Cooking

The following is a basic guide to help you prepare for running a food activity in a primary school classroom. Although not exhaustive, it provides a checklist for the main points you need to consider.

Cooking is an interesting and dynamic way to engage children. However, it is important that any cooking session is well prepared in advance to ensure that the learning you wish to convey is delivered and that hygiene and safety procedures are followed.

Before cooking

- Check any food, or hygiene and safety, policies your school might have. These may provide guidance on the types of activities, foods and equipment agreed for use in your school.
- Select recipes that are appropriate for the age/ability of the children you teach.
- Ensure that you are confident and competent to demonstrate a skill, use equipment safely or make a recipe – you will be the role model. It is advisable to test the recipe yourself before the lesson.
- Ensure that an Ingredient checking letter has been sent home to parents/carers, or consult the school records to check for any children who may need to avoid certain ingredients.
- Organise additional adult help if this will be needed. Make time to brief other adults on what will be happening and the support you will need.
- If you do not have a designated food room, create an area to cook. Tables should be cleaned with anti-bacterial spray and covered with a wipe clean tablecloth.
- Decide on the number of children who can cook at one time. This will depend on a number of factors, including the age/ability of children, number of staff available, room size and equipment/facilities available.
- Ensure that you have all ingredients required, that they are stored correctly and are within date. Some foods may need part preparing or pre-measuring before the lesson, e.g. weighing flour.
- Make sure that the equipment is clean, in good working order and is of an appropriate size for the children.
- Place all the ingredients and equipment on trays ready for the cooking session – only get out what you need.
- Organise a bin for food waste so it can be removed from the classroom after the lesson. If you have a school compose, some of the food waste might be suitable for this.
- Organise clean aprons for the children to wear.
During cooking

- Just before they cook, make sure that all the children tie back any long hair, remove jewellery, put on their aprons and wash and dry their hands properly. You could use the Get ready to cook PowerPoint to talk to children about how to get ready to cook.
- If any children have cuts or sores on their hands, these need to be covered with a plaster and plastic gloves should be worn. (Be aware that some children may have allergies to plasters or latex gloves. It is advisable to check this with parents/carers before the lesson.)
- Staff or children who have colds or other illnesses on the day cooking will be undertaken, should not cook.
- Ensure that the children understand what is expected. If there are any new skills, ingredients or equipment, make sure that you talk about these first.
- Place a plate or bowl in the middle of the table for waste. Encourage children to place peelings or food scraps here.
- If knives are being used, ensure you demonstrate how to use these safely. Carefully monitor the use of knives.
- Use a chopping board for cutting, slicing and chopping food.
- If an oven or hob is being used, ensure its use is supervised. For primary school aged children, adults should place/remove items from the oven or hob, using oven gloves. Note: Do not wear disposable plastic aprons if using an oven or hob.
- It would be useful to organise access to a sink in the classroom (or a bowl of warm water) hand wash and paper towels, in case you or the children need to re-wash your hands during the food activity.

After cooking

- Prepared food that is not eaten straight away should be cooled quickly (if hot), and covered. Foods, such as sandwiches, which contain perishable ingredients, will need to be refrigerated.
- Washing-up is an important part of preparing and cooking food. It may not be possible for all the children to wash-up on every occasion but children can take turns at washing-up in small groups, with an adult.
- Tidy up and clean the food preparation area. This might involve cleaning the tablecloths and putting the equipment away.