

Characteristic 11

Healthy eating

A characteristic of good practice when teaching pupils with additional needs is that pupils learn about healthy eating and can apply this to make healthier choices.

Overview

- Staff demonstrate knowledge of the Eatwell Guide, the UK healthy eating model, including its food groups, and current dietary advice, and apply this in their teaching.
- Staff ensure that healthy eating messages are clear and consistent throughout the school day, including food and drink at mealtimes, before and after school sessions and during breaktimes.
- Staff ensure information sources are reliable and evidence based, developing teaching resources based upon this information and share these with colleagues in school.
- Staff develop Schemes of Work and lessons that integrate healthy eating and demonstrate progression in the development of key concepts and its application over time. Healthy eating is embedded throughout all aspects of food learning, including practical food lessons and food-based activities.
- Staff use ingredients and equipment that promote current healthy eating advice.
- Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to apply and explain their knowledge of food groups and healthy eating through planning, verbal/written tasks and food activities.
- Staff provide opportunities for pupils to share healthy eating messages with parents/carers.



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CASE STUDY

As a residential special school, we have a whole school approach to healthy eating based around the Eatwell Guide.

The school is for deaf pupils, many with additional needs, and the approach is to be flexible and adapt to a variety of individual needs. Although most can take part in established, interactive Eatwell activities, this does not necessarily translate into practice. Some pupils will not be willing to touch or eat foods that are outside of their preferences or experiences. Establishing confidence in and around food is the key to engagement.

For example, a pupil did not want to eat anything with his bread. This pupil has a special interest in trains, so we cut out a train shape from a slice of bread, added an egg and baked it in the oven. The pupil said he did not want the egg,

but undertook the activity because he wanted to make his train. He was very happy with his finished dish; he then tried it and ate a tiny bit of egg – I considered this huge progress for this pupil.

SILVIA'S TIPS

1. Progress with healthy eating for some pupils will be in very, very, small steps. Progress may not be apparent at first, but this is okay.
2. Start with some tasting of foods that you know they like, to give them confidence to be in the room, around food and with you.
3. Do not make a 'big thing' around the types of food selected – just slowly increase the choice and variety of food available over time.

Putting the characteristic into practice

The Eatwell Guide (the UK healthy eating model)

In practice, staff:

- use the Eatwell Guide as the cornerstone of healthy eating teaching;
- use reliable, evidence based sources of information about healthy eating and share these with other staff;
- plan and apply a consistent whole school food approach to healthy eating and dietary recommendations;
- ensure that there is a consistent approach to healthy eating across all food-based activities and food and drink opportunities, e.g. independent living activities, school trips and behaviour management, e.g. do not reward with confectionery;
- ensure that the main healthy eating recommendations act as a thread throughout all work. These include 5 A DAY, reducing salt, sugar and fat, increasing fibre and eating more fish (two portions a week, one of which should be oily);
- ensure that the message of at least 6-8 drinks to be consumed per day is used;
- consider portion size to pupils' age when planning and delivering lessons;
- plan a series of practical/food-based activities that illustrate the use of a variety of ingredients from the different Eatwell Guide food groups;
- discuss the Eatwell Guide food groups and encourage pupils to consider what it means to them, e.g. 5 A DAY, two portions of fish a week, at least 6-8 drinks a day;
- select recipes that reflect healthy eating recommendations;
- explore the main nutrients provided by each of the food groups, e.g. fat, protein, carbohydrate (fibre, starches and sugars), vitamins and minerals, plus water; where appropriate for a pupil's individual learning journey;
- provide opportunities for pupils to investigate sources of different nutrients, highlighting their functions, where appropriate for a pupil's individual learning journey;
- provide opportunities for pupils to share healthy eating messages with their parents/carers.

Other examples:



Putting the characteristic into practice

Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Provide opportunities for pupils to familiarise themselves with foods from each of the Eatwell Guide food groups and develop manual dexterity, vocabulary, recognition and numeracy through play, e.g. set up a greengrocers using artificial fruit and vegetables and ask pupils to sell, to an adult or another pupil, a bag of apples (or another fruit/vegetable).
- Encourage pupils to learn how to make hot and cold drinks and recognise how they fit into the 'at least 6-8 drinks a day' message.
- Teach pupils to use easy and appropriate portion size measurements, such as handfuls. See the [Get Portion Wise](#) resources, from the British Nutrition Foundation, for a guide to using hands or spoons to measure ingredients.
- Develop pupils' numeracy skills and understanding of healthy eating messages by counting fruit and vegetables (real, artificial or images) for their 5 A DAY.
- Encourage pupils to wash or scrub fruit and vegetables, rather than peeling them (to increase the fibre content of recipes), e.g. potatoes for mashed potato or carrots for vegetable soup.
- Develop independent living skills through making a range of lunch items that promote healthy eating messages, e.g. jacket potato with reduced fat cheese, or baked beans on wholemeal toast to encourage pupils to eat more fibre.
- Plan recipes that demonstrate the use of herbs and spices instead of salt, to add flavour.
- Explain, model and repeat healthy eating messages regularly.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Diet and health

In practice, staff:

- are aware of pupils' individual dietary and health needs;
- teach pupils to consider the needs of different people, including dietary restrictions, when planning lessons, dishes and menus;
- help pupils plan a menu for a day, investigating whether it meets healthy eating recommendations, e.g. 5 A DAY, basing meals on starchy food, at least 6-8 drinks;
- use recipes that are predominantly savoury;

- use menus to support choosing dishes for themselves and others.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Plan and make a simple dish, such as scrambled egg on toast, and discuss with the pupils the different food groups used. Ask the pupils to match the food with the correct food group on the Eatwell Guide.
- Share a range of meal ideas and ask pupils if they look healthy and balanced. Create meals which deliberately do not have any fruit, vegetables or drinks (for example). The meals can be created using food cards, illustrations or symbols.
- Gather a selection of restaurant or takeaway menus and discuss healthier options.

- Discuss healthier choices with pupils when eating out, e.g. jacket potatoes or oven-baked potato wedges instead of chips, no butter on vegetables, opting for balsamic vinegar rather than a dressing for salads, not adding salt to meals.

Other examples:

Putting the characteristic into practice

Making choices

In practice, staff:

- are aware of pupils' individual needs and behaviours around food, such as tactile defensiveness or touch-sensory sensitivity, and provide pupil-centred alternatives;
- help pupils read food labels to help them compare products and make informed decisions;
- encourage pupils to make healthier decisions when choosing food and drink, during the school day or when on trips and visits.

Other examples:



Considerations when teaching pupils with additional needs

- Offer alternatives when tasting food, e.g. some pupils may not like the feel of a sticky, soft banana, but would eat a slice of dried apple.
 - Use a selection of packaging to practise label reading/recognition, particularly front-of-pack nutrition labels (traffic light colours, go for greens and ambers). Use labels for similar dishes, such as sandwiches or pizzas, to show how to make healthier choices, e.g. a lower salt option.
 - Provide pupils with the opportunity to make choices at snack or lunchtime and demonstrate their likes or dislikes.
- Other examples:**
- 'Think out loud' when making healthy eating choices to help pupils understand the decision making process, e.g. when choosing a filling for a sandwich or a jacket potato at lunchtime.

Putting the characteristic into practice

Exemplary practice

Governor/head teacher/senior leadership team

- Establish a breakfast club for pupils to ensure that pupils who have not had breakfast have one in school. Support, guidance and funding for breakfast clubs is provided to schools across the UK by a number of organisations, see links on page 75.
- Work with the school cook/caterer to develop menus that ensure consistent healthy eating messages across the school.
- Register for, and participate in, British Nutrition Foundation Healthy Eating Week. Make sure the whole school community are aware of the event and how they can be involved.
- Add information to the school website or regular newsletter about healthy eating, to encourage pupils and their families to follow government recommendations.
- Enable staff to undertake online or face-to-face accredited training on nutrition and healthy eating.

Curriculum lead/coordinator

- Work with colleagues in other curricula areas to ensure that pupils receive consistent, up-to-date information about nutrition and healthy eating. Learning should be cross-referenced across areas to demonstrate progression.

- Organise a display and tasting session at open evening/parents events to raise awareness of the Eatwell Guide.
- Liaise with the PE lead to have a display or stands at sports day or another sporting event to highlight the importance of healthy eating and staying hydrated.

Class teacher/teaching assistant

- Undertake online or face-to-face training on healthy eating and disseminate the information to all staff.
- Teach pupils, where appropriate, how to calculate the energy and nutrients provided by a recipe or diet, e.g. using the Explore Food nutritional analysis tool ([available at www.foodfactoflife.org.uk](http://www.foodfactoflife.org.uk)).

Other examples:



A list of useful websites to support this Characteristic can be found on page 75