

Food Growing in Schools Taskforce

Executive Summary, March 2012



Foreword

Caroline Spelman, M.P.

Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



Food is absolutely central to our lives. But in recent decades our eating habits have changed. We are eating much more pre-cooked food. We eat less fruit and vegetables. We spend less time having family meals, and are more likely to eat on the run, or while watching television. We are also throwing more food away. At the same time obesity levels are rising.

Reconnecting with food – with its provenance, its cultural significance, its variety – will help us develop healthier habits. It will also help us value the natural environment, which is the ultimate source of all our food. So it's vital that we do all we can to help children make this connection.

The Food Growing in Schools Taskforce has brought together expertise from the private sector, schools, environmental organisations and the media to produce this report. Its findings confirm that food growing schools can lead to children eating more fruit and vegetables, and having a better recognition of taste and type. Food growing can increase children's scientific knowledge, and their environmental awareness. It also teaches them practical skills that will be useful throughout their lives.

The report also shows that food growing helps children's attainment in core curriculum subjects, particularly science. It demonstrates that food growing in schools can forge strong links with communities.

Let's work together to turn the recommendations of this report into a reality, and get more kids growing food.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Spelman." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Introduction

Myles Bremner

Chair of Taskforce, Chief Executive, Garden Organic

The Food Growing in Schools Taskforce, led by Garden Organic, was established as a response to increasing concerns about the health and well-being of our children and young people, and a confidence that food growing in schools is a successful way of dealing with these concerns, delivering many benefits.

The twenty-five members of the Taskforce are a diverse group, representing equally diverse interests, but all with a strong belief that food growing in schools is an important activity. We wanted to demonstrate the impact food growing in schools can have, explain why it is so powerful a catalyst for change, and understand what must be done to ensure that every child and young person, school and community, experiences the potential benefits of participation.

Drawing on Taskforce expertise, evidence from thousands of schools and other interested organisations, and commissioned independent research, we wanted to clearly describe the many benefits, identify challenges, and showcase best practice. After considerable deliberation, we have made a set of simple recommendations that will support schools to enable and embed food growing in every school, in practical and affordable ways.

I would like to thank the significant commitment and enthusiasm from Taskforce members, members of the four working groups and the many other schools and organisations that have helped to produce this exciting report. We must now work together to ensure that every school can and does become a food growing school.



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“The garden has added significant value in terms of learning, physical hands-on activities and building stronger links with the community. It has been a superb resource for supporting children that demonstrate challenging behaviour. Growing fruit and vegetables has had a significant impact on the children’s understanding of where food originates. Children enjoy nurturing and harvesting their produce as well as selling it to parents and cooking it within school. The gardening clubs, which involve parents and carers after school, bring the community together and parents find it supportive because they are able to support their child’s learning.”

Tim Baker, Headteacher, Charlton Manor Primary School.

Food Growing in Schools Taskforce

Our Vision:

Every school is a food growing school. Every child and young person has regular access to the practical experience of food growing throughout his or her education. This enables them to develop an understanding of where their food comes from and the importance of the natural environment. It excites them about learning, and promotes their health and well-being. Schools, children and young people, their families, and extended communities are enriched through the experience of food growing. We have a healthy, thriving nation in which the population, economy and society benefit from the learning, skills and health and environmental behaviours acquired through food growing in schools.

Key Findings

- The most effective food growing schools achieve significant learning, skills, health and well-being outcomes for children and young people.
- Food growing in schools has a positive impact on the schools, communities, organisations and businesses involved.
- Many schools grow food, but only some do so in a way that achieves the maximum benefits for all involved.

There is more that needs to be done to:

- Support school leadership teams, teaching and non-teaching staff to improve outcomes for their school, by integrating and embedding food growing into their practice.
- Increase the availability of resources to support food growing and better match those who are offering resources with those who need them.
- Involve communities to a much greater extent in food growing in schools to increase impact within and beyond schools.



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At the time of writing we face multiple challenges – rising obesity, threats to the natural environment and food security caused by climate change, global population growth and competition for natural resources, and economic uncertainty. At the same time government and business

leaders point to a skills deficit that limits our chances of dealing with these issues. Individuals and families are also feeling the pressure of the economic downturn and the effects of rising food prices, which is constraining their ability to eat healthily.

We are confident that food growing in schools is one powerful way of equipping us to meet these challenges, whilst also delivering an impressive range of benefits for all those involved – from individual children and young people, through to communities and major corporations.

The Taskforce bases its recommendations on newly commissioned research, (including a survey of 1,300 early years, primary and secondary schools, and a review of relevant literature) and submissions made to the Taskforce by schools, voluntary and community businesses and public sector organisations.



Co-operative Farms

There is evidence that food growing in schools:

- Encourages and facilitates learning, particularly science learning.
- Builds skills, including life, enterprise and employment-related, and horticultural skills.
- Improves awareness and understanding of the natural environment and its importance to us.
- Promotes health and well-being, particularly in relation to diet and nutrition.
- Supports school improvement and development.
- Strengthens communities and school-community interaction.

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of schools growing food; however the number of children and young people involved, and how far it is embedded in each school, varies considerably. Less than half of food growing schools regularly integrate food growing into lessons, only a third have food growing as part of their whole school policy and only a quarter of schools involve *all* children and young people in food growing.

We want to celebrate food growing in schools that is already ongoing. However, we also believe that we all need to do more to ensure that food growing in schools is experienced by every child and young person throughout their school life and in a way that achieves the maximum possible benefit for all those involved.

To do this we need to:

- Raise awareness of the benefits of food growing in schools to get every school growing and to encourage those who do so already to embed it further across their whole school community.
- Remove barriers, perceived and real, that prevent or limit food growing in schools.

- Work together at a local and national level to ensure that knowledge, skills and resources are available and accessible to support food growing in schools.
- Support school leadership teams, and teaching and non-teaching staff, to develop the skills and approaches they need to grow food in their school and embed this across the whole school experience.
- Ensure that the knowledge, skills and enthusiasm developed through food growing can be available for the green economy.

We make six key recommendations to make food growing in school a reality for every child in England. To be achieved they require varying levels of input from schools, voluntary and community organisations, children and young people and their families and communities, businesses and the public sector. The specific responsibilities of each stakeholder are set out in an accompanying action plan, available at www.gardenorganic.org.uk/foodgrowinginschools

Six key recommendations

1. A national campaign celebrating food growing in schools.
2. A policy emphasis on food growing in schools.
3. A food growing in schools online hub.
4. Business commitments to support food growing in schools.
5. Promotion of food growing by school leadership teams.
6. Making clear connections between food growing in schools and food-related and land based careers.

The benefits of food growing in schools

There is strong evidence, from published research and practical experience, that food growing in schools can have a profound positive impact for the children and young people, teachers, schools and wider communities involved.

Benefits



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1. Supporting learning

- 1.1 Raising achievement
- 1.2 Developing skills for life
- 1.3 Improving motivation and encouraging positive behaviours

2. Enhancing health and well-being

- 2.1 Improving diet and nutrition
- 2.2 Boosting psychological health and well-being
- 2.3 Encouraging physical activity

3. Developing and improving schools

- 3.1 Developing and delivering a whole school ethos
- 3.2 Promoting student voice
- 3.3 Involving families
- 3.4 Engaging community support

4. Strengthening communities

- 4.1 Bringing the community together
- 4.2 Improving access to fresh produce
- 4.3 Creating opportunities
- 4.4 Delivering organisational objectives

1. Supporting learning

Incorporating food growing into the formal, and informal curriculum can have a positive impact on children and young people's academic achievement, skills acquisition and attitudes to learning and school.

1.1 Raising achievement

Food growing is used successfully to support teaching and learning across the whole curriculum, boosting achievement in the formal curriculum, both in terms of overall academic performance, and attainment in specific subjects.

- Food growing enables children and young people to **make sense of concepts** they have learnt elsewhere in the curriculum.

- Teachers describe how their teaching has been improved and how they are able to **bring the curriculum to life** through food growing use a variety of teaching methods that engage *all* of their students and create a sense of awe and wonder that encourages learning.

CASE STUDY I

School Produce Sale – School Food Matters in partnership with Waitrose

School Food Matters works with schools, local authorities, caterers and parents to promote excellent school meals and practical food education. For the School Produce Sale, School Food Matters invites primary and secondary schools to grow produce to sell at their local branch of Waitrose on one day in July. This gives children and young people food growing AND enterprise experience. Not only do they have to grow, price and display the produce, they also need to engage with customers and handle their hard earned cash.

The School Produce Sale works as an education and enterprise venture on any scale. The growing spaces of the 19 schools involved in 2011 ranged from a few containers to a few acres. The cash raised by sales of their produce in 10 Waitrose branches ranged from £28 to £312, and over £2,000 was taken by the schools on the day for reinvestment in the growing projects.

Waitrose say of their involvement: "Waitrose is very pleased to support the School Produce Sale,



School Food Matters

as it actively encourages all the children involved to learn and appreciate where their food comes from. It also offers them a fun insight into the principles of business as they sell the fruits of their labour and make a profit for their school.

An early appreciation of good food helps children make the right nutritional choices throughout their lives."

- There is particularly strong evidence for a positive impact on **science learning** but there is also an impact on food technology, maths, oracy and language skills.

1.2 Developing skills for life

Food growing develops skills that are essential for living.

- Working with others, inside and outside the school community, supports the development of **social and interpersonal skills**.
- Experiencing and dealing with success and failure in a non-threatening way builds **resilience**.

