

Food for Life Leicestershire



June 2024 – May 2025

Food for Life Leicestershire has been commissioned by Leicestershire County Council to work closely with 20 schools to champion healthy and sustainable food, as well as provide access to the Food for Life Schools Award for all primary and SEN schools in the county.

In numbers

+12

177 schools enrolled,
including **12 new**
enrolments this year

44,461

children benefitting from a
healthy and sustainable food
culture in their school

6

6 Bronze Awards

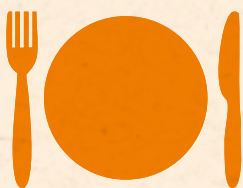
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1 Silver Award

2

2 Gold Awards

Increased level of food education in Leicestershire schools



40 **Food Education actions completed**,
meaning children have more
opportunities to cook, grow and learn about
healthy and sustainable food and its benefits.

8 **schools** have visited or linked with a farm,
connecting pupils with where food comes from



[Pupils] will also be learning about how some farm animals do provide us with food like eggs and milk. When the children return they will feed back to other year groups about what they have learnt.

Leicestershire school



Environmental change to support an increase in healthy behaviour in Leicestershire schools

197 Award actions to transform the food environment completed this year, positively shaping pupils' relationship with healthy and sustainable food, including:

- reviewing the food culture in school with input from pupils, giving children agency in their own food environment
- monitoring school meal uptake and identifying ways to increase this, helping more children to regularly eat a meal meeting school food standards



10 schools have set up a **School Nutrition Action Group** including pupils, staff and caterers, fostering whole school collaboration and long-term change

Two month-long nationwide Food for Life campaigns; 'Cook and Share' and 'Plant and Share' promoted across Leicestershire, raising awareness across the county



The food is displayed to look appetising. Adults eat in the classroom with the children and so model the good behaviour

Leicestershire school



Increased knowledge, skills and confidence in Leicestershire school staff in delivering food education



1 Food for Life Inspires training day with **14 attendees**, with 100% of attendees reporting increased confidence and knowledge about a whole school approach to food


46 bespoke staff support and training sessions held, building knowledge, skills and capacity



As a result of FFL training I will...
"Plan a whole school initiative based around food."

Training attendee





Newbold Verdon Primary School Cook and Share



To celebrate both Cook and Share and Diwali, Newbold Verdon Primary School got cooking with their early years pupils.

Enrolled with Food for Life since July, since then they have established a SNAG group, met with their caterers and briefed school staff in addition to already having an eco committee and forest school.


Usually they celebrate by making barfi, but this year Cook and Share's free toolkit of resources inspired them to give a savoury snack a go using the [Bombay Chickpeas recipe](#). Nicola, Deputy Headteacher at the school, organised the session.

"They absolutely loved it," enthuses Nicola. "They enjoyed seeing the process from start to finish – opening tins, spelling spices, putting things together."

It was a great opportunity for the children, aged three and four, to learn more about cooking and the equipment involved. "A lot of them could name the bowl and spoon but didn't know what a tin opener was, didn't know what the spices were and didn't know what chickpeas were."



The children discussed what chickpeas smell and look like, as well as learning the names of spices. When the chickpeas were in the oven, they predicted how they had changed. One pupil thought they might have melted but in fact the raisins had got bigger and looked round.



They especially enjoyed tasting their creation at the end of the session. "They thought they were delicious! They definitely want to try chickpeas again and are hoping they'll cook them at home too. Often, children don't want to try new food, but every single pupil did try it and enjoyed it," shares Nicola. And not only did the children try it but lots of parents did too at pick up time, with many taking home the Cook and Share recipe to give it a go at home too.

Next, they'll be doing some Christmas cooking with Cook and Share resources.



St Mary's C of E achieve Food for Life Gold Award



Big congratulations to St Mary's C of E School in Hinckley, Leicestershire, who have achieved their Food for Life Gold Award. This is the highest level of the Food for Life Schools Award and is proof of a school's exceptional dedication to building a good food culture.

During their award ceremony, the school's headteacher credited Food for Life's support and guidance for the changes they've been able to make. Food for Life showing them exactly what to do and how made all the difference in helping them to create a good food culture at the school.

"We have transformed our whole school culture through this fantastic initiative which enables our children to learn more about where food comes from and the benefits of healthy eating and food sustainability. Thanks to Soil Association Food for Life for their support."

Rachel Ayres, Headteacher

Their first action was to set up a School Nutrition Action Group, or SNAG. This is a group made up of pupils and staff who want to lead the way with making change. The pupils who are a part of this group have overseen loads of changes at the school since then, from encouraging their peers to try more veg to getting involved with growing food. One SNAG pupil shared that he enjoys vegetables a lot more since working with Food for Life, with red peppers being a favourite, whilst another now eats sweetcorn every day at lunch. Before working with Food for Life, many of these pupils didn't eat vegetables at all and were uncomfortable trying new ones.

Alongside eating more veg, pupils have been packing up food to send to families in other countries who don't have the same access to food.

They enjoyed learning about food beyond just growing, cooking and eating it, and finding out more about food insecurity and other inequalities.

One pupil said she had helped her mum to cook at home using the slow cooker and used tubs to save leftover food for future meals, avoiding food waste

The school have also set up sensory tasting sessions, attended Food for Life training, improved the school dining environment, made links with local farms, set up growing areas using raised beds, invited parents to try school dinners, cooked food from scratch, and used school-grown produce in school meals.

All this makes for a school where food is a positive part of the school day, whether that's enjoying a healthy and sustainable school meal or connecting with farms to find out where food comes from.






A strong start at St Winefride's in Leicestershire



Food for Life visited St Winefride's in June to run a session on school food culture and the dining room experience with the school's SNAG (Student Nutrition Action Group). Pupils learnt about how they can make changes to their school food culture as well as debating food related issues such as "I think school dining halls should be run like a restaurant" and "We should eat less meat". Following this, the group investigated the current dining room experience, working in pairs to monitor the dining hall and look at busyness, noise, seating, access to salad, food waste, which food was most popular and which adults were in the room. They will use findings to inform their School Food Culture Review and make an action plan to achieving a Food for Life Bronze Award.




After lunch, Food for Life's Local Programme Officer met with the midday supervisors to discuss how they can celebrate the important work they're already doing to embed a good food culture as well as driving further positive change. With a list of actions now in hand, the midday supervisors will begin introducing a dining room award system as well as encouraging pupils to try new foods and use knives and forks properly.

Later, Food for Life sat down with the school's Food for Life Lead to go through the portal and complete actions that have been achieved as well as making a plan around completing more actions in future. Actions BFQ2, BFE2 and BFE3 were completed during the session, with plans for five further actions in place.



Finally, Food for Life delivered a staff briefing to ensure everyone at the school is on the same page when it comes to embedding a good food culture. After the briefing, staff read through the award pillars and made notes on what they're already doing to achieve them. This was an easy way to celebrate successes and also make a plan around making improvements in other areas. It was also a great opportunity for staff to hear more about how Food for Life can facilitate training sessions to support further changes. By the end, they had completed four actions, made great headway on three actions and discussed an actionable plan for another five. This was followed up with an email summarising the discussion and including signposting.

Overall, it was a really positive and productive day which met the school where they're at in their Food for Life journey and gave them the information and tools to keep progressing.



An inspiring day with Food for Life

Making good food the norm in Leicestershire

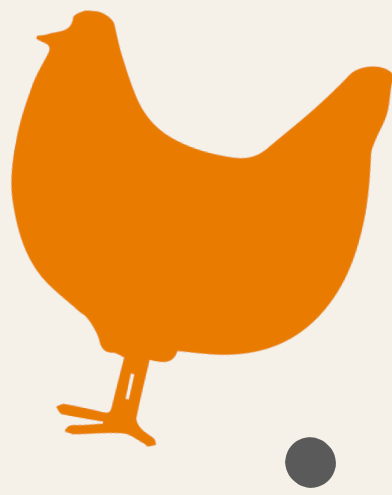
The Freer Centre in Wigston, Leicestershire, welcomed teachers and staff from local schools to learn about growing and cooking good food as part of the Food for Life Leicestershire programme, commissioned by Leicestershire County Council.

These training sessions are a valuable way to learn new skills, build capacity in knowledge, as well as an opportunity to bring people together to share experiences and insights from their good food journey.

Making food from scratch got everyone talking about ultra-processed foods and how we can make swaps to eating more freshly prepared and minimally processed food. Having an arsenal of simple, everyday recipes in your back pocket is a great way to eat more whole foods, and now the Aloo Tikka can be one for everyone in this training session!

At lunchtime, participants from different schools enjoy a relaxed meal together, sparking valuable conversations and idea-sharing. The group tucked into the food they prepared earlier, alongside fresh bread, cheese, vegetables, and dips.





The afternoon focused on farm links, a key part of the Food for Life Schools Award. Whether through in-person or virtual visits, connecting children with where their food comes from is vital. Schools are given practical guidance and local farm contacts to support this.

Participants then revisit the day's recipe by exploring how to grow its key ingredients; potatoes, spring onions, and coriander. Using simple, accessible methods like seed tape and paper pots, they learn how growing food can fit into any school setting, no matter the space or experience. Teachers note the added benefits, such as developing fine motor skills and linking activities to maths, science, or enterprise education.

By the end of the day, attendees felt more confident in supporting a positive food culture in their schools. They leave with hands-on resources, from seed tape and planting guides to Food for Life Award planning sheet, funding opportunities, and information on upcoming campaigns to get involved with for further free resources and support, ready to put learning into action.

