

Working with local businesses to grow food

Hitherfield Primary School, Lambeth

About the school

Hitherfield Primary in Streatham, Lambeth, is a three form community primary school with a nursery and Children's Centre. The school has more than 600 pupils from a diverse community. 78% of pupils are from an ethnic minority, 40% do not speak English as their first language, 26% are on the SEN register and 30% have free school meals.



Students from Hitherfield Primary shape bread with Duncan Salisbury-Gaumont, of Elephant Bakehouse, Streatham.

Partnership

Food Growing Schools
: London

Trees for Cities

Streatham Food
Festival

Thrive

Elephant Bakehouse

Food growing at Hitherfield Primary

In 2014 Hitherfield Primary school started an ambitious project to create an Edible Playground. The plans include a 300m² allotment, improved use of existing planters, expansion of the wildlife area, a classroom kitchen and a chicken coup.

The Edible Playground provides an amazing outdoor classroom to teach the children about gardening, cooking and healthy eating as well as engaging them with nature. It will also be used for hands on teaching across all areas of the curriculum. Hitherfield and Trees for Cities plan to use the project to inspire and support other schools in Lambeth to start their own food growing projects.

www.foodgrowingschools.org

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Connecting with local food businesses

Hitherfield Primary have used their Edible Playground to build links with local food businesses.



In March 2014, with the help of Trees for Cities, the school organised a volunteer **Build It Day**, inviting parents and guardians to build the first section of the allotment.

The event was also used to showcase the plans to local stakeholders and potential funders, including Food Growing Schools: London, who suggested Hitherfield invite Streatham Food Festival Director, Pauline Milligan, who they knew wanted to work with local schools.

The meeting led to the idea for the school to host a Festival event where a chef from a local food business would cook food using herbs planted by the children in the Edible Playground.

In June 2014, a Year 1 class took part in the Streatham Food Festival with activities on Herby Bread Day.



Herby Bread Day

In the morning, the children had a herb tasting and planting session with local garden educator, Jenny Hindson.

In the afternoon, Duncan Salisbury-Gaumont of Streatham's Elephant Bakehouse taught the children to bake their own herby focaccia using herbs they picked at the school.

By the end of the day, the children had created a sensory herb garden and made a delicious herb focaccia bread to take home.

Local garden educator, Jenny Hindson came on board as she is a parent at the school and has volunteered on the project.

Duncan Salisbury-Gaumont is also a parent at the school and had launched his bakery at the previous year's Festival, and was an ideal choice for a local food business to work with.

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The benefits of making links to local food businesses

- Working with the community and local businesses is at the heart of Hitherfield Primary's school vision and ethos, bringing benefits for community cohesion.
- The practical nature of food growing sessions brought learning about food to life for pupils. It was a simple way to teach them where their food comes from and how the food they are growing is used in what they eat.

" We are a community school and we wholeheartedly believe we are here to serve our community. Developing and using children's life skills in the community and with local businesses is integral to creating successful citizens. Strong school – community – business relationships lead to mutual support and trust. "

Chris Ashley-Jones, Headteacher

" I loved making the bread shapes and putting in the herbs. It was really nice to eat. "

Scarlett, Year 1 pupil

- Food growing activities present learning opportunities across curriculum subjects, including English (describing herbs using adjectives), Maths (counting to measure how long to water), and Science (learning about the senses during herb tasting sessions).

" Enterprise projects can be a great way of engaging and inspiring pupils that might otherwise not be interested in food growing. "

Jenny Hindson, Garden Educator

- Pupils learnt there is a tasty, quality alternative to highly processed low nutrition bread. Working with a local baker taught them the skills to make it themselves and made them aware of baking as a job.
- Taking home food made in the classroom with school grown ingredients sends positive messages about healthy eating back home to

educate the whole household.

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- The event raised the profile of the school and the Edible Playground across Streatham, through promotion on the Streatham Food Festival programme, website and local press, opening up other community links and fundraising opportunities.
- Working with schools helps businesses develop relationships with new customers, while sharing their local skills to support food growing projects.



“ I would recommend working with schools. It helped our business to tell our story and give our products a face. Children that eat my bread call it Duncan Bread. ”

**Duncan Salisbury-Gaumont,
Elephant Bakehouse**

Find out more:

Food Growing Schools London - www.foodgrowingschools.org

Hitherfield Primary - www.hitherfield.co.uk

Trees for Cities - www.treesforcities.org

Streatham Food Festival - www.streathamfoodfestival.com

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Top tips and lessons learnt

- ☑ Start within the school community. Ask parents, carers, teachers and staff if they run a food business or know someone who does.
- ☑ Find out if there are any food festivals in your local area and contact the organiser for opportunities to take part or to recommend food businesses to approach.
- ☑ Invite local stakeholders from the community in to see your project and discuss ideas of how you can work together. Invite the council, local business and community action and business groups. Ask them who else they think you should invite. Remember to invite the press!
- ☑ When approaching food businesses, highlight the potential benefits to their business such as raising the profile in the school community and helping them create a friendly local brand. Have a short sales pitch ready backed up with numbers on the size and make up of your school community, your catchment and the background to your food growing project.
- ☑ Don't worry if you do not have a large food growing site or have only just started. Small activities with local businesses can be very rewarding and can be built on in the future.
- ☑ Keep it simple and manageable to match the resources you and the food business have available. Hitherfield Primary kept the event to one class to make the practical tasks more feasible and given the limited space in school ovens.
- ☑ Make the event as practical and hands on as you can rather than just talking to pupils. Get the food business to work with the children to teach them new skills and make links to other curriculum subjects. Have a meeting before hand to discuss ideas and plan resources so that everyone can get the most from the collaboration.
- ☑ Get children to taste food at different stages of food preparation. Some that did not like fresh herbs liked them when cooked.
- ☑ Use the event to promote your school and the food growing project to the local community. Take lots of pictures or make a video and invite the press. Ask the business to promote it as well.
- ☑ Make sure you provide some recognition or publicity for the food business as a thank you for their time and efforts. For example, give details of their business in an article on the event in the school newsletter.
- ☑ Build on the event and the relationships you have created with the food business. Find opportunities for working together again. Hitherfield is hoping to host a Food Festival event with other schools in the future and is looking for food enterprise project opportunities.

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