"Our pupils have gained many life skills from this experience. Individually they have seen the rewards of following through with a project and understanding the value of planning and patience in seeing this project through to completion. The group of pupils... have had to work together as a team, problem solving and spreading the workload fairly and cooperatively."

Olsen House School, Secondary
SEBD School, Liverpool.

CASE STUDY 2

Gardening Inclusion Project, Royal Horticultural Society working with Middleton Primary School, Leeds



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Middleton Primary School is a large mainstream school with 340 students aged 5-11, situated in an area of significant social disadvantage. Already an established gardening school, Middleton's vision was to explore the potential for gardening to impact on learning and behaviour for its *vulnerable* students.

20 students with Individual Education or Behaviour Plans (IEPs or IBPs) were chosen to attend regular gardening sessions, supported by the RHS for the year-long project. Students were organised into small, mixed age groups to enable mentoring and positive role modelling by older students. All sessions were supported by a teacher, behavioural support worker or teaching assistant.

The students' behaviour was monitored to see how the gardening intervention influenced their overall behaviour. Involvement in the RHS project has helped them to achieve important outcomes.

One child for whom this intervention has been successful is six-year-old Josh. Josh previously had 32 incidents of disruptive behaviour and 9 timeouts in a single term. By the summer term he had easily met the targets in his IBP with only 7 incidents, and 3 timeouts.

Josh no longer needs the support of the specialist support unit. As part of a broader programme of interventions within the unit, the weekly gardening sessions have contributed to building his social skills sufficiently to return to mainstream education.

Head teacher Sam Williams commented: "I am sure that gardening was the intervention that grabbed Joshua's attention and encouraged him to perform better."

- Many schools use food growing as a means to develop **financial literacy and enterprise skills**. Children and young people sell on or supply their plants and produce to others. This requires them to plan, budget, negotiate and handle money.
- Practical **horticultural skills** are developed. An understanding of factors such as climate, seasonality, pests and diseases, growing cycles and food sourcing, gives children and young people a better grasp of what it takes for their food to reach them.
- **Cultural awareness and understanding** is built. Growing a variety of fruit and vegetables from across the globe creates opportunities for sharing information about cultures. Food growing also helps those for whom English is an additional language to engage with their peers and develop their language skills.

"Teachers have used the growing area to investigate plants and living creatures, and it has enabled deeper discussions about beneficial plants and insects, eliciting enquiry and predictive skills."

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Buckinghamshire.



1.3 Improving motivation and encouraging positive behaviours

- Children and young people demonstrate **more enthusiasm for school**, reflected in reduced absence rates and in arriving early for school and leaving later. They also have a more **positive attitude to learning**, including taking more responsibility for their own learning, e.g. more regular completion of their homework.
- **Improved behaviour** is also reported, particularly amongst those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. These improvements are observed both in the food growing area and within the classroom.

- Food growing influences **environmental awareness and attitudes**. 80% of schools surveyed cite teaching children about the environment as a motivation for food growing in their school. Children and young people with increased knowledge of the natural world such as biodiversity, eco-systems and sustainability understand their impact on the environment and their role as environmental stewards and have increased levels of environmental responsibility.

2. Enhancing health and well-being

Many schools undertake food growing as a means of supporting their students' health, with 73% saying that teaching children and young people about nutrition is a factor which motivates their food growing activity, and 68% saying that helping them to develop skills for a healthy adult life is a factor.

2.1 Improving diet and nutrition

Children and young people's nutrition and attitudes towards healthy eating is positively affected by food growing in schools.

- They are better able to recognise fruit and vegetables, have a greater willingness to try them and, in many cases, this leads to an increased intake of fruit and vegetables.
- Many schools incorporate school grown food into school catering and there is evidence of increased take-up of school meals, including free school meals.
- Children and young people share their learning with their parents and positively influencing their purchasing, cooking and eating behaviours as a result.

73% saying that teaching children and young people about nutrition is a factor which motivates their food growing activity, and 68% that helping them to develop skills for a healthy adult life is a factor.

CASE STUDY 3

Sandwell public health collaboration

Sandwell has high levels of diet and lifestyle-related poor health including cancers, diabetes and obesity. To tackle this, Sandwell Primary Care Trust is working with Sandwell Local Authority and charity Ideal for All to improve public health through community agriculture.

Ideal for All has created two innovative community gardens from derelict land to support a wide range of projects and promote health and well-being outcomes. Activities include:

- Hands-on sessions for 1,000 primary school children each year, where they garden, harvest and taste fresh produce; this supports curriculum delivery and raises awareness of healthy lifestyles.
- Workshops for staff, parents, carers and children focusing on seasonal produce, healthy eating, gardening and cooking with fresh ingredients on a budget as part of Sandwell PCT's early years healthy eating training programme.
- Outreach work for children's centres, nurseries and schools to bring hands-on gardening experience into the institutional setting.
- One-off sessions to support teachers with ideas and confidence to garden.

