

The Importance of a Good School Food Culture

Case Study: Washingborough Primary School

Integrating Food Education

Our journey to raise the profile of Food Education at Washingborough Academy began six years ago when Headteacher, Jason O'Rourke, took up post. Committed to embedding a strong food culture, he was passionate about providing children with the opportunity to learn about healthy food choices and essential life skills. He quickly engaged all members of the school community in active roles, developing the children's understanding and appreciation of the role that food plays in a healthy and active life.

Four years ago we had no hot school meal provision at the school. We took the opportunity to bid for a commercial school kitchen on site. The addition of our very own School Chef at the start of this academic year means that we are now able to provide our children with outstanding, freshly prepared food on a daily basis.

Chef Callow's inspirational menus celebrate locally sourced, seasonal ingredients which, in itself, has encouraged support from and forged strong links with local businesses. Having our own chef means we are able to build purposeful curriculum links across the school through themed menus which link closely with the learning curriculum, reinforcing and further supporting the learning in the classroom.

By regularly posting photos and feedback on social media about the meals, parents have been able to see what's on offer and, as a result, school dinner uptake has increased steadily. Word has spread about the quality of the meals and we are now delivering over 120 meals a day. The dining experience is now a calmer and more enjoyable time of the day, allowing different age groups to enjoy their lunch together.

Our lunch hall, "Food, Glorious, Food", has music playing to create a pleasant atmosphere, proper plates and cutlery, and lunchtime supervisors to encourage children to make good choices. Our older children don a uniform and act as 'Salad Servers' and 'Aqua Sommeliers' working alongside members of staff to mentor our younger pupils; promoting good behaviour, manners and a positive attitude towards food. See our video from our parents and grandparents day here: <http://bit.ly/1nCM3ly>

A more recent and very exciting addition to our school grounds has been the introduction of a beehive; the produce of which will be sold at our extremely popular biannual Farmers' Markets. These markets are held in our school hall and are a great way of showcasing local food suppliers and involving our local community. Our children take part, growing micro-herbs and creating different types of food to sell at these events.

Another one of our successful Food Education projects is our healthy 'Snack Shack'. Each week, the children make healthy snacks to sell for 50p. By recording the number of portions sold, and how much profit they have made, they can ascertain the best sellers. As well as developing great food skills and knowledge, this is also a fantastic enterprise project.

With so much research, cooking and growing going on at our school we are proud to have made Food Education an integral, innovative and meaningful part of our school curriculum.

Follow our food stories: @washingborough

