

Outstanding Teaching of Life Skills

At Netherton Moss, we are only too well aware that many of the skills needed in life do not form part of the government's prescribed National Curriculum. It is for this reason that we have made a commitment to ensuring that the experiences the children have in school are designed to give them the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need in order to navigate the routines of everyday life as well as equipping them to participate in the many social and cultural activities that give life meaning and purpose.

Surely the most important of these is the ability to prepare balanced and healthy meals. The skills needed in order to cook and feed oneself are the ultimate survival tool for adult life. As with most skills, once mastered, cooking can become quick, easy and fun, not just a means to an end but an enjoyable and creative hobby through which to explore the richness and variety of the wider world. The sourcing and sustainability of our food is also a very topical social and environmental issue, a debate in which we enable to engage and participate.

At Netherton Moss we believe that every child should start learning about food and cooking as early as possible and we take a very creative approach to the teaching of this vital skill. From the youngest to the oldest, all the children get the opportunity to cook. In the Early Years the children start to use simple equipment and ingredients to prepare food that supports their topic work such as making pancakes, fruit salads, bread-making and sandwiches for picnics. In KS1 cooking is used to explore the wider world as they prepare dishes from different countries as well as our own and start gaining a clear understanding of the origin of different ingredients and how the availability of some fits into the seasons.



In Year 3&4 children continue to explore the world through food linked to topics but also use their developing food preparation skills as a form of enterprise through which they raise funds both for the school and for others. This year the children in Jazz Class (Year 4) were able to part fund their school visit to the Outdoor Education CHET Centre as a result of their regular pop up food stalls that have fed members of the school community, Soup Kitchen, Kebab Shop and Cottage Pie stall being just some of the culinary delights that have turned their pennies into pounds!

Enterprising Cottage Pies

For the Christmas Fair this year we have been using our cooking skills to make delicious and nutritious cottage pies. We followed a simple recipe to make as many as we could, but we had to do some maths to make sure we made a profit!

Mince beef	£3.50 x 5 =	£17.50 ✓
Potatoes	£1.50 x 4 =	£6.00 ✓
Carrots	£1.00 x 3 =	£3.00 ✓
Onions	£0.80 x 4 =	£3.20 ✓
Leek	£1.40 x 3 =	£4.20 ✓
Swede	£0.50 x 4 =	£2.00 ✓
Thyme	£0.80 x 1 =	£0.80 ✓
Stock Cubes	£1.50 x 1 =	£1.50 ✓
Total		£38.20

We sold 45 pies @ £2.00 each

45 x 2 = £90

£90.00
38.20
51.80
Profit

Maths: Add and subtract numbers with up to 2 digits and decimals with one decimal place using the formal written methods of columnar addition and subtraction where appropriate. Solve problems involving multiplying and adding, including using the distributive law to multiply two digit numbers by one digit.

Design & Technology: Analyse the tools, materials, smell and appearance of a range of foods (non-harmfully) safely. Follow instructions to cook. Plan and combine a range of ingredients. Explore seasonality of ingredients and food.



With the older children we start to explore the nutritional value of different foods and look to adjust published recipes to make them healthier. We also investigate the health benefits of cooking certain dishes from scratch as opposed to eating shop bought versions that are often highly processed. We take the time to compare different homemade foods to their shop bought counterparts both in terms of nutrition but also price and above all taste.

Shop bought Spring Rolls versus homemade, no contest!



We allow the children regular opportunities to explore the financial and economic skills that relate to food, sometimes we will set the children the challenge of creating a menu within a strict budget and at other events we like to introduce an element of enterprise. In order to be truly inclusive, we don't ask the children to pay for or provide any of their own ingredients but we do use their skills at regular fundraising events that help to finance the cookery they do. As part of this work we involve the children at the planning and pricing stage so that they can calculate the costs, decide upon a price and then identify the profit. As part of our work we try to take the children shopping for the ingredients so that they can compare prices and make some of those difficult decisions faced by consumers such as paying the extra to use free-range eggs in recipes! This aspect of our work links directly to our participation in financial education through the 'My Money' Week programme where we have explored the responsibilities of spending and the benefits of saving helping the children to prioritise their needs and wants.

Central to our work is our cooking space, christened 'Moss Munch' by the children. It was for many years an old abandoned entrance foyer which over time has been transformed into a dynamic and flexible area in which the whole school community can gather to prepare, share and enjoy the children's culinary creations. It has a demonstration area, food preparation tables, washing-up area, oven, hobs, storage, and most importantly a dedicated eating area with home style dining tables so that food can be shared in a friendly family style. They say that the kitchen is the heart of a good home and in the same way 'Moss Munch' has grown to be at the heart of the school. It plays a part in nearly everything we do, from fundraising events like the mini Christmas dinners or cottage pies that are sold at the Christmas Fair to the role it plays in SATs week when the children meet each morning to share a healthy and relaxing breakfast before they face the dreaded

tests! The room also plays host to some sad farewells when at the end of the summer term each year the children prepare and share their 'Leavers Meal' with family and friends. Much of the equipment in 'Moss Munch' remains mobile so that it can be taken into the classrooms and used there or even outside if necessary. The pleasure the children get from sitting together in groups sharing food in Moss Munch, caused us to re-evaluate the way in which the children share meals in the school dining room. It was our aim to create a dining space for the whole school that could be more focused on the social aspect of sharing a meal together. In order to do this we recognised that investment in new and much more appropriate furniture would be the most effective way to achieve this valuable goal and so we worked with the children of School Council to help prepare a bid for funding. While the application process was very slow and after six months both the adults and the children had given up any hope of success, just last week, a cheque for £7500 arrived in the post. The children have really enjoyed choosing the designs, colours and finishes of their new dining room furniture.