John Middleton, Director of Public Health Sandwell and Vice President of the UK Faculty of Public Health says: "The garden is increasingly used by local schools who do not yet have the resources to grow food themselves. It gives children an understanding of where their food comes from and how it grows, it enables them to grow food at home and helps them live more healthily and actively. It helps their families and people with long-term health problems."



Sandwell Primary Care Trust

2.2 Boosting psychological health and well-being

Schools and supporting organisations frequently note the improved psychological well-being of children involved in food growing, including an increase in self-esteem, self-worth and confidence. This arises from a sense of satisfaction from nurturing a plant to harvesting point, contributing to their school community and having a safe, tranquil space to help them to deal with the stresses of their life in and out of school.

"A boy who had quite low self-esteem after his parents split up and he lost contact with his father joined gardening club because his dad used to grow things with him when he was little. He has been a fantastic role model for the younger children, has become a keen and talented gardener and his confidence has grown so much. This was reflected in his school work. So much so that he won the award for progress at our end of year prize giving ceremony."

Nursery Officer, Hunslet-St- Mary's Church of England Primary School, Leeds.

2.3 Encouraging physical activity

Food growing can have a beneficial impact on the physiological health of participants. The physical tasks of food growing build participants' understanding of the range of ways to stay active. They enjoy having access to fresh air and outdoor spaces and teachers report that they take greater responsibility for their own health.

Findings from Orme et al.'s 2011 evaluation of the Food for Life Partnership (health & Well-being)

Impact on diet and nutrition of the Food for Life Partnership Programme (of which food growing is a part of whole school approaches to food).

- The number of children reporting growing fruit and vegetables at school in the last year rose by 28.1%, from 54.4% to 82.5%.
- The number of children helping to grow fruit and vegetables at home in the last year rose by 9.2%, from 26.0% to 35.2%.
- The number of children reporting that they practised food preparation skills in school in the last month rose by 20.2%, from 17.3% to 37.5%.
- Children reporting eating an average of 4 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day increased by 11.9%, from 37% to 48.9%.
- For Year 5 children only, those reporting eating an average of 5 or more portions a day increased from by 4.6% from 16.3% to 20.9%.

Orme, J., Jones, M., Kimberlee, R., Weitkamp, E., Salmon, D., Dailami, N., Adrian, M. and Kevin, M. (2011) *Food for life partnership evaluation: full report. Project Report.* University of the West of England, Bristol.

Investigating soil types.



CASE STUDY 4

Food for Life Partnership - Growing skills programme

The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. The Partnership is led by the Soil Association, with the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. Together these organisations “work to revolutionise school meals, reconnect young people with where their food comes from and inspire families to cook and grow food.”



Garden Organic delivers the growing skills and community engagement element of the programme. They enable schools to establish and maintain food growing areas, ensure adults have the skills and confidence to share with young people, and inspire community members to grow their own food. A team of education officers deliver CPD training, workshops and planning sessions. Garden Organic has also developed resources, including a Food Growing Manual, to support schools.

Research evaluating the impact of the growing skills programme, found that it leads to the following outcomes for children and young people:

- **Skills:** gardening, social and interpersonal, work-related, participation.
- **Being physically active:** development of strength, co-ordination and skills, enjoyment of regular activity.
- **Knowledge and understanding:** horticultural and nutritional science, ecology, culture, food and wellbeing, industrial practice.
- **Personal development - values, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours:** interest in growing and eating fresh fruit and vegetables, a pro-sustainability disposition, positive attitudes towards, and involvement in, school and learning, a sense of satisfaction and making a positive contribution, preparation for adulthood.

3. Developing and improving schools

Food growing can be a dynamic tool for school development and improvement. When used effectively, food growing can help schools to engage parents, bring in support from the community and create a whole school ethos. There is a significant link between food growing and good or outstanding performance in Ofsted inspections.

3.1 Developing and delivering a whole school ethos

Schools which include food growing as part of their school improvement plan report that it helps them to deliver a number of key improvement objectives. It can be a unifying tool, which brings together all aspects of school life from formal lessons to the canteen. The embeddedness of this approach enables everyone within the school

to have and to understand their role in contributing to the whole school community.

3.2 Promoting student voice

Food growing creates many opportunities to enable student voice for all young people, whatever their learning style. Children and young people are able to contribute through involvement in the design, planning and ongoing care for their

“Individuals see they can contribute to the wider community. Members of the local community come to take some of our excess produce, which benefits them and gets them into our school to be part of our wider community work. Over the summer vacation various neighbours and parents, and grandparents came in to water the produce and harvest what was available. Again this is a great community link. They also “protect” the site... as it is seen as a community asset.”

