

Crich Junior School

Crich Junior School, in rural Derbyshire, has just 50 pupils and – because of tight planning regulations for its Victorian building – no kitchen. Instead, it gets its lunches delivered every day from a primary school in Fritchley, a mile down the hill.

The relationship with Fritchley’s cook, Bernie, is crucial. Before she began cooking for Crich, Bernie visited the school several times to talk to the children about their likes and dislikes, and helped smooth out any glitches in the system for delivering, reheating and serving the food. “Every request has been willingly tried out,” says head teacher Cheryl Julian. Lunch costs a very reasonable £1.90. In the past, Derbyshire County Council managed the food budget from a central pot. Now that the funding has been devolved, Cheryl and Bernie are having to balance the books themselves. But by collaborating with Fritchley – and running a tight ship themselves – they are managing to break even.

Despite its small size, Crich runs a popular, efficient and healthy lunch service. It also has an impressive growing scheme – including a 30-foot polytunnel and a chicken coop – and has become a ‘flagship’ school in the Food for Life Partnership. The school was recently deemed ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted.