Community Engagement

Prepared as part of the Food for Life Partnership
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# Community Engagement

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1 Introduction

A major part of the Food for Life Partnership is to get as many people as possible involved in growing and cooking their own food, whilst raising awareness of where food comes from, healthy eating and sustainability. Connection and interaction between a school and its wider community is important as it both broadens and deepens what can be achieved whilst encouraging lifelong learning.

Throughout this booklet reference is made to the Food for Life Partnership Food Growing Manual. This exciting manual was produced in support of the Food for Life Partnership by Garden Organic to provide practical growing advice and guidance. This resource is free to all schools enrolled on the Food for Life Partnership Mark Award www.foodforlife.org.uk and can also be accessed on the Garden Organic website www.gardenorganic.org.uk

The Government, through its ‘community cohesion agenda’, is placing great emphasis on community engagement. Since September 2008 OFSTED has been required to inspect and report on the contributions made in the area of community cohesion. The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, www.qcda.gov.uk have produced ‘Community cohesion in action’ – a curriculum planning guide for schools. This is a guide to help build community cohesion into the learning experience of all learners. The Food for Life Partnership is a mechanism for helping this to take place.

The Community Engagement booklet contains information to help you with the process of community engagement, as well as practical resources that you can download and use. Also included are case studies from schools that have already been successful in involving their communities and how they overcame any challenges.

The benefits of school and community interaction are many.

- Developing partnerships with parents and others would support the learning process, and nurture self-esteem and confidence in young people.

- Parents, community and employee volunteers could assist children, teachers and school management in the classroom and in other aspects of school activities.

- Schools could help families to develop learning at home which in turn would help the children’s education in school.

- Learning opportunities may be available for all age groups within and outside the school, and within and outside conventional school hours.

Before looking at the process of community engagement think about, what we mean by community and why we should be concerned with it?
There are a number of ‘community definitions’ as follows.

- A geographical area.
- A group of people living in a particular place.
- A way of life in which people share a common ownership and agreement on goals.
- A community can also be described as a system of social networks.

What groups make up your community? It’s important to know the characteristics of your community in order to communicate appropriately and effectively. This knowledge will also enable you to target specific groups as necessary.

The following are some examples of ways in which schools can encourage their local community to get involved.

- Engage parents and the wider community in the school ‘growing and cooking’ activities by holding a family participation day.
- Get young people involved in growing and cooking at home by giving them a seed or plant to take away and look after; reporting back on its progress.
- Involve families and community by setting up a Saturday gardening club, with visits to other gardens/allotments for ideas and inspiration.
- Hold community events, such as a produce show.
- Make food and cooking education available to community members by holding workshop/training sessions on topics such as composting or growing in containers.
- Provide opportunities for community members to visit local farms.

**Extending schools**

Links with business can occur through direct contact with individual companies, leading to visits, sponsorship and their contributions. This may be via co-ordinated local partnerships between education and business, and through local and national link agencies. Employees may volunteer to work in classrooms, or act as mentors to young people, teachers or school managers. Businesses get involved in schools as a way of raising their profile in the community and business leaders are in an excellent position to explain to young people the relevance of a good education in their future roles in the workplace.

Pupil involvement in community projects at the school, such as hosting a meal and entertainment for the local elderly, can offer empowering opportunities to pupils, who may design, manage and deliver the programmes.

Experience of learning alongside adults can improve motivation and behaviour in young people. Community education supports young people by:

- Making the school a more friendly and sociable place.
- Presenting learning as something for all ages.
- Giving opportunities for social interaction.
- Improving communication between the school and its local community.
- Raising the reputation of the school in the local community.
2 Community Involvement

Community involvement brings many benefits. The range of knowledge and skills is far greater and along with the extra ‘manpower’ allows otherwise unachievable targets to be met.

With careful thought and planning, initial support can be obtained and built upon to develop a wider network of people with a common interest in growing food organically and promoting healthy eating.

School community

Hold a ‘get together’ where parents and their children are invited to share ideas for the school garden. Ask what they can offer, whether it is practical help, advice or donations of tools. Make it more of a social event with the offer of refreshments, perhaps food the pupils have made in school. Deliver a gardening workshop; people often enjoy doing something practical. Get those interested in helping further to sign up to attend a more structured meeting to plan and designate jobs.