Assistant Headteacher, Carshalton Boys Sports College, Surrey.

growing space. In schools where a whole school approach to food is adopted they are also able to influence wider aspects of school life.

3.3 Involving families

Food growing creates opportunities to engage families. 49% of schools surveyed said that they receive support from parents for food growing. Food growing is seen as a non-threatening way for parents to support their child’s learning. The informal environment enables parents and teachers to feel that they are working towards a common goal. Many schools use food growing as a mechanism to deliver other activities for parents, such as cooking classes. Family involvement helps reinforce messages communicated to children and young people inside the school day.

3.4 Engaging community support

Schools use food growing to gain support and involve the local community. 29% of schools report support from a local or national business, and 20% from a local or national charity. Support for food growing is most likely to come in the form of material resources (44% of schools report this type of support)



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and human resources (38% of schools). This helps establish, develop and maintain food growing spaces. Children and young people are also exposed to a wider set of skills and experiences, which helps them to expand their own.

49% of schools surveyed said that they receive support from parents for food growing. Food growing is seen as a non-threatening way for parents to support their child’s learning.

CASE STUDY 5

Growing to Give food philanthropy

Growing to Give is a project run by “food philanthropy” organisation Foodshare, which connects food growers with charities to reduce their food bills, provide fresh produce to those who will benefit most, reduce food waste and food miles and teach children about sharing. Foodshare works with schools to grow fruit and vegetable to donate to local charities. Over 250 Foodshare charities are supported by 7,500 primary school children growing produce in school and collecting other local gluts from across the community. Schools collectively donate thousands of pounds of fresh, local produce to those who can benefit most. There are wider benefits too; one homeless shelter said, after children delivered soup they had grown and made: “Most importantly, it shows the homeless that society cares about them.”

This also creates a personal bond between a school and a local charity; children and young people are able to learn about and experience what the charity does and the charity is encouraged through the children’s work. Foodshare transforms schools, and becomes so central to their values that it is naturally integrated into every part of the school.

Foodshare co-founder Mark Desvaux says: “We help to create a new generation of philanthropists, helping to nurture the caring, sharing nature of children. We are preparing children for a future where food will not be taken for granted, and when growing skills and sharing within a community will be essential.”



4. Strengthening communities

The impact of food growing in schools stretches beyond the immediate school community into the wider community and brings benefits for local, national and international organisations involved.

4.1 Bringing the community together

Many schools involve members of the local community in their growing. For example, sharing allotment sites creates an opportunity for different generations to interact. In areas with a diverse ethnic and cultural profile, food growing can increase understanding and connections between members of the community. People can communicate without needing an extensive vocabulary; and growing and cooking vegetables from around the world promotes understanding of different cultures and illustrates what people have in common.

4.2 Improving access to fresh produce

Many schools extend the distribution of their fruit and vegetable produce to the local community, or create community growing spaces on their own land. Some schools supply produce to local organisations and social enterprises, contributing to community health and well-being.

CASE STUDY 6

Morrisons Let's Grow community investment programme

Let's Grow is a community investment programme designed to inspire children to follow a healthy lifestyle and to be excited about fresh produce. Shoppers collect one voucher for every £10 spent; schools collect and redeem them against kitchen and garden products. Over four years Morrisons have donated gardening and cooking equipment worth over £10 million, including seeds, trowels and wellington boots to over 26,500 schools.

Morrisons have developed teaching resources for Key Stages 1- 4 for use in and outside of the classroom. Downloadable from the Let's Grow website, they cover healthy eating and environmental themes; teachers can order equipment, post news articles, direct students to fun, educational games and track the growing seasons. Additionally, school visits, including from celebrity gardeners Diarmuid Gavin and Chris Collins, are organised, as are competitions for additional equipment and expert help.

Head of Corporate Responsibility Steven Butts says "Let's Grow is designed to help young people appreciate the value of fresh food and the resources needed to produce it. The programme is simple and engaging, but at the same time because it's driven through a learning environment, it encourages young people to think about food, understand nutrition and prevent waste."

Morrisons are delighted with the impact the programme is having for schools, as well as for them as a business. During this year's Let's Grow campaign, customer perceptions of Morrisons as a community-focused supermarket rose by over 10%.



Morrisons

4.3 Creating opportunities

Supporting food growing through volunteering can be fulfilling. Individuals are able to develop new skills, including food growing and cooking, communication and teaching. Schools also often extend workshops, and celebrations of food growing, to members of the community.

4.4 Delivering organisational objectives

Supporting food growing helps businesses to meet their corporate objectives.

- Connecting people with their food develops an understanding of food production processes and influences purchasing habits.
- Businesses release staff to volunteer on food growing in schools projects. This motivates staff and fosters strong employee relationships.