Right next to 'Moss Munch' is the school allotment where the school's Eco Club grow their fruit, vegetables and herbs, it is great to watch the children as they pick the ingredients they have nurtured and put them straight into the dishes they will enjoy. In many cases the global environmental issue of 'Food Miles' is reduced to just a few 'Food Metres'! This year has seen the construction and introduction of the school greenhouse. Over a period of 8 months the children collected over 4000 plastic drinks bottles and set to work with the help of our Site Manager and volunteers from the local community in order to construct the panels that would become our 'green' greenhouse. A building as environmentally friendly in its construction as it is in its contents and purpose and one that, through the collection and preparation of the bottles, every child knows contains a small contribution that they themselves have made. The greenhouse itself has enable the children not only to increase the quality and quantity of the food that they grow but also the range and type of plants. The greenhouse is currently full of fruit, salad and vegetable plants waiting to be harvested including chilli, garlic sweet peppers and edible flowers.



Another important aspect around the development of life skills focuses upon engagement with members of the local community, helping the children to see the role they can play in supporting (and catering for) different groups. Throughout

the year the children invite guests to join them in 'Moss Munch' to share a meal. These include the residents of our local nursing home who join us for our all-in-one Christmas dinner, the congregation from our local church who enjoy a 'Scouse' lunch on International Scouse Day, and the members of the school's toddler group who come in the summer for an 'Enchanted Picnic'. Our annual 'Smile Challenge' event this year saw us prepare an afternoon tea for the residents of the local nursing home and preparing goody bags of homemade sweets, cards and pictures. As well as all the cooking that is involved in each event, the children design the invitations, lay the tables and can even turn their hand to table decorations and flower arranging. After the food is served, the children will often provide entertainment, playing games with the



toddlers, singing and playing their musical instruments for the adults. It is the conversations and interactions that occur between the children and this diverse range of people that adds another vital dimension to the life skills they acquire.

The culinary event that perhaps encapsulates our work best comes in the form of the annual 'Cookathon'. A full day in which every child in school cooks and contributes to a dish that they can then take home with them at the end of the day. The older children are trained in the preceding weeks and given all the skills that they will need to help, support and demonstrate for the younger children. This year's 'Cottage Pie' both meaty and veggie versions were a huge success, all 200 portions!



This year has seen an important innovation in our teaching of life skills, a drive to ensure that the children start to develop the aspirations that will lead them forward into the world of work. Our participation in the Job Junction programme has seen the children in Year 6 embark on a range of activities and experiences that have shown them the wide range of careers that are out there and what skills they'll need to make a positive difference in the world. The programme has been about building their self-belief, their resilience and recognising their qualities and how they can be of value in the workplace. It has developed their language and literacy skills, oracy skills, music, listening skills and team work as well as recognising and understanding the qualities, skills, talents and positive behaviours they possess.

It is vital that the children are able to articulate their aspirations and that these reflect their own personal interests, skills and dispositions and the programme we have put in place helps them to recognise that achieving one's ambitions requires motivation and that requires a commitment and personal investment towards achieving something that can seem quite distant when you are just 11. To help us to do this we held a Career Carousel and we as a school are indebted to the many professionals who came in to share their journey through the world of work. With the children we have stressed that it is a journey and we asked the professionals to share with them their story from primary school through education, training and work to the job they do and love today. They shared the highs and lows, explained how ambitions and aspirations often change over time and how challenges come along that have to be overcome and opportunities that have to be seized. Thanks to our strong community links, we were really fortunate to be able to welcome people into school from a variety of backgrounds, these included parents who are known to the children and also a good number of former pupils who were able to make a personal connection with the children and where they are in their lives at this moment.



We were thrilled with the engagement and excitement that surrounded our aspirations work, particularly the Carousel, as this strategy is a vital step in making all our work around life skills sustainable in the long term. While it is important to develop the skills for their own sake it is critical that the children can identify and develop their personal skills and interests and understand from an early age how these can contribute to fulfilling and successful life both at home and at work.

At Netherton Moss, the teaching of life skills is not just about providing the children with a range of opportunities to learn new things, it has become a key way of embodying our curriculum drivers of:

Communication, Community, Resilience, Creativity, Adventure, Health

In order to do this it is afforded our Life Skills work a good deal of investment in terms of space, money and most importantly curriculum time. Life skills pervade a great deal of what we do and in a positive way have come in part to characterise the culture and ethos of the school and its aims. The life skills that they children access through this work are truly multi-dimensional and have a significant impact on their lives today and we hope through the social, cultural and intellectual capital they accumulate as a result of this work, it will help to sustain them in the years to come.