

Journey to Silver: Stokes Wood Primary



Introduction

Food for life has been commissioned by Leicester city Public Health since 2015 and work with over 80 schools. The aim is to improve the healthy food environment in schools and in turn contribute to the positive health outcomes of children attending school in Leicester City.

The school has 470 Pupils, with 50% coming from White British backgrounds, and 50% from other ethnic backgrounds and includes pupils with English as a second language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The school is situated on the edge of the New Parks Council Estate, which is in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the England.

This case study focuses on Stokes Wood Primary that achieved their Bronze Food for Life award in April 2016 and were awarded their Silver Food for Life award in March 2021. It aims to highlight the work that Stokes Wood Primary School have carried out to reach Silver award level despite submitting award criteria during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The work carried out in school supports the four main areas of the FFL award.

Food Quality

School lunches are provided by City Catering who have achieved their Silver Food for Life award. Most dishes are made from scratch and local produce and organic ingredients are used where possible. Overall, the children are happy with their school meals.

Lunchtimes

Teachers are encouraged to have a school lunch and sit with the pupils. This encourages and models good behaviour and food choices. The Lunch time supervisors have attended Food for Life training. They support pupils to try new foods on their plate and monitor packed lunches. Recommendations for healthy packed lunches are sent out to parents each year. The school has regular healthy eating assemblies and healthy eating displays in the dining room.

Following a food waste webinar by the local Food for Life programme manager, the Head teacher at Stokes Wood began to address food waste in school. The school worked with the lunchtime supervisors, pupils and Leicester City Catering. Changes were made to portion sizes which has significantly reduced food waste. The school will continue to look at reducing food waste through menu preferences and weighing and monitoring food waste.



Figure 1: Pupils in the newly decorated dining room

Food Leadership and Culture

This criterion aims to bring together pupils, parents, teaching and catering staff to form the basis of the 'Whole School Approach', which will allow a good food culture to become an intrinsic part of life at school.

Gardening Club

At Stokes Wood Primary, there are two members of staff who bring a wealth of horticultural experience and currently lead the gardening club. All food grown at school is organic and have grown lettuce, broad beans, courgettes, tomatoes, strawberries, dill, onions coriander and potatoes, to name a few.

As part of this activity, children can take the produce home and return the following week to tell us that they used it in their own cooking. More recently, the school has started to grow food to be used in the cooking club and take part in the annual Leicester Grow Your Own Grub competition and the Pumpkin competition.



Figure 2: Pupil showcasing their harvest

Cook and Eat Programme

Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, the school was taking part in the Cook and Eat programme, which aims to support food insecure families and improve eating habits.

During the lockdown, when most children were out of school, the school opted to provide vulnerable families with food parcels rather than vouchers to ensure that children were provided with fresh, healthy food. The Cook and Eat project is a 4-week project, which encouraged and guided families to cook healthy meals from fresh ingredients using the food contributions from Chroma Church food bank and specially designed recipes provided by FFL. The families were also given a recipe every week, a folder to put the recipes in and an evaluation form to complete at the end of the 4 weeks.

The parcels consisted of staple kitchen cupboard foods, such as dried spices and herbs, flour, soy sauce and stock cubes), fresh vegetables/salad and fruit. The programme was a success and received well by the families that took part. 6 families took part in the 4-week programme.

To further support learning in the home during lockdown, Stokes Wood Primary sent home activities for parents to do with their children. These include ideas for growing and cooking at home as well as instructions to promote these activities. Since then, parents have sent us photos of their children taking part in these activities at home.

Food Education

Teaching children to cook, grow and understand where their food comes from equips them with the skills and knowledge that will allow them to make decisions that have a direct impact on their health – both now and in the future.

Healthy Eating in the curriculum

As part of the Year 4 curriculum, pupils study the human digestive system and how the body processes food to enable it to grow, function healthily and be active. The children study the origins of food i.e. not the fridge or supermarket, food groups and the healthy eating plate. In PSHE lessons, students look at fair distribution of food across the world.

The after-school Cookery Club is for Year 3-4 children, allows pupils to learn and experience a variety of ingredients and techniques for cooking and baking. Recipes include oat and raisin biscuits, coconut macaroons, shortbread, potato cakes and pizza from scratch! The children are also encouraged take home the recipe to repeat again with friends and family.

Staff continue to further their experience and knowledge through training, for example the CPD for Grow Your Own Grub in Leicester City which has let to teachers incorporating growing as part of the science curriculum.



Figure 3: Pupil sharing their fishcakes



Community and Partnerships

At the heart of the Food for Life ethos is the principle that we should make good food the easy choice for everyone, no matter who or where they are. Sharing Food for Life learning and experiences with parents and your surrounding community allows the benefits of a good food culture to extend beyond the school gates. That's not just about making the right food choices; it's about celebrating good food and how it underpins so many important occasions in so many different cultures.

Building relationships with Farmers

Since beginning of February 2021, the farmers at Manor Farm, Burton Overy Leicestershire, have been sending the school short videos regarding how the farm prepares for the arrival of new lambs. This includes preparing the lambing sheds, feeding the sheep, actual lambing, lambs feeding from mothers and bottles, explanations of fostering, etc.

These are shown in short clips to nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. The clips have been collated into a video and uploaded to the school YouTube channel. Teachers are currently using the videos to support learning in nursery and reception as part of Knowledge and Understanding of the World Early Learning Goal and language and Communication.

In KS1 they are used to support the Science curriculum (Life cycles, life processes) and Geography (farming, food production and clothing manufacture). An example of one of the clips can be found [here](#).

Building relationships with Food producers

To further build relationships within the community, the Y1, Y2 and SEND pupils visit the local bakery on Aikman Avenue which also has a cafe (Baxter's). This is part of their community project, looking at the local area, how food is produced and sold to the community. The SEND pupils visit as part of their life skills development.

Building partnerships has also been an important part of our engagement in Grandparents' gardening week, which is carried out by reception and nursery pupils. As part of this event, Grandparents of the students come in and work on preparing raised beds and planting the seeds or seedlings. This has also led to the local community, from the allotment adjacent to the school, invite the children to growing events. Both members of the allotment society and our gardening club were involved in filming for the pumpkin composting programme on CBBC Newsround in 2019.

Partnerships for success

Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetics Service work with Food for Life in Leicester City. They assist pupils in the School Nutrition Action Group to conduct a lunch box audit in school and offer nutritional advice and information. Their service has helped Stokes Wood to improve the lunch boxes of their pupils.

The Conservation Volunteers assist Leicester City Schools with food growing in school. They have supplied seeds and advice to Stokes Wood.

Jane Gadsby, the head teacher at the school has been instrumental in leading changes to the food culture and environment in school. Her passion is apparent for giving pupils a healthy environment and consequently, a healthy start in life.

Conclusion

Although the Bronze Food for Life award gave a framework to the school from which to improve school food environment and acted as a good base from which to move forward, the ideas, motivation and determination of the school meant that they were able to implement meaningful change. As a result, they achieved their Silver award and successfully integrated good food and education into everyday school life.



Figure 4: Pupils creating raised beds