- Support also raises awareness of possible careers within the business, and encourages skills development.

Voluntary and community organisations experience similar benefits. Being involved in food growing in schools helps them to reach children and young people, school staff and families, increase awareness of their work and purpose, and fulfil their charitable objectives.

What makes food growing in schools successful?

Because of the range of benefits accrued through food growing we believe that it is essential for every child and young person to have experience of it throughout their school life.



Northfield Junior School, Derbyshire/realreadcampaign.org

Although **83%** of schools report that food growing has the support of senior leadership, only 49% say that food growing is regularly integrated into lessons and only 34% that food growing is part of their whole school policy.

We recognise that there are many different models of effective food growing in schools. However, we have found that there is an optimum environment in which the full range of benefits can be achieved for all involved. Schools that are not able to create this environment find it harder to get the most out of food growing, and we found that this environment exists in only a small number of schools. We have identified a set of factors that help build this environment:

1. School Leadership

The support of a school's senior leadership is crucially important. Although 83% of schools report that food growing has the support of senior leadership, only 49% say that food growing is regularly integrated into lessons and only 34% that food growing is part of their whole school policy. Only a quarter (26%) of schools say that all children and young people are involved in food growing; the same amount say that less than a quarter are involved. More senior leaders should use food growing in a planned, resourced, way to develop their school.

There are four main ways in which schools do this effectively:

- Ensuring food growing is an integral part of the whole school ethos.
- Make explicit links between food growing and the curriculum (formal, informal and hidden) in line with and to support broader school objectives.
- Support children and young people in the decision-making around food growing.
- Allocate appropriate resources for teaching and non-teaching staff to integrate food growing into their practice.

2. Professional Development

A staff team with the knowledge, skills and confidence to grow food and incorporate this into the curriculum helps ensure the best possible outcomes for all involved. Often teachers in food growing schools would benefit from having the opportunity to develop, and have confidence in, the food growing, cooking and project management skills they need to do this. There are three sets of skills that are particularly important; each school will need a mix of teaching and non-teaching staff with different levels of these skills.

- Ability to **integrate food growing into the curriculum** in a stimulating and meaningful way.



- **Growing and cooking** skills enable teachers to be confident in their use of food growing to support their teaching of wider concepts.
- **Project management and organisation** to ensure that the food growing year is synchronised as far as it can be with the academic year.

3. Resources

Many schools establish and sustain food growing successfully with minimal resources. Despite this, many are daunted by the extent of the human and material resources they believe are required. Schools do need to make some human and material resource commitment to make food growing possible and effective.

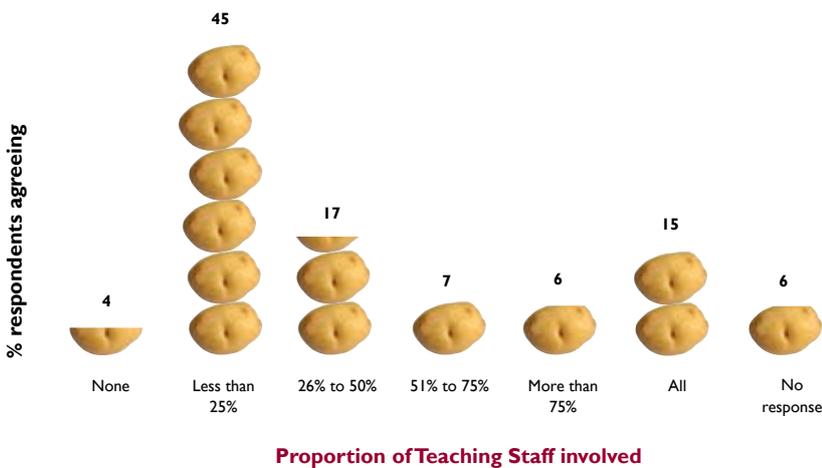
33% of schools that are currently involved in food growing report that a lack of material resources, such as seeds and equipment is a barrier to food growing.

- Human resource, across the school staff team, is necessary to sustain food growing. It is made best use of, and the least negative impact on time and capacity occurs, when food growing is integrated throughout the life of the school.
- At the very least schools need to be able to access a space to grow (on or off site), tools and planting.

“I had not realized that some staff had very little subject knowledge in this area. Although they were very willing to take part they did not have the confidence to lead the children.”

Headteacher, Helpringham Primary School, Lincolnshire.

Proportions of children and staff involved in growing food



There are many organisations (commercial, public and NGOs) with resources to support food growing. Many schools make use of these (44% receive material support, 38% human resource support) but there is scope to better connect schools with available resources.

4. Community involvement

For the impact of food growing in schools to reach a wide audience communities need to be involved. Such involvement can also help in the long-term sustainability of food growing in schools. The participation of businesses, community and voluntary organisations, and the local population can lead to benefits for all participants.

