

# Characteristic 7

## Running practical food lessons

A characteristic of good practice when teaching pupils with additional needs is that food and drink preparation activities and cooking lessons are delivered in a hygienic, safe and organised way. The classroom is set up and resourced appropriately and pupils are shown what they should do and how they should behave.

### Overview

- Staff select and organise resources, ingredients and equipment appropriately, including specialist/adapted equipment, to support learning intent and pupil capability.
- Staff ensure provision has been made for pupils with physical disabilities, food allergies, intolerances, sensory issues, and/or other dietary requirements so they can participate safely and be included in food activities.
- Staff set up classrooms or food spaces to become hygienic, safe and practical food and drink preparation areas.
- Staff ensure that the food hygiene and safety standards are always the same, no matter the space being used.
- Staff ensure equipment for food lessons is well maintained and stored safely and appropriately.
- Staff ensure that food purchased for practical lessons is safe for use, e.g. is within its date mark, has undamaged packaging, is stored correctly.
- Staff ensure ingredients are handled and stored safely before, during and after food lessons.
- Staff ensure pupils and adults are aware of and follow the safe practices, as stipulated in the risk assessment.
- Staff are aware of any individual pupil behaviours or potential risks that may cause harm, such as head banging, along with how the group as a whole interacts.
- Staff teach pupils, and any adults supporting the lesson, to follow specific routines and procedures to ensure food lessons are safe and successful, e.g. getting ready to cook, knowing where equipment is stored, recycling.
- Staff set and share learning objectives, which are pupil-centred, and recap throughout the lesson to ensure pupils are focused and on track.



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**CASE  
STUDY**

**Developing resources to ensure that all pupils, including nonverbal, have access to lessons can be quite challenging.**

My previous school advocated a total communication approach, so symbols and lots of visuals form the basis of all class interaction. As part of the planning of practical food lessons, I worked closely with the class teachers and personalised pre-teaching and post-teaching activities were incorporated to prepare the pupils for each lesson and consolidate learning.

I developed a 'first, next and then' and a 'first/how and then' visual resource for some of the pupils using the *Food a fact of Life* resources for practical lessons, as a picture sequence was for some pupils the most appropriate way of assisting them to complete practical activities.

During practical lessons, support staff helped individuals to work at a pace that allowed them to progress.

Using a consistent, repetitive approach to teaching, utilising visual prompts and objects of reference, supported pupils' progression in retention of knowledge, and greater manual dexterity was noted over time.

#### KATE'S TIPS

1. Have a consistent approach to all aspects of teaching food.
2. Plan pre and post-teaching activities to enhance and support learning.
3. Explain, model/demonstrate and repeat skills and methods at a pace all pupils can access.

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Planning lessons and practical activities

In practice, staff:

- plan Schemes of Work and lessons that are based on learning intent;
- are flexible and adapt lessons/activities to take into account pupils' individual needs and capabilities;
- are aware of, and build on, prior learning;
- consider individual needs when planning recipes, e.g. some pupils may find it difficult to focus on complex or longer recipes, whilst others may find complex recipes overwhelming;
- plan recipes that that create interest in pupils, e.g. by using spices to stimulate their senses;
- plan activities that enable pupils to use all their senses and discover new tastes and textures, slowly over time and with repetition, if required;
- plan activities that enable pupils to become familiar with the different textures of food and/or parts of food;
- use repetition and regular practice to embed learning;
- create and use recipes in different formats to suit pupil needs, e.g. using symbols, images, pictures, words, storyboards, step by step, videos;
- make effective use of IT, e.g. videos of real-life situations.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Teach and reinforce skills, routines and working procedures continually throughout pupils' food education, so that these become default practice.
- Demonstrate progression through making recipes with an increasing number of ingredients, e.g. starting with two ingredients and then increasing the number.
- Demonstrate progression by making the same dish but using a more complex recipe, e.g. start with pizza toast, and then make a scone-based pizza, and finally a yeast-based dough pizza.
- Plan a lesson to make a stir-fry using a bag of ready-prepared vegetables and adding freshly grated ginger, Chinese five spice and the juice of a fresh lime to provide sensory stimulation (but bearing in mind that some pupils may not like food that is highly flavoured or not able to be served separately on a plate).
- Plan a lesson where a pupil feels a food to become familiar with its texture, e.g. a whole avocado. Then encourage the pupil to feel the prepared or cut food, e.g. the flesh of the avocado and the stone. Then encourage the pupils to taste the flesh. This activity could also be carried out using other fruit or vegetables, e.g. apple, orange, cucumber.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Routines and procedures

