

# Characteristic 5

## Developing skills for independent living

A characteristic when teaching pupils with additional needs is that pupils acquire, develop and secure skills and knowledge, and have a range of experiences around food and drink, cooking, and looking after themselves, to support their health, wellbeing and independent living.

### Overview

- Staff plan food, drink and cooking activities to promote skills for independent living that are pupil-centred and focus on being able to feed themselves well and keep healthy.
- Staff ensure provision has been made for pupils with physical disabilities, food allergies, intolerances and/or other dietary requirements, including sensory issues, so they can participate safely in food activities.
- Staff plan activities that use food as a context to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in relation to independent living, such as planning meals, compiling shopping lists, reading food labels and making a budget.
- Staff plan activities that promote recognition and familiarisation from home to school and the wider world, including meaningful employment.
- Staff set up hygienic and safe independent living spaces for practical food preparation.
- Staff act as role models and ensure that food hygiene and safety standards are maintained.
- Staff use positive reinforcement and motivate pupils to become familiar and more competent with new skills, leading to an increase in pupils' confidence, interest and motivation.



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#### **At Whitefield School, pupils have always participated in learning to develop skills for independent living.**

This provides them with invaluable first-hand experiences and develops their confidence in working independently or as part of a team. Pupils are given a scenario, such as planning a meal for themselves for a given theme and budget or planning a menu for dinner with a friend with a specific dietary need.

Opportunities are provided for pupils to look for suitable dishes, identify the key ingredients and practical food skills required, adapt the ingredients if needed, or even create a new dish.

Pupils are taught to identify where different ingredients can be purchased. They sort ingredients into traditional suppliers, such as bread from a bakery and fish from a fishmonger; or consider which

section of a large supermarket they need to visit to locate the ingredients that they need.

Pupils' numeracy skills are developed by being taught how to scale down or scale up a recipe, as well as weighing and measuring. This helps pupils put together a shopping list which can be used during a trip to purchase ingredients or when shopping online, while keeping to the given budget.

#### **ADELE'S TIPS**

1. Provide real life scenarios for pupils to reinforce learning between home, school and future independent living.
2. Use practical food activities to encourage pupils to work with others.
3. Enable pupils to develop their IT skills through food activities, such as shopping safely online.

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Planning what to eat and buying food

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - planning what to eat or drink;
  - compiling a shopping list;
  - making and following a food budget;
  - buying food – in person and online;
  - handling money;
  - knowing where food comes from – growing food, buying from independent shops, supermarkets, markets and farm shops, online, food banks;

- storing food safely;
- cooking economically – using canned/frozen food, safe use of leftovers, buying in bulk.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Use supermarket websites to plan what to buy and compile a shopping list to buy in person or online.
- Use recipes (with words, pictures or symbols) to plan shopping lists.
- Use and compile shopping lists using words, pictures or symbols to reinforce recognition from home/school/shopping.
- Use real-life menus from takeaway or delivery services to plan what to eat.
- Use meal occasions as a context for learning how much food costs, e.g. finding out the cost of breakfast items either online or by visiting a supermarket. As an extension, pupils could be taught that some items may be cheaper depending on the brand, where it was bought or whether it was on a multi-buy deal.
- Use a breakfast menu from a local café and the costs calculated by the pupils (in the activity above) to explain how it can be cheaper to buy food and cook and eat at home.
- Show pupils that food may not have to be bought every day, e.g. calculate how many days it may take to use up a loaf of bread. Repeat with other items such as a jar of coffee, tea bags, carton of juice, box of cereal (using the recommended portion size).
- Take pupils on trips to experience handling and using money in realistic situations, e.g. on the bus, to pay for food or drink in a café, to buy food in a shop.
- Use money in class, e.g. have a range of food to 'buy' and receive change.
- Grow food from seed, e.g. cut a tomato in half, place on a bed of soil in a small pot, cover with soil and water regularly.
- Take pupils on trips to experience buying food in bulk, e.g. a bowl or bag of fruit or vegetables from a local market.
- Take pupils on a trip to a supermarket, or use online shopping sites, to demonstrate that prices for the same food item can differ; e.g. a can of baked beans or chopped tomatoes.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Making choices and using information

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - making choices for health, e.g. choosing a drink that is lower in sugar;
  - planning food and drink choices, such as cooking from scratch, reheating ready-meals, using canned/frozen ingredients, purchasing takeaways, and eating out at a restaurant/café/pub;
  - planning what to eat for their individual food preferences;
  - making others aware of their choices, expressing likes and dislikes;

- making food and drink decisions between different options, based on a criteria, e.g. lower salt;
- using food labels to find out information, e.g. what the food is called, its cost, how it should be stored, number of servings, serving suggestions, nutrition information, how long it lasts;
- reading menus to make decisions, considering their preference and other needs, e.g. vegetarian, money available.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Encourage pupils to try new food using repetition and role models, e.g. adults or other pupils.
- Encourage pupils to express their food likes and dislikes verbally or through signs and symbols/pictures.
- Support pupils to make simple choices at snack or mealtime based on preferences, e.g. water or milk, toast or cereal for breakfast, apple or pear at snack time, progressing to more complex decisions based on a criteria such as health, e.g. lower salt foods.
- Compare food labels using the colours of the traffic light front-of-pack labelling, e.g. use red, green and amber coloured circles, with sad, happy or neutral smiley faces, to demonstrate what the colours mean.

- Sort food or shopping into the correct storage places, following the instructions on the food labels. Pupils could be taken on a trip a supermarket to buy a variety of food items and sort them into the correct storage places, e.g. fridge, freezer, cupboard. Alternatively, images of a fridge, freezer or cupboard and empty food packages could be used.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Following recipes

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - following a recipe or set of instructions;
  - demonstrating an awareness of, and an ability to use, common measures, e.g. weighing and measuring ingredients for recipes, knowing quantities to purchase when shopping.

Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Ensure that instructions are clear and easy to follow, building step by step.
  - Use recipes with symbols, images, pictures and words to ensure inclusion.
  - Engage pupils in following instructions to make food and drink, increasing in complexity, e.g. start with making a cold drink, and move on to making a cup of coffee/tea, a sandwich, soup, macaroni cheese or chilli con carne.
  - Measure quantities of a liquid using a measuring jug. Use coloured water, as this may be easier to see. Use labels with 10ml, 25ml, 50ml, 100ml to help pupils link written measurements to what is physically in the measuring jug. Repeat the activity with measuring scales, balance or digital, and a solid food such as rice (avoid using flour due to allergies and be aware of the expansive properties of foods such as rice and lentils if ingested) and labels with quantities in grams.
- Other examples:
- Demonstrate to pupils that whilst a whole bag, jar or container may need to be purchased, the contents could be used for more than one recipe. For example, use half a bag of potatoes to make mashed potato. Then make jacket potatoes or oven-baked wedges with the remaining potatoes.

For further details see [Characteristics 4 Teaching the curriculum](#) and [9 Developing practical food skills](#).

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Using practical food skills

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - using practical food skills to feed themselves, independently or with support;
  - preparing and serving a hot or cold drink, independently or with support;
  - making and serving a healthy snack or meal, either independently or with support;
  - using kitchen equipment safely and with purpose either independently or with support, or via inclusive technologies,

such as switches;

- using different cooking methods;
- opening packaging, such as bottles, jars, cans and packets.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Encourage pupils to independently make a snack, dish or drink for themselves, considering individual needs.
- Start with one simple instruction, e.g. place a tea bag in a cup, and progress to more complex instructions/steps, e.g. boil the kettle, pour the water safely, remove the tea bag, add the milk.
- Use inclusive technology such as switches to enable pupils to control a blender to make a smoothie or mix a cake in a stand mixer.
- Use an electric soup maker or a bread machine.
- Gather a selection of bottles, cans, jars and packets and practise opening them by hand or with equipment such as a jar gripper; an electric can opener; jar opener with a pop-up handle, non-slip cone jar/bottle opener.
- Practise opening packets and using a range of skills to make a food or drink with the contents. For example, pupils make a sugar free jelly – boil a kettle, open a packet of sugar free jelly crystals, pour the crystals into a jelly mould or bowl, measure the required amount of boiling water into a jug (with supervision if required) and add to the bowl. Stir to dissolve the jelly crystals and leave to set. Serve with freshly prepared or canned fruit.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Food hygiene and safety

