

# PRACTICE



**DESIGN &  
TECHNOLOGY  
ASSOCIATION**

# On the menu

## Teaching food and nutrition to pupils with additional needs

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### What did a 15-year food teaching career teach me?

- Make sure pupils wash up before they go, or you'll be the one 'detained' after school doing 20 students' washing up.
- Be clear that weighing scales require a receptacle – pouring flour directly onto the scales will end badly for everyone (especially the school cleaners!).
- When making cheesecake, make sure that pupils understand that it is cream cheese they need and not cheddar!

Joking aside, one of the most important learnings during my career was that although pupils have different capabilities and require different types of support, they (almost all) universally love cooking – and that's a great hook for learning! So, what better subject than food to engage pupils with additional needs and help them experience success as they develop the skills needed to feed themselves in the future?



### Learning through food

As a previous food technology teacher, now supporting teachers and their pupils through the *Food – a fact of life* education programme, I am delighted that over the last three years, the **British Nutrition Foundation** has published two *Characteristics of good practice in teaching food and nutrition education* guides to support primary and secondary teachers to become even better teachers of food and nutrition.

In 2021, the British Nutrition Foundation produced a third guide, this time to support teachers of pupils with additional needs. We know that children and young people are motivated and inspired with food, especially opportunities to handle, prepare and cook, and we are fully committed to all children and young people having the necessary 'food' skills to cook and feed themselves well and keep healthy. Following this third guide, we realised that there was a need for further support, so developed a framework and a range of resources to provide a structure for teaching around the key themes of Healthy eating, Cooking and Where food comes from.

Children and young people need to know how to keep themselves healthy; how to plan what to eat and drink; where and how they can buy food; how to prepare and cook snacks, meals and drinks for themselves and others where appropriate. It is also important they know where food comes from; be able to relate food grown on a farm or caught in the sea to the food on their plates, and that food is from either a plant or animal.

### Providing support

Each key theme in the resources is supported by an introductory guide with a range of activities, a presentation with images to provide stimulus and clear, editable worksheets. You can decide on the level of complexity of the tasks chosen.

It is important for children to learn that not everyone likes the same food and drink and that some people eat certain foods due to tradition, culture, religion, health reasons and family circumstances. Sometimes it's hard for pupils to explain their feelings about a food or drink so there are cards (with smiley, neutral and sad faces) and worksheets to develop tasting vocabulary that will help them. Feeling, smelling, cooking and tasting food allows pupils to develop their senses, fine and gross motor skills and understand the importance of working together and sharing.

Food preparation and 'cooking' can be as simple as cutting fruit and vegetables to share at break-time, to making a hot drink safely for themselves or someone else, to creating an evening meal to share with family and friends. The resources include six peer-to-peer recipe videos, with accompanying recipes adapted for pupils with additional needs, including versions that use Widgit® symbols to help children who have difficulty with text or communication.

The resources also look at shopping to help pupils understand that food is available from a variety of places, and that decisions need to be made when planning what to eat and when buying food.

### In the classroom

Working with food can also help manage behaviours in the classroom and provide an opportunity for grounding and calming whilst also developing dexterity and fine/gross motor skills, for example:

- ripping cabbage or lettuce leaves
- holding a heavy pumpkin to feel weighted
- crunching on carrots which aids self-regulation
- feedback through using a push-button blender or juicer
- having a particular task that makes the pupil feel different or special.

One colleague always has a large box of oranges available and when one particular pupil is finding things hard in school, he is given the task of juicing oranges for the rest of the class. This allows him to focus and gives him a purpose and the teacher a hook for praise.

Food preparation and cooking with children and young people with additional needs is fantastically rewarding for all involved. Learning how to feed yourself and others well independently or with support is a vital life skill and should be encouraged from an early age. We hope our resources help you to widen children's experiences and develop their skills and love of 'food', no matter their level of need or circumstances.



[www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/pupils-with-additional-needs/](http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk/pupils-with-additional-needs/)



### Food – a fact of life

The *Food – a fact of life* programme provides curriculum compliant, evidence-based resources for pupils aged 3-16 years and teacher training around Healthy eating, Cooking and Where food comes from. Since October 2018, *Food – a fact of life* has been supported by a partnership between the British Nutrition Foundation and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).



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