

Characteristic 9

Developing practical food skills

A characteristic of good practice when teaching pupils with additional needs is that pupils acquire, develop and secure a range of practical food skills and use a range of cooking methods so they can prepare, cook and serve a variety of drinks, meals, dishes and snacks hygienically and safely.

Overview

- Staff provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure practical food skills so they can feed themselves well, keep healthy, and develop skills for independent living and work.
- Staff expose pupils to a range of practical food skills and cooking methods that work best for each pupil, using a variety of ingredients and a range of appropriate equipment.
- Staff integrate practical food skills into Schemes of Work and lessons, demonstrating progression in the development of practical food skills, precision/accuracy, use of equipment and complexity of recipes over time.
- Staff ensure teaching resources, recipes, ingredients and equipment used are capability appropriate, encourage an awareness and understanding of safe practices, and promote current healthy eating advice.
- Staff undertake assessment that reflects pupil-centred learning intent and provides constructive feedback to pupils.



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When delivering the Springboard Let's Cook programme (a 10-week programme over two days a week covering industry knowledge, employability and cooking skills), we acknowledge the importance of applying nutrition principles, using locally sourced and seasonal foods, and having the opportunity to extend the range of taste experiences by trying new foods.

When planning a session, we always start with the basics:

- knife skills;
- easy and interesting food plans;
- taster sessions to encourage wider understanding of healthy choices;
- food groups and extended knowledge, e.g. different cuts of meat, pasta, seafood.

We also look to extend underpinning knowledge and understanding. For example, when we make breads we explain the science involved. It's not

just simply making bread! There are also additional opportunities to be creative, add flavours and shape the breads to have fun with the learning.

Over the course of the programme, the aim is for the pupils to work together to discuss, plan, budget and create a two-course meal for family and friends in celebration of their hard work and achievements.

JAN'S TIPS

1. Start simply and build on the experience. Everyone has more to give than they first think and this way everyone can experience success.
2. Use a variety of ingredients and different cooking methods/styles to develop a wide range of practical skills.
3. Encourage experimentation, creativity and presentation skills while being supportive and giving guidance.

Putting the characteristic into practice

Planning

In practice, staff:

- review practical food skills previously taught to pupils through formal education or social and family experiences;
- ensure planning reflects pupils' family/ social circumstances, food availability in the local area and financial circumstances;
- define and map out practical food skill progression in Schemes of Work;
- develop practical activities that are age/ ability appropriate, building on previous experiences, skills learned and pupil preferences;
- plan activities that are inclusive and enable pupils with physical disabilities to take part and develop practical food skills, making adaptations where appropriate;
- focus on practical food skill learning intent, not recipe outcome;
- are flexible and plan food activities that can be undertaken in a variety of food spaces, e.g. a classroom, snack area, dining room, sensory room, flat, or specialist classroom;
- plan practical activities that develop skills for independent living and ensure that pupils can feed themselves well and keep healthy;
- ensure planning reflects the cultural diversity of pupils and local environment;
- enable pupils to experience a wide variety of foods that may not be available at home;
- use food as a context to develop literacy and numeracy skills as well as physical skills, e.g. reading/listening to recipe instructions, weighing and measuring;
- ensure individual pupil needs and capabilities are considered, and risk assessments are undertaken, shared and followed;
- are sensitive to the needs of pupils who are tube-fed or are on a restricted diet and plan an inclusive food experience for them wherever possible;
- use a variety of assessment styles, including self, peer, and teacher.

Other examples:



Putting the characteristic into practice

Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Consider potential risks and behavioural issues when planning practical activities and ensure other staff are made aware of these.
 - Consider the individuals in the group and how they may interact with staff and other pupils.
 - Be aware that some pupils may live in a care setting which may impact their past and future learning experiences.
 - Plan pupil-centered practical activities that focus on the individual needs of the pupils in the class, e.g. some pupils may wipe and prick potatoes ready to be microwaved and others may peel, dice, boil, drain and mash potatoes for mashed potatoes.
 - Use pre-prepared ingredients to support pupil learning, e.g. ready-made pastry, frozen or sliced vegetables.
 - Use pupil-centred modelling where appropriate, especially if working with a mixed age group, e.g. ask a pupil who has secured a practical food skill, such as dicing an onion, to demonstrate to another pupil or the rest of the class.
 - Make a recipe on several occasions, so that the different steps and food skills are practised, and support is decreased over time as pupil confidence/competence increases.
 - Ensure that food activities are inclusive to all pupils through providing adapted equipment, assisted technology and/or accessible/adjustable tables, sinks and cookers.
 - Provide opportunities for pupils with severe learning needs to participate through sensory activities, e.g. touching raw and cooked bread dough, tasting edible paper flavoured with lemon/lime juice, smelling fresh and dried herbs and spices.
- Consider the focus of food skills lessons/activities, including:
 - weighing and measuring using balance/digital scales, measuring jugs, measuring spoons, cups, hands;
 - opening and closing packets, jars, bottles by hand or with equipment;
 - using knives, scissors, graters, peelers;
 - using hands and fingers to mix, rub-in, form and shape;
 - using small equipment such as a sieve, rolling pin, mixing spoons, fish slice, cutters;
 - using small electrical equipment such as a kettle, toaster, electric whisk, microwave, blender, food processor, soup maker, bread machine;
 - using the cooker (hob, grill and oven);
 - using pans, baking trays, dishes and tins;
 - serving prepared items.

