

## CASE STUDY

# GREENFIELDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL UNIFYING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY THROUGH FOOD

Greenfields Community School in Nottingham first joined the Food for Life schools programme in January 2008. They enrolled having already done some fantastic work to develop a thriving school garden and were keen to use the Food for Life award framework to extend this good work to improve their food provision and food education.

As a very diverse school, with 70% of pupils coming from a wide range of backgrounds and with around 30 languages spoken in school, Greenfields knew they would have to overcome some obstacles along their Food for Life journey.

Eight years later they are one of Food for Life's prestigious Gold schools, having met these challenges head on and achieving all of the Food for Life award criteria. The award framework has not only supported them to transform their food provision and embed food education into all areas of school life, but it has also helped them become a hub for the diverse community which surrounds them.



## Starting their journey

The wide range of pupils' nationalities brought very specific challenges to the school. With many pupils attending extra Literacy lessons, fitting 12 hours of cooking lessons a year into already packed timetables proved tough. Now cooking is organised and takes place across the school from Reception to Year 6. Cooking activities are related to the curriculum and some classes have afternoon cooking sessions with specialist Teaching Assistants. Other cooking activities are integrated into general school life, as part of Forest School sessions, school trips, gardening sessions, potato day and the annual school barbeque. In all sessions pupils discuss the origin of ingredients used, with the children deciding if they are grown, caught or reared, embedding an awareness of where our food comes from and knowledge of the food industry supply chain.

At lunchtime, getting both children and parents to try different foods from different cultures was a big hurdle to overcome and was reflected by low school meal take up. Greenfields adopted a number of approaches to tackle this, including introducing a variety of daily lunch options, such as a range of halal and vegetarian dishes. A 'grab bag' scheme has also been introduced with a choice of four types of sandwich, a jacket potato with a range of fillings, a salad bar and fresh fruit. Pupils were consulted about these changes and a number of their favourite foods have been introduced. All of these changes have made an impact: 88 out of 90 eligible pupils now take up Free School Meals and 73% of all pupils opt for a school lunch.



In order to maximise the positive impact of the new menus, tastings are held for both children and parents at the end of the school day. Parents are able to see first-hand the quality of the food and that it is nutritious, freshly prepared and locally sourced.

## Bringing the community together through cooking and growing

Involving parents and the wider community in school food is a key part of the Food for Life schools award framework. Greenfields Community School used this as one of their strongest tools in creating positive change.

Greenfields Community School is fortunate to have families from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with EAL pupils (English as an Additional Language) making up 65% of the school community. Parents have been encouraged to come into school to discuss growing and cooking in their home countries, as well as to attend family learning classes, where parents work with their children in the school's specialised kitchen. Classes have included 'Healthy Eating' and 'Cooking on a Budget' as well as Healthy Packed Lunch sessions. These classes have enabled parents to develop their cooking skills, whilst having fun with their children and have proved to be extremely popular, with up to 20 parents attending each session. Parents of pupils in year 4 and year 6 also have the opportunity to attend curriculum cooking classes with their children, learning simple skills they can try at home. An after-school club has recently produced a recipe book containing children's, parents' and staff's favourite recipes.

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**Terry Smith**  
Headteacher,  
Greenfields Community  
School

Greenfields are committed to healthy eating and supporting parents with this is a key priority. This was evidenced when the school asked parents not to send children to school with fruit juices or smoothies, instead making water the drink of choice by offering free water bottles for all pupils. Parents were consulted throughout this process.

Through creating links with the neighbouring Arkwright Meadows Community Garden, Greenfields have ensured parents have access to local food growing opportunities on a regular basis. Plots and beds are available in the garden for community use, as are opportunities to use the Training Room to develop knowledge of growing and cooking. There is even a Tandoor oven available! Back at school, a gardening club provides after-school opportunities for green fingered pupils and their families to develop further gardening skills. The greenhouse and kitchen garden (with shed, greenhouse, compost area, eight raised beds, a mini orchard and wildlife garden) provide multiple opportunities for organic gardening, from collection and organising seeds to planting and caring for the crops and harvesting produce. Close collaboration with class teachers ensures this work ties in with the topic work happening in the classroom, supporting children wherever possible and developing literacy and maths skills. Parents who



can't make it into school are also encouraged to grow at home, with pupils taking home seeds and examples of school grown produce. Children in Years 3 and 5 have weekly gardening sessions as part of their curriculum.

By creating links with local farms children from reception to Year 4 benefit from farm visits, undertaking Forest School and farming activities throughout the seasons. These include lambing, feeding the animals, planting and harvesting crops and observing the cows being milked. These activities are followed with discussions addressing where our food comes from and asking questions such as 'what happens to the sheep and lambs on the farm?'



Local businesses are also integral to pupil learning at Greenfields school. Pupils in year 3 visited a Jamie Oliver restaurant in Nottingham to take part in sessions related to cooking and running a business – all in a real life environment.

## Sharing learning

Greenfields Community School also works hard to share their Food for Life learning with other local schools. They have hosted a variety of events, including a visit from five local Nottingham schools, sharing how they approach growing, cooking, dinner time and outside education. Greenfields has also been highlighted as an exemplar of how to transform your lunchtimes by Nottingham City Catering, with local schools invited to visit to see a Greenfields lunch in action and to meet teachers and the catering team.



As a flagship Food for Life Silver school, Greenfields has hosted two events for other Food for Life schools in the East Midlands, one specifically for Health Councils from Nottingham and neighbouring local authorities, sharing their FFL learning.

It's not only local schools who benefit from Greenfields' knowledge. The school also regularly holds a community lunch, where members of the local neighbourhood, are invited for a free school meal.

## What the school say:

Terry Smith, Headteacher at Greenfields, says:

"It has been a real pleasure to have worked so closely with Food for Life over the last few years. At Greenfields we have a strong commitment to outside education and to providing opportunities which the children may not otherwise have. So the cooking, gardening and Forest Schools sessions that we put on offer invaluable experiences for the children.

"We have also worked very closely with Nottingham City Catering, who have been extremely supportive of our wish to make dinnertimes a healthy and pleasant social experience.

**"Food for Life has helped Greenfields become the school that it is today."**

