

Wiltshire Healthy Schools



Case study focus: Healthy Eating

Core theme: Healthy Weight

Lypiatt Primary School and Early Years Centre

School context

This very small school is situated within the Services Cotswold Centre army base. It is the only primary school in the country serving armed forces' families needing temporary accommodation following separation, bereavement, or discharge from the services or other welfare reasons. The majority of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils transfer from a large number of schools, usually from Germany, Cyprus and other countries. Pupils stay at the school for periods ranging from one or two weeks to three months (on average); a few stay up to ten months until their families find alternative accommodation. Most pupils have significant and varying emotional needs and often have learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small proportion from minority ethnic families.

Why choose this project?

Recent surveys showed that Reception aged children in the local community area had a higher percentage of obese or overweight children than the rest of the county. None of the families at the Services Costwold Centre grow vegetables. Discussions with parents and children showed that overseas families were unaware which fruit and vegetables were available in England. Meals provided to children, out of school hours, largely consisted of 'ready meals'. Looking after chickens may provide a therapeutic outlet which has a positive impact on learning.

What did the school want to achieve?

- To increase the awareness of pupils and parents of a healthy and balanced diet
- To improve the diet of pupils when in school and out of school
- To involve children in growing, cooking and eating a range of fruit and vegetables
- To enable children to keep chickens and hatch chicken eggs

What did the school do to achieve these aims?

All elements of the plan were agreed by the governing body, to ensure that it would be fully implemented with sufficient resources and time for staff to carry out their responsibilities.

New growing areas were created in the garden area, including raised beds, with financial help from the governors. The children successfully grew herbs, vegetables and planted a range of fruit trees. Growing and planting has been extended into the Early Years Centre with the installation of a raised bed and tubs. Families were not charged for gardening or cookery activities.

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During the year, chickens were hatched and cared for by children; their eggs were used for breakfast and other cookery activities. Environmental studies (gardening and care of the chickens) were used to help children, especially those with emotional needs and challenging behaviour, to grasp academic concepts and to improve their social skills and behaviour.

Children received a healthy diet at school, with the school complying with current food and nutrition standards. The school purchased and used HPORT software to help meet current standards. A healthy breakfast was introduced for the whole school each morning.

Children were taught about Healthy Eating through PSHE Education and Science lessons. The Children's Centre organised a healthy breakfast event where parents joined children for a learning session about healthy eating. Information was provided about a healthy and balanced diet.

Children and parents whose first language is not English, or who speak a non standard dialect of English and children who have limited language skills, were fully supported to participate in all activities. Objects and areas in the classroom were labelled using English and other languages used. Fluent speakers of the child's primary language (Teaching Assistants, parent volunteers and older children) were used.

Measuring success

The children have learnt how to plant and care for vegetables and fruit, as well as how to harvest and cook them. Both children and parents have increased their knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet and developed related skills. Children have developed some vital lifeskills, are more alert, receptive to learning and happier individuals.

After having ensured that all children receive a healthy breakfast each morning, school staff observed that the levels of energy, interest and concentration that the children show in their learning have greatly increased. In addition the children's behaviour for learning has also greatly improved.

Lessons learned

The process of implementing the action plan was enjoyable. Although it was important to involve parents, it was difficult to monitor the provision of food outside school, for example whether the healthy eating advice given at the breakfast event was implemented at home.