In practice, staff:

- establish classroom routines, procedures and rules for food lessons. For example:
  - how the classroom is set up;
  - how to get ready to cook, such as wearing an apron and washing hands;
  - how to handle ingredients and equipment hygienically and safely, such as not eating while cooking and using a clean spoon to taste food;
  - how to deal with recycling and food waste appropriately;
  - how to clear away/wash up after the lesson.
- set clear expectations and ensure all staff are consistent in applying these in every lesson;
- define and establish roles and responsibilities for teachers, teaching assistants, technicians, pupils and other staff, as appropriate;

- plan how food waste and packaging will be disposed of during the lesson, e.g. organise a container for food waste that will be composted, designate a recycling bin for packaging;
- plan ahead to help practical lessons run smoothly and take into account pupils' individual needs and capabilities, e.g. appropriate recipe formats, adapted equipment, pre-prepared ingredients, pre-lined tins, one-to-one support;
- use and display resources to support pupils, e.g. pictorial/symbol recipes, food skills videos, step-by-step recipes.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Label equipment storage boxes and/or cupboards and drawers with familiar symbols or real-life images of the equipment. Real-life photographs help the pupils make connections between settings and situations, e.g. school, home, the workplace.
- Label equipment storage boxes or cupboards with braille, if appropriate.
- Take photographs of the correct layout of equipment storage cupboards.
- Create a resource to act as a prompt when pupils put clean equipment away at the end of the lesson, this could be stuck inside the cupboard door or drawer.
- Where possible, ensure consistent symbols/images are used throughout the school.
- Use a variety of recipe styles dependent on pupil needs, e.g. step-by-step photographs, symbols, symbols with words, recordings of instructions.
- Use visuals, symbols, words or photographs with Velcro attached to the back to show what the pupil will be doing 'now' and 'next' – step-by-step photographic recipes can also be used in this way.

#### Other examples:

For further details see [Characteristics 5 Developing skills for independent living](#), [8 Establishing good food hygiene and safety practices](#) and [9 Developing practical food skills](#).

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Safe and easy to use food rooms/food spaces

In practice, staff:

- plan how the classroom furniture will be arranged during food lessons for safe movement around the room and avoiding bottlenecks;
- plan the placement and storage of equipment carefully and ensure pupils are familiar with procedures;
- store sharp equipment safely in a locked cupboard or drawer;
- ensure there is sufficient, hygienic storage space for ingredients and finished dishes, e.g. fridges, freezers and ambient storage (cupboards).

- ensure there is a fully supplied first-aid kit available, if this is part of the school's risk assessment.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Use labelled photographs to identify the hand-washing sink, if available, and the sink to wash the equipment.
- Use photographs to illustrate the process of safe hand washing and the washing and drying of equipment.
- Ensure there is enough space for pupils using wheelchairs or other mobility aids to move safely around equipment, tables and other pupils.
- Provide equipment, such as tables, worktops and ovens/hobs that can be adjusted in height for safe use by all pupils.
- Provide physical supports such as handrails, where appropriate, for pupils to access practical activities safely.

- Position worktops/tables and equipment so that there are clear sightlines for both pupils and staff.
- Be aware that some pupils may need more space around them to avoid conflict.
- Provide a place to serve and eat the food and drink made.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Ingredients and equipment

In practice, staff:

- select appropriate ingredients based on pupils' dietary requirements, sensory needs and physical suitability;
- plan to make dishes that are predominantly savoury, using seasonal ingredients where possible;
- choose equipment that is suitable for the pupils being taught, e.g. the correct size, so it can be properly controlled by the pupil and is appropriate for pupil ability;
- have a process for checking out/in sharp equipment before/after the lesson;
- have a process for checking that equipment is in good working order and safe to use, e.g. no rust or broken parts;
- are aware of first-aid procedures if a pupil or staff member is injured during the food lesson/activity.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Part-prepare or pre-weigh ingredients, unless preparing or measuring is the main learning focus of the lesson.
- Use softer ingredients for pupils practising a new cutting technique or smaller sized ingredients for younger pupils with smaller hands.
- Use adapted equipment such as a knife with a handgrip, non-slip mats, mixing bowls with suction bases and pan guards.
- Use assistive technology software or hardware to enable inclusivity, e.g. dyslexia software, speech and hearing amplifiers, sound/switch adapted equipment such as blenders or virtual reality headsets.
- Practise opening bottles, cans, jars and packets by hand or using equipment, such as jar grippers and electric can openers.

