

Getting ready to cook in a primary school classroom



This guide is intended to take you through what you need to consider before undertaking practical food activities in a primary school classroom.

Getting started

Does your school have a policy for practical food activities?

Find out if your school has a policy for practical food work as it will contain useful guidance to get you started. If a policy is available, it should capture the school ethos regarding food and the role it plays within school. There may be guidance on the food skills children will be taught and experiences they will have at different stages in their primary school education. It should offer guidance on safety procedures and may outline the equipment and ingredients which should or should not be used. If your school does not have a policy, this may be something you can take a lead on. In the meantime, perhaps you have an appropriate subject co-ordinator in your school who you can talk to about running safe practical activities. If you do not have either of these, speak to your headteacher about the best way to proceed. Remember, your Local Authority/Council may provide guidance for practical activities in school.

Are there Risk Assessments for food activities available in your school?

Find out if your school has procedures and Risk Assessments in place for practical work. Perhaps colleagues have completed these before and you can use them as a starting point to prepare your own Risk Assessment for your food session. Undertaking a Risk Assessment is very important. The process of undertaking the assessment will provide you with time to thoroughly reflect on what you will be undertaking and consider any potential risks and how they can be avoided or minimised. Potential risks you will need to consider are:

- physical harm from heat or equipment such as those with blades, e.g. knives, graters, peelers;
- allergies to foods or ingredients which may be contained within foods. Remember to send a letter home to check for any allergies (or religious or cultural reasons) which may prevent children working with or eating particular food, or may necessitate banning a food from the classroom altogether;
- choking hazards, e.g. food such as whole grapes or cherry tomatoes. Make sure foods like these are cut into smaller pieces before children try or use these in recipes;
- food poisoning – ensure any food to be used in a food lesson is stored correctly from the time it is bought until it is used and that it is within its date mark. Special caution should be taken with high risk foods such as cheese and cooked meat.

Do you need a Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene certificate?

It is good practice to have a Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene certificate and reasonably priced courses for this are available online. Undertaking the food safety and hygiene course is a good way to 'open your eyes' to potential risks and help you avoid or minimise them. It is not a legal requirement for you to have a food safety and hygiene certificate, but as well as being good practice, it can help you feel more confident about undertaking practical food work in school.

Planning your food session

What are you making?

Make sure you feel confident about what you will be making with the children. Practice what you will be making in advance of the lesson so you are comfortable with the skills you will be demonstrating and how you will explain them, e.g. fork secure, bridge hold, dough shaping. For more guidance on teaching food skills, take a look at the **How to teach food skills Guide**.

How will you organise the session?

Invest time planning how your session will run so it is safe and hygienic. Do you need to work with a small group or half the class at a time to demonstrate and monitor a skill or is it safe for the whole class to undertake their practical work at the same time? You will need to consider whether additional adult support will be needed. How you organise the session will depend on what is being made and the equipment being used. It is a useful idea to keep sharp equipment to one side, giving it out only when it is needed. It is also good practice to ensure that children do not walk around the classroom whilst carrying equipment or food. Think about whether the classroom furniture needs to be re-arranged, you could remove the chairs so children stand to prepare ingredients which may give them better control of equipment. You will need to cover classroom desks with plastic table cloths. Have you got a dust pan and brush and paper towels ready to clear any spills? Get a bin bag ready specifically for food waste which you can dispose of after the session.

Have you got parent/carer permission slips?

Make sure you have got up-to-date permission slips signed by parents/carers. It is important to be aware of allergies, intolerances, religious or cultural reasons which may prevent children eating or coming into contact with particular foods. This information will enable you to plan your session to ensure it is safe and inclusive.

Have you got your equipment ready?

The food equipment you are planning to use will need to be clean and in good working order – make sure you check this before your session. Food equipment should only be used for food activities and should not be used for other classroom work, e.g. general classroom scissors should not be used for food work. Make sure that the size of the equipment you plan to use is appropriate to the size of the hands of the children you will be working with. Children need to be able to hold and control the equipment to make sure they are working with it safely. You can also be inventive, did you know that kitchen scissors can be used to cut a wide variety of ingredients? For example, you can cut herbs, spring onions, pepper sticks, lettuce leaves and cabbage (for coleslaw) all with kitchen scissors!

Have you got your ingredients ready?

Once you have organised how and when you will get the ingredients for your session, you will need to think about how those ingredients will be stored. Make sure food is stored correctly and according to instructions (where applicable). Is there a clean available space in a fridge? Is that fridge the correct temperature (i.e. 0 - 4°C)? Keep an eye on date marks to ensure the food is safe to use and eat. Before your session you may need to partly prepare some of the ingredients, ensuring that this is done in a clean and hygienic manner and that they are covered and stored correctly until they are ready for use on the same day. Partly preparing ingredients may involve washing or cutting food or weighing ingredients. How much you prepare the ingredients before your lesson will depend on your teaching points and activity aims. For example, if the focus of a bread making lesson is to teach kneading and shaping dough, you may pre-weigh the ingredients so you can get to your main teaching points quickly and give children time to practise and develop these skills. You could then focus on weighing and measuring in a different lesson.

Preparing the children

Are the children ready to cook?

Before you start a food session you will need to talk to the children about what they need to do to get ready to cook. Talk through the following checklist of what the children should do and why:

- **Tie back long hair** – prevents hair falling into food.
- **Roll up long sleeves** (to above the elbow) – prevents sleeves touching food.
- **Remove jewellery** – prevents any jewellery falling into food (e.g. earrings) and any dirt under jewellery (e.g. rings and watches) which might contaminate food.
- **Wear an apron** – prevents dirt, hair and flint from everyday clothing entering food but also protects clothing from food.
- **Wash and dry hands thoroughly** – removes bacteria from hands. Drying thoroughly is important too to prevent damp areas, e.g. between fingers, providing a breeding ground for bacteria.

You will also need to provide children with hygienic strategies if they need to cough, sneeze or use the toilet during a food session. You may wish to practise these procedures with the children in advance – it will be time well spent.

Remember to download and display the **Getting ready to cook Poster** to help children remember the steps.

Tip

Once the children have washed their hands, ask them to interlink their own hands/fingers to help limit what they touch.

Do the children know how to work safely and hygienically?

Make sure you show the children what you want them to do and how you want them to work. You should demonstrate any new food skill such as cutting or grating slowly and ensure children are aware of any safety implications. It can be useful to get children working in pairs with one child using the new skill and the other being a 'spotter' to check it is being undertaken safely. Children should also be taught to work safely and hygienically, e.g. they should put waste food such as peelings to one side (on a paper towel) so their cooking area remains tidy and they have space to work safely. They should use clean spoons and equipment to take ingredients from containers.

For more information about teaching safe food skills, take a look at our **How to teach food skills Guide** available at: www.warburtons.co.uk/corporate/teaching-resources

To eat or not to eat?

You will need to decide if you will be allowing the children to eat what they have made after the session or whether you want them to take it home. If they are taking it home, it will need to be stored appropriately (e.g. in the fridge or a cool/dry place) until that time and you may also need to advise parents/carers that it should be consumed the same day.

Finally

Whilst it may seem that there is a vast amount to think about and organise, many of these considerations will become second nature very quickly once you have undertaken them a few times. As you and your class become increasingly familiar and confident with the processes and procedures necessary when food work is undertaken, the whole experience will become ever more enjoyable and rewarding for everyone!

Take a look at our **Sandwich making session** and **Bread making session** plans. These two comprehensive documents provide clear instructions on how to run a sandwich and bread making activity with primary school pupils. Both sessions are accompanied by a selection of supporting worksheets. To access these resources, go to: www.warburtons.co.uk/corporate/teaching-resources

Getting ready to cook in a primary school classroom - checklist

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- 2 Are there Risk Assessments for food activities available in your school?
- 3 Do you need a Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene certificate?
- 4 What are you making?
- 5 How will you organise the session?
- 6 Have you got parent/carer permission slips?
- 7 Have you got your equipment and ingredients ready?
- 8 Are the children ready to cook?
- 9 Do the children know how to work safely and hygienically?
- 10 To eat or not to eat?