- Schools that form good relationships with local businesses and individual members of the community are able to bring in, and facilitate the sharing of, food growing resources, knowledge and skills.
- Community participation helps to reinforce and sustain food growing by creating a long-term support network and embedding a food growing culture beyond the school, which reinforces messages learnt within the school context.

To be successful, food growing needs to be seen as “a means of contributing to the community... a place for the community...[and] an activity owned by the whole community.”

Nelson, J et al. (2011)
Food Growing Activities in Schools.

CASE STUDY 7

The Co-operative's From Farm to Fork farm visits programme

The Co-operative's "From Farm to Fork" (FF2F) programme, launched in 2005 on one of the Co-operative's farms has since expanded to seven sites. Over 65,000 children have benefitted from an educationally structured visit.

FF2F allows primary school children to experience the world beyond the classroom; for some, it is the first time they have experienced the countryside. They leave with a greater understanding of the importance of farming, both in supplying food and protecting wildlife in its natural habitat.



Co-operative Farms Managing Director, Christine Tacon says: "From Farm to Fork fits with the Co-operative Group's business and Corporate Social Responsibility objectives: education is one of the Co-operative principles

and has always been an integral part of our way of doing business; as a community retailer, linking the community back to where the food is grown and meeting our social goal of 'Inspiring Young People' is a key advantage of the project."

The Co-operative Group commissioned research to provide the Taskforce with information on the value of external visits and how it links with growing food in schools. The research found that since the farm visits and growing food in school:

- 32% of parents believe that at home they cook food from scratch more than they did before.
- 49% of parents believe that their child helps them cook at home more.
- 67% of parents feel that their child's interest in where food comes from has increased.
- 63% of parents feel that their child's interest in what types of food the family eats has increased.



Co-operative Farms

"For food and growing activity to become more embedded in a school there needs to be a shift in who drives the work from enthusiastic but lone champions to multi-skilled teams including pupils."

Barratt Hacking et al (2011)

Food for Life Partnership Evaluation (FFLP): monitoring the impact of the growing skills programme.

Recommendations

We have demonstrated that it is essential for every child and young person to have regular experience of food growing, in a way that contributes to his or her learning and well-being throughout their school life. There are schools that do not use food growing at all and many more in which food growing is not embedded in a way that achieves adequate impact for all involved. This needs to be addressed.

Taskforce vision

Every child and young person has experience of food growing that has a positive impact on their learning, well-being and understanding of the natural environment. Schools and their extended communities are enriched through food growing. Our population, economy and society benefit from learning and behaviours acquired through food growing in schools.

Desired outcomes

- School leadership teams understand the value of food growing and have the will and resources to embed it into learning and development objectives.
- All teachers are aware of the benefits that food growing offers for teaching and learning and have access to the skills development opportunities they need to use it effectively.
- Schools have access to, the resources required to support food growing.
- Communities and schools work together to embed food growing activity, and extend benefits beyond the school.

Recommendations

1. A national campaign celebrating food growing in schools.
2. A policy emphasis on food growing in schools.
3. A food growing in schools online hub.
4. Business commitments to support food growing in schools.
5. Promotion of food growing by school leadership teams.
6. Making clear connections between food growing in schools and food-related and land based careers.

The following recommendations will promote, enable and embed food growing in schools. An accompanying action plan has been developed that contains specific actions for schools, communities, NGOs, businesses and government.

1. A national celebration campaign

A cross-sector campaign celebrating current achievements, raising awareness of the impact of food growing in schools and promoting further activity.

There is a need to engage all schools (both those already growing and those not yet doing so) and possible supporters with the idea and benefits of food growing in schools, to increase and embed activity. We believe a year-long campaign, starting in Spring 2013, would be a successful way of doing this. Therefore Government, business, the voluntary sector, communities and schools should work together to:

- Design and deliver the campaign.
- Engage all audiences for whom food growing in schools is relevant.
- Encourage increased support for food growing in schools.
- Connect community activity with food growing in schools.



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2.A policy emphasis on food growing in schools

Government departments, specifically the Department for Education, Department of Health and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs should recognise the impact of food growing on learning and promote it through policy and communications.

The contribution that food growing makes to learning, particularly in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths), should be recognised by the Department for Education, and reflected in education policy:

- The National Curriculum Review should consider the impact of food growing in schools.
- DfE communications should encourage schools to maximise opportunities resulting from

greater flexibility throughout the curriculum to use food growing to support learning.

- Ofsted inspectors should be made aware of the impact of food growing for pupil outcomes, and encouraged to look at its integration into teaching and learning.
- Food growing as a resource for teaching should be promoted to teacher-training providers.
- Food growing spaces should be incorporated into new school buildings and into improvements of existing school sites.