#### Other examples:

For further details see [Characteristics 5 Developing skills for independent living](#) and [9 Developing practical food skills](#).

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Stimulating learning environment

In practice, staff:

- create displays that engage pupils and provide a stimulating, bright environment, e.g. fruit and vegetables, the Eatwell Guide, names of equipment;
- use posters, pupils' work and other resources as a learning reference to assist pupils and stimulate discussion;
- use displays, photographs and images of role models to help break down barriers and misconceptions;
- consider seating arrangements or where pupils work for practical activities to encourage focus and attention

(depending on the needs of the pupils), e.g. near the teacher or another staff member; near another pupil that can support or be a role model, a quiet corner of the classroom;

- limit the noise in the classroom, where possible, to assist pupils with a visual or hearing impairment.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Create displays with images of people in the workplace, e.g. chefs, which reflect the pupils in school, so that they are seen as role models.
- Be aware that some pupils may find displays on walls distracting, so consider leaving an area of the classroom free from 'visual clutter'.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Safe and easy to use food rooms/food spaces

In practice, staff:

- make sure that routines are established with pupils, e.g. 'clean as you go' procedures;
- constantly model expectations for safe and hygienic working, e.g. washing hands and washing and drying equipment;
- are aware of individual pupils' dietary needs (such as allergies), including sensory issues, and take these into account when planning activities;
- adapt spaces, equipment and procedures to take into account pupil needs and behaviours, always ensuring that safe and hygienic practices are followed;
- plan to ensure that food waste is minimised and composted where possible, or used in cooking;
- recycle where possible and organise disposal of rubbish;
- ensure that laundry is regularly washed and stored correctly.

#### Other examples:



### Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Position pupils so that everyone can see and be seen. Make this a repeated activity so it becomes default for pupils at school, home and future work.
- If required, allow pupils to wear gloves when handling food, use scissors to cut food or use a fork to secure food when cutting so that they do not have to touch food during preparation.
- Where possible, explain, model/ demonstrate and repeat practical food skills, e.g. explain how to hold a knife safely, demonstrate how to cut a piece of food using the bridge hold or claw grip, ask the pupils to repeat/show the process.
- Encourage pupil-centred modelling and ask pupils who have secured a skill to demonstrate it to other pupils.
- Adopt a 'thinking out loud' approach, e.g. when getting ready to cook, ask pupils to talk through what they are doing.
- Encourage pupils to talk about what they are doing and why.
- Teach pupils to place tea towels and cloths used for food activities into a laundry basket and/or wash them, so they know they are dirty and need to be cleaned.

#### Other examples:

## Putting the characteristic into practice

### Exemplary practice

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

- Provide opportunities for pupils to undertake food preparation and cooking activities regularly throughout their learning journey.
- Ensure that there is space and sufficient equipment, including adapted resources, to enable practical work with food. This will also include adequate budgets, e.g. equipment and ingredients.
- Make composting and recycling facilities available and encourage use by staff and pupils after food is consumed or after practical food lessons.

#### Curriculum lead/coordinator

- Complete effective risk assessments that are specific to the pupils and the environment they are working in. Make sure all staff have access to the risk assessments and have a process in place to review and update as necessary.
- Establish and maintain rigorous standards of hygiene and safety (based on best practice) that are monitored and reviewed regularly.
- Establish cleaning schedules for the practical food room; these should be monitored and reviewed as necessary.

- Make sure that all staff undertaking practical food activities understand the school first-aid procedures and that these must be followed.
- Use senior pupils/prefects before and after school to support the teacher (preparation of equipment, resources and lessons).

#### Class teacher/teaching assistant

- Create a display of photos showing the pupils working in a food lesson in the school reception area to ignite an interest in food in other pupils.
- Invite the link governor, head teacher or a member of the senior leadership team to observe, and perhaps participate in, a food lesson.

#### Other examples:



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