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - personal hygiene, including handling food and following simple healthy routines;
  - cleaning and food hygiene, including washing and drying equipment (being aware of hot water), wiping surfaces, cleaning the fridge, washing the floor, and washing and drying tea towels;
  - placing waste in the bin and recycling/composting;
  - storing food safely – where and how food should be stored, including covering with foil or film;
  - knowing when food is cooked and safe to eat, independently or with support, e.g. time, temperature control, colour;

- personal safety and the safety of others, including:
  - awareness of safety symbols;
  - safe use of kitchen equipment, including different types of hob, e.g. gas, electric, induction;
  - sources of heat;
  - following instructions to act safely;
  - accepting the support of others (another pupil or staff member) to keep safe;
  - following simple rules (use of water, electricity and gas, household and kitchen equipment).

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Practise, and repeat, effective hand washing routines before touching food or eating.
- Allocate pupils tasks or roles when preparing food or drink, e.g. washing or drying the equipment and then swap so that all pupils become secure in maintaining a clean environment.
- Enable pupils to know when food is cooked by setting and using a timer and showing photographs/videos of what food should look like when it is cooked, e.g. chicken skin is golden brown, the meat is white, with no pink remaining, and the juices run clear.
- 'Think out loud' when being safe, e.g. explain, model/demonstrate and repeat how to hold a knife safely.
- Use paper-based, digital or physical 'spot the hazards/dirty kitchen' activities to enable pupils to recognise a dirty kitchen and understand the consequences.

#### Other examples:

For further details see [Characteristic 8 Establishing good food hygiene and safety practices](#).

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Working with others/social situations

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - working with others, e.g. support staff, other pupils, tutors or peers in other settings, such as a local college;
  - sharing ideas with other people, such as recipes and healthy eating messages;
  - celebrating special occasions with food, e.g. birthdays, religious festivals, customs;

- being aware that they can contribute to the community, such as volunteering in a community project;
- being aware that they can contribute to society through meaningful employment.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Organise for pupils to spend time in another setting or for work experience.
- Invite parents/carers into school for a coffee morning or assembly to find out from pupils what they have learned about healthy eating.
- Celebrate birthdays or other special occasions using food and drink as a context to encourage pupils to share and think about others.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Using and communicating with IT

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to acquire, develop and secure skills in:
  - finding suitable food or drink recipes;
  - sharing recipes;
  - choosing and buying food and drink online, e.g. from supermarkets, delivery services, takeaways.

Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Create a newsletter for pupils to share with their parents/carers via email.
- Share photographs of food and drink made by pupils via the school social media channel or website page.
- Enable pupils to choose a recipe that they would like to make as a group or class. Pupils then order the ingredients from a supermarket website (with support), sort

the ingredients into the correct storage place on delivery and then make the recipe and share the dish.

Other examples:

### Exemplary practice

#### Governor/head teacher/senior leadership team

- Ensure that suitable provision is made for pupils to develop independent living skills.
- Provide suitable and appropriate spaces for pupils to develop independent living skills around food and drink, e.g. a 'flat' set up like a home so that pupils can recognise and transfer skills between school and home.

#### Curriculum lead/coordinator

- Enable pupils to develop independent living skills, and relate experiences in school to the wider world, through trips and visits.

#### Class teacher/teaching assistant

- Compile a calendar of class birthdays and organise a celebration event for each pupil for their birthday to encourage pupils to share and think about others.

Other examples:



A list of useful websites to support this Characteristic can be found on page 74