

## **The Whole School Food Approach in Takeley Primary School**

Takeley Primary School is a growing school of approximately 300 pupils which has recently relocated to a new site at Takeley in Essex. Takeley is situated between London and Cambridge. It has good transport links as it is 2.5 miles from Stansted airport with train and air links. It is also served well by roads as the M11 is only 4.5 miles away.

All aspects of food are very important at Takeley Primary School. In 2009, we achieved the Bronze Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) Award and then we worked through the Silver award up to the Gold FFLP award which we received in December 2011. Below is a summary of the activities which we use in school in order to encourage the children to eat a healthy diet and to grow food so that they understand where their food comes from.

### **Cooking**

All of our children have a minimum of 12 hours cookery during the school year. This is divided between skills based lessons which take place in our purpose built teaching kitchen. These sessions have small groups of children from different year groups and are led by parents, members of staff and volunteers from the community. Often the children have the opportunity to eat what they have made at the end of a session where they sit around a table and discuss what they have made. Some of the popular recipes that the children have made are published in the village magazine so that parents (or other members of the community) can try them at home.

Other cookery is carried out as part of class teaching. Sometimes the children taste new foods to experience a wide range of flavours and at other times the children carry out cookery as part of the topic work that they are doing in class.

The children have the opportunity to take part in cookery club after school run by two of our teachers. Over the last few years there have also been parent cookery classes to help the parents improve their skills.

### **Growing**

We have several growing areas in our school. There are raised beds within the playground that have been used to grow a range of food such as garlic, broad beans, lettuces and tomatoes. This produce is used as part of our school dinners. We are on a new site and at the moment we are establishing a polytunnel to extend our growing

environments. We expect that this tunnel will have raised beds by the spring and we intend to grow more salad crops and herbs, again for use in our school dinners. The polytunnel has been constructed by members of the community who come in to school to support us with our growing.

Periodically, the children are sent home with plants such as tomato plants so that they can continue to grow a plant at home and benefit from the fruit that it grows.

We also hold a growing club in the warmer months which last year ran after school. This year gardening clubs will be extended to run at lunchtimes as well after school, giving interested children the opportunity to learn more about growing.

Each year we hold food centred days where the curriculum is focused around one food type. In the past we have held an Apple day and a Tomato day and in early July next year we intend to hold a Potato day.

### School lunches

Our food is made from scratch on site in order to give the children the best lunch we can. We also use a high proportion of organic and free range produce along with locally sourced ingredients to provide our children with a healthy meal. By improving the standard of the food that we serve we have increased our uptake of school lunches over the last few years and they have risen from roughly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the children having lunches to  $\frac{2}{3}$  of children having school lunches. We are very proud of our delicious lunches which we serve on white plates rather than in moulded trays. Many of our staff members choose to eat with the children (approximately 90% of teachers) and parents are invited to join us every Thursday.

### Farm visits

We have links with a local organic farm and the children visit it throughout the year in order for them to understand where their food comes from. The local farmer also sits on our School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) which is a forum where staff, children and other interested parties can discuss school food issues.

### Bees

This year we have installed bees at our school. A group called the Takeley Buzz cared for the bees this year. This group was made up of members of staff and some of the older children. They harvested the honey over the summer which was sold to parents in the autumn. Some of this honey has been used in the kitchen for the school lunches.

### Learning about food

*"The best thing about cookery is that it is fun and teaches you useful techniques."*  
(Freddie)

We have worked hard to include cooking, growing and tasting in our curriculum as much as we can. There are three ways that we have done this. Firstly, by holding food days such as apple day, tomato day and potato day where the whole school gets involved in growing, tasting learning about different foods.



Secondly, by broadening our curriculum so that tasting and cooking can be added to learning. This has been easiest in topic areas where we have been able to create topics that include a food focus; however it has also been brought in to literacy, maths and science.

Thirdly, our children take part in skills based cookery lessons where they cook in small groups, often eating their food afterwards.





The children learn to grow by planting pots at school and then taking them home. The children use the raised beds and our polytunnel to grow a range of vegetables and salad stuff which can be used as part of our school lunches.

We have spent time educating our children where their food comes from and some of our local producers have talked to the children during assembly time and visits to our local organic farms have formed part of our children's learning experiences.



Also, we have bee hives on our school field which are tended by some of our staff and children. The whole school became very involved with the production of our own honey which involved a great deal of learning about bees and their role as pollinators.