Suggested activities to involve the school community

- Invite parents to a ‘digging day’ where they get the opportunity to garden alongside their child at school. This could be followed by a school lunch. It is really important to ensure that there is a list of jobs, and that all the necessary equipment is available so that all volunteers are occupied and feel valued.

- To encourage pupils to grow produce at home give them a seed or plant to take home and look after. Curriculum work can be done around this and they can report back on its progress. It could also result in a competition.

- If the school has plants in pots or grow bags that need looking after over the summer they can be adopted by families during the school holiday. For plants in the ground set up a rota for families to sign up to help with the watering and weeding. They can be rewarded during their turn by harvesting and using the produce.

- Ask pupils to give parents a tour of the garden at home time or before a parents’ evening.

Wider community

Involving the community brings a range of benefits. Neighbours, businesses, societies/clubs and the local authority can be great sources of advice, information, practical help and funding. Make a list of everyone you think might have an interest in helping your school in its growing activities. Your list might include some of the following contacts.
Suggested activities to involve the wider community

- Invite members of the wider community to your next garden planning meeting.
- Invite members of the school and the wider community to an event, eg a plant sale. The school could also host a seed, vegetable or fruit swap for the community where a glut can be exchanged for a different produce.
- Get involved in a local produce show or hold your own. Invite local producers to sell their produce.
- Have a celebration event, for example an apple day, harvest festival, picnic or garden party.
- Run garden activities at other school events, such as the summer fair. You could ask people to take a cutting of a herb, make a hibernation house or sow a mini salad garden in a tub.
- Teach the pupils about composting and then set them the task of training parents and community. Pupils can design flyers, write letters home inviting parents to a workshop, and produce articles on composting for local newsletters.

Think about the timing of the meetings/events. Hold them at times that would suit the majority. It may, of course, be necessary to arrange times to suit various groups. To help with the smooth running of an event make sure you complete a risk assessment (CEI) and have a checklist (see ‘Further information’).

Case Study

Minority Groups

Engagement with some areas of the community may be a little more challenging. English may not be their first language therefore making communication difficult. A head of a primary school in London was able to overcome this problem. He obtained a grant through Family Learning to employ a Bi-lingual Community Liaison Support Worker through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. The support worker went into the playground and spoke to the parents on a one-to-one basis encouraging them to attend events and functions. This proved to be very successful.
3 Volunteer management

Volunteers come from all age groups and walks of life. They have a passion to help make a difference and their energy and enthusiasm is invaluable. It’s vital that the time they dedicate and the skills they bring to a project are valued and maximised.

This section looks at the recruitment, management and training of volunteers.

Volunteers

The key difference in recruiting volunteers as opposed to paid staff is in the motivation of those who apply. Ask volunteers at the outset what they’d like to get from their experience. They may wish to meet new people, develop skills and feel needed. Look for ways to accommodate their needs whilst still achieving your goals.

As well as people who volunteer regularly throughout the year, consider recruiting for a particular time-limited project or recruit heavily for one-off events. People are more likely to volunteer when they can identify how their work will benefit others while also enhancing their personal satisfaction.

It’s common for people who don’t have regular contact with schools to think every job needs to be done at school and during school hours. Make a list of ‘flexi time’ and ‘work at home’ jobs to attract people who can’t help out during the day.

Ask people to make a general commitment of hours but be flexible when you can.

Recruitment

It is preferable if there is a main point of contact (volunteer co-ordinator) for volunteers. The person in this role would oversee the following activities.

- Recruit and interview volunteers.
- Ensure volunteers are aware of the recruitment process.
- Maintain the administration.
- Make sure volunteers are placed where their skills and experience will be of most benefit.
- Keep them informed.
- Be a ‘friendly face’ to approach with any issues.

Criminal Record Bureau check

Whether or not volunteers will need a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check will depend on the individual school policy. In general, if they are likely to be on their own with a group of children they will need a CRB check.
The Criminal Record Bureau provides checks for volunteers free of charge. The following definition is used by the CRB to decide whether a check should be free or paid for.