Public health policy such as *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A call to action on obesity in England* already makes reference to the value of food growing to encouraging healthy behaviours. More explicit guidance should be given by the Department of Health to the nascent Health and Well-being boards to support food growing in schools as a part of any local public health strategy.

Gaps remain in the academic evidence base of the impact of food growing in schools, particularly in relation to developing enterprise skills and stimulating the local food economy, as well as the cost – benefit of food growing in schools. As part of its commitment to reconnecting people with their food and growing a “green economy”, Defra should commission research to build our understanding of these issues.



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Lifting precipitated fruit DNA on a pipette - a process used to aid the identification of pathogens.

3. A food growing in schools online hub

A one-stop online shop for all those wanting to get involved in food growing should be developed.

Online resources, such as Growing Schools, have been a significant part of the recent trend in food growing in schools, and have provided valuable access to case studies, lesson plans, and details of CPD opportunities for teachers etc. There is a need to enhance and scale-up

what is currently offered to better serve the needs of all those already involved, and those wishing to be involved, in food growing in schools, and an on-line hub would ensure that there is a match between those needing support and those wishing to offer it. This would include:

- An introduction to food growing in schools and the benefits it can achieve.
- Guidance on what effective food growing in schools looks like.
- Teaching and learning resources.
- Signposting to CPD opportunities.
- Guidance on horticultural careers.

- A “dating service” matching schools with volunteers, businesses, communities and public organisations.
- Opportunities for all participants to share good practice and ask questions of each other.

4. Business commitments to support food growing in schools

Businesses should continue and extend their support for food growing.

Many businesses are already supporting food growing in schools, and report that it is an effective way of achieving their corporate social responsibility and business objectives. However, they also report that they struggle to engage schools and get full take up of the resources they offer; similarly schools report that they aren't able to secure the business support they would like. Businesses should continue and extend their support for food growing through measures such as:

- Partnerships with local schools providing material or human resources or skills development opportunities.
- Collaborations between businesses which pool resources and support for food growing.
- Because of the proven health and wellbeing benefits of food growing, schools are encouraged to avoid working with companies and brands associated with products that undermine healthy lifestyle messages.

5. Promotion of food growing by School leadership Teams

School leadership teams should make greater use of food growing as a means of improving and developing their schools.

Those schools that have used food growing as a way of developing and improving their school have achieved significant learning and well-being outcomes for children and young people. However, few schools take a whole school approach to food and food growing, integrate food growing across the curriculum or include it as part of the whole school policy. School leadership teams should recognise the potential impact of food growing and integrate into their leadership approach. To do this they should:

- Use food growing as part of a whole school approach to food, health and well-being, and learning.
- Ensure food growing is integrated into the curriculum and embedded across their school.
- Work with other school leaders in food growing school clusters, building on school clusters and frameworks for collaboration already in place for procurement and professional development. Clusters should enable the sharing of best practice, peer support and professional skills development for school leadership teams, teaching and non-teaching staff.

- Work with the local community as well as networks such as Health and Well-being Boards, Local Nature Partnerships and other local voluntary and community, local government and business organisations.

6. Making clear connections between food growing in schools and food-related and land based careers

Improved links should be made between food growing in schools and initiatives promoting food-related careers.

Businesses reported to the Taskforce that there is growing concern about dwindling numbers of entrants into food related careers, including horticulture, in the UK. At the same time there is rising worklessness amongst young people and, in the context of challenging economic times, a need to stimulate local economic growth, of which the local food economy could be a significant part.

Experiences of food growing and cooking in schools, and connected activities (such as farm visits) raise awareness of a wide range of careers in the food industry, and build positive attitudes towards them. There are already a number of initiatives seeking to improve career entry; however these do

not currently make best use of the opportunities presented by food growing in schools.

The Taskforce believes that improved connections should be made through:

- A Defra chaired summit examining how business and educators can work together to stimulate an enterprise culture among young people and how this would contribute to the local food economy.
- Pilot partnership projects between businesses, schools and colleges aimed at making clear connections between food growing in schools, and food-related and land based careers.
- Thinking of the needs of the economy, the Taskforce hopes that secondary schools will continue to recognise the value of vocational courses and qualifications related to food growing as part of a broad curriculum.



Taskforce Partners

The Taskforce consisted of representatives with interests and expertise in the delivery of food growing in schools. It included leaders and practitioners from schools, charities, corporate providers, voluntary and community organisations, the media and government departments including Defra, The Department of Health and The Department of Education. The Taskforce engaged with over 150 organisations and schools and used data from an independent, national survey of 1,300 schools carried out to produce this report and recommendations.

Project funders

[The Brook Trust](#)

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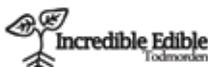
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Sharing the best in Gardening



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