For further information about practical food skills, techniques and equipment, see Appendix: Practical food skills chart.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Recipes and practical activities

In practice, staff:

- use tried and tested recipes and avoid pupils selecting recipes from internet searches/magazines which may not have the desired learning intent;
- ensure recipes promote current healthy eating advice and are predominantly savoury;
- ensure recipes develop practical food skills over time;
- create and use a variety of recipe formats to suit pupil needs;
- expose pupils to recipes and ingredients from different traditions and countries;
- plan practical activities to allow pupils to develop their food skills and build confidence over time;
- use food as a vehicle for inclusion and to develop fine motor skills, e.g. gripping, twisting;

- provide creative experiences around food to encourage recognition and familiarisation;
- enable pupils to link recipes to different contexts, e.g. celebrations, occasions, home, eating out, work;
- encourage pupils to explore and evaluate ingredients using their senses, e.g. smell, taste, but with an awareness of sensory issues for some pupils.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Ensure all recipes and practical activities follow the same pattern to develop independent working.
- Create and use a variety of styles of recipes, e.g. using symbols, pictures/images, simple commands extending to more complex instructions.
- Show a variety of uses of recipes, e.g. at home (a recipe book or the internet), in the school kitchen, a restaurant, café or pub.
- Encourage pupils to keep a recipe book or create their own recipes using index cards.
- Enable pupils to share recipes with others through written tasks or by email, if appropriate.
- Use recipes for guided reading or to develop numeracy skills, not just for 'cooking lessons'.
- Provide creative experiences around food, not just 'cooking' experiences, e.g. create pictures with dried pasta, painting with broccoli florets or growing 'cress-heads' in yogurt pots.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Teaching skills

In practice, staff:

- are confident in teaching, demonstrating and using a wide range of practical food skills;
- practise their own practical food skills before teaching pupils;
- develop their own practical food skills (if required) through training by external providers or working with more experienced food teachers, the catering team or professional chefs;
- ensure support staff are briefed fully before practical lessons/food activities regarding hygiene and safety expectations and the way food skills should be demonstrated and carried out;

- expose pupils to new experiences, ingredients and/or skills, e.g. invite a chef into school to demonstrate a particular food skill, a butcher to show how to prepare meat dishes or a local food producer to show some of the produce they grow;
- encourage pupils to support their peers in class.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Understand the specific needs of pupils and employ different teaching strategies to support them. For example:
 - demonstrate cutting techniques to an individual pupil, such as the bridge hold or claw grip. Explain the technique, model/demonstrate and then repeat. Ask the pupil to do the same: explain what they are going to do; cut the food and then repeat the technique;
 - ask another member of staff to guide a pupil's hand when cutting or support a pupil to operate a switch to start a blender or food processor.
- Encourage pupils to experience different settings in order to develop their food skills, e.g. a school or community café, work experience with a local employer, short courses at a local college.

Other examples:

For further details see Characteristics 4 Teaching the curriculum, 5 Developing skills for independent living, 7 Running practical food lessons and 8 Establishing good food hygiene and safety practices.

Putting the characteristic into practice

Exemplary practice

Governor/head teacher/senior leadership team

- Systems are in place for staff to share pupil progress across year groups to ensure pupils' food skills progression as they move through the school.
- Ring-fence, and make staff aware of, the budget for ingredients/equipment to undertake cooking activities.
- Ensure appropriate facilities and equipment for food lessons and practical activities.
- Enable staff to develop their own food skills, e.g. through undertaking practical skills courses, arranging for appropriate visitors to provide food preparation demonstrations.
- Support families, parents and carers to work with pupils outside of school to develop practical food skills and create healthy recipes.
- Organise a monthly local market on the school site working with several local producers that encourages contacts with local businesses, pupil enterprise and work experience.

Curriculum lead/coordinator

- Work and plan effectively with technicians and support staff to ensure the smooth running of practical activities, including positive behaviour management strategies.
- Create links with local supermarkets and food producers. Provide opportunities for pupils to visit the shop/producer or for visitors to come into school.
- Create links with organisations that provide food and ingredients through redistribution schemes from local producers and supermarkets.

- Produce 'cooking at home' packs for parents and carers with a recipe to make a healthy meal.
- Run parent/carer healthy eating and cooking workshops.
- Invite parents/carers into school for a coffee morning or lunch created and served by the pupils.
- Fundraise for donations to support the creation of a space for pupils to develop independent living skills around food, such as a flat or community café.

Classroom teacher/teaching assistant

- Discuss positive strategies for behaviour management around food with parents/carers.
- Plan a school visit to experience using new ingredients and learning new skills.
- Plan a trip for pupils to experience food in other settings, e.g. a café, leisure centre, farm shop or supermarket.
- Build in the opportunity for competition-style activities that can be used to teach specialist knowledge/skills for working in 'food', e.g. food styling and presentation.

Other examples:



A list of useful websites to support this Characteristic can be found on page 75