‘… a person who performs an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travelling and other out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives.’

See the Criminal Records Bureau website www.crb.gov.uk for full details and guidance. Another leaflet that may be useful is ‘Criminal Records Bureau: Managing Demand for Disclosures’. This gives guidance as to whether or not it is necessary for a volunteer in school to have a CRB check, and also includes a fact sheet for prospective volunteers. This leaflet can be found at www.teachernet.gov.uk.

**Job description**

Some people volunteer to build their skills and experience, which may lead to improved employment prospects. Many others donate their time because it makes them feel good about themselves. Job descriptions must therefore appeal to the motivations of volunteers. Consider carefully what tasks volunteers can do and try to be innovative to make it fun. The reasons for needing volunteers must be clear and reflect the overall goals. Duties and responsibilities should reflect these goals, and clearly demonstrate how they will meet objectives.

Writing job descriptions for volunteers may seem unnecessary and overly formal but they are as important for volunteers as they are for paid staff.

- They clarify what skills you need from people who will volunteer their time.
- They clearly define roles for you and your volunteers.
- Volunteers need to know what is expected of them.
- Tasks must be completed in order to meet specified goals.
- People are more likely to contribute their time when they know what tasks they will be doing.

When writing a job description make sure to keep sentences short and use terms denoting action and achievement ensuring the goals, tasks and responsibilities of the volunteer are clearly described. The following list will help you structure the job description.

- Job title
- Department
- Location
- Line manager
- Other working relationships
- Brief statement of why the job exists
- Job content
- Other information, eg clean driving licence

To measure performance you need a reference point, and job descriptions are essential when evaluating programmes involving volunteers. See CE2 for an example job description.
Advertising

Formal advertising can be expensive but there are many other ways of ‘getting the word out’. Possible options include, existing employees, school noticeboard, school website, sending a letter home with the children, hold a volunteer ‘open day’. People are much more likely to participate in a group if they know someone who is already a member. Ask existing volunteers to invite their friends to help out too. Target appropriate places to advertise, eg a garden centre, if looking for someone to care for the vegetable plot.

When advertising think about the content, design and timing of the advert. Include a description of the jobs to be carried out. Explain the duties of the position, likely time commitment, and other pertinent information. You’re more likely to find a good match for the position if you publicise it well. Before advertising a volunteer job, ask somebody who is not familiar with your organisation to proof read it for clarity.

Avoid advertising just before a holiday/shutdown period, because you may miss potential applicants who are on holiday or disillusion others who cannot contact the organisation for further information.

See the Silver and Gold booklet of the Food for Life Partnership Food Growing Manual for further information on advertising media and how to structure the content of an advert.

Don’t let volunteer applications sit around for weeks before you respond, even to people who expressed interest in helping at an event that is months away. People are much more likely to maintain interest if you make a connection immediately and keep them up-to-date periodically. Thank them for their interest and ask them if they would be able to help in more immediate ways.

Interview

This doesn’t need to be as formal as for selection for paid employment. It gives you the chance to discuss the volunteer’s skills and experience and match these to your needs. The volunteer will appreciate the opportunity to ask questions, have a look around the school/garden and meet the people with whom they will be working.

To ensure that you remember everything that needs to be covered when interviewing a potential volunteer, completing a checklist can be helpful. See CE3 for a sample checklist.

References

Before taking on any staff, either on a paid or voluntary basis, it is usual to request references. Information can be requested on a candidate’s recent employment, if applicable, or as to their character.

You should provide referees with a copy of the advertisement and job description. Ask the referee, in the light of their knowledge of the individual’s performance and experience, how well they believe the candidate might suit the job. See CE4 for an example reference request.
Induction

The induction process is an important activity. It enables volunteers to have a good overview, and a warm welcome will make them feel a valued member of the organisation. Introduce them to others and include them in conversations. If the work environment is pleasant they are more likely to want to continue to be involved. The following will help you plan the induction.

- Explain the work of your organisation and the volunteer’s place in it.
- When you have a new volunteer, have an experienced volunteer work with them to give them support and supervision. A good mentor will help the new volunteer feel more confident and be like a part of the team from the start.
- Help your volunteers understand how their role relates to your overall goals or mission.
- Set expectations from the start. Provide information on conditions of employment. This does not need to be as formal as for paid employment but will outline what is expected of the volunteer while they are with the school, eg adhering to the organisation’s rules and values.
- Explain the importance of confidentiality within the school.
- Give them a plan of the layout of the school.
- Make sure you give them a copy of the organisation’s policies and procedures, eg volunteer agreement, health and safety, first aid arrangements, etc.
- A volunteer agreement can be useful to make it clear what you expect from your volunteers and what support they can expect from you (sign a copy for each of you). See Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice for a sample volunteer agreement.
- Be clear in what you expect of volunteers in terms of hours and notification when they’ll be late or absent.
- Create a folder to include information on resources, tools, and key steps. Don’t forget items like tips for using the photocopier, how to access the tool shed, etc.
- Show them where to find the employee facilities, eg staff room, refreshments, toilets, etc.

Insurance

Ensure that you have adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst carrying out their volunteering roles.

Review

It’s vital to motivate and encourage volunteers, and providing opportunities for regular review will ensure they continue to enjoy the experience. See all volunteers on a regular one-to-one basis to confirm the value of their input and discuss any problems. This also helps to focus them on the contribution their role has in relation to the overall objectives of the organisation.

Hold regular meetings where they can meet as a group to socialise, and exchange information and knowledge. It is also an opportunity to update them on any necessary information, get their feedback, and deal with any general issues.

Show your appreciation

No matter whether the time donated was long or short, or how easy or difficult the task, let the volunteer know you appreciate their help. They could have chosen to spend their time elsewhere.
Motivate and appreciate

Motivation and appreciation go hand in hand. If someone feels appreciated they are more likely to be motivated to continue their association with your school and contribute fully. It is often the little things that make the biggest difference, as in the examples below.

- Say thank you.
- Include them in coffee breaks and social events.
- Recognise the contribution of particular volunteers in speeches at events and perhaps show appreciation with a small gift.
- Remember their birthday – give them a card.
- Now and then, if possible, pay them in kind for their work, eg give them some produce from the school garden.
- Ensure regular and long term volunteers have the same benefits as paid staff wherever possible, eg canteen discounts.
- Provide training opportunities.

Some general tips for maintaining a happy volunteer workforce

**DO ...**

- Promote an atmosphere that encourages new ideas. This will inspire volunteers and keep the group interested.
- Make sure your volunteers feel like part of the team
- Use people’s talents, not just their time, eg let the person who enjoys carpentry build your plant containers or the person who’s interested in graphic design create your publicity material.
- Celebrate your successes with your volunteers. A shared sense of accomplishment can be a powerful motivator.

**DON’T ...**

- Forget to inform the volunteer if plans change and they are no longer needed on this occasion.
- Make them stand around waiting while you gather materials to do the job. This is a waste of their time.
- Give them a job to do without the necessary instruction or the right tools to do the job properly; this can be very frustrating.
- Ask the volunteer to donate an hour of their time but keep them past this time until the job is done. They might think twice before committing to help out again.

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*Top tip*

**Time is precious**

New volunteers are often concerned that the time commitment will be too much. Remind them when their scheduled time for a particular session has ended.

**Top tip**

**People have different styles and abilities**

Wherever possible give volunteers the freedom to make the job their own.

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Make sure your volunteers feel part of the team. Include volunteers in coffee breaks and social events. Show appreciation – say ‘thank you’.
Training

After the initial training during induction, the training requirements of the volunteers will vary enormously as they will have a diverse array of skills and knowledge. Some training will be ‘on the job’ with permanent members of staff or experienced volunteers mentoring. It will be necessary to identify the particular needs of the organisation and those of the individual volunteers for more formal training to be planned and implemented. See the further information box at the end of this section for useful websites.

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4 Running a community meeting

This is a fantastic opportunity to let people know about the exciting work the school is doing to transform its food culture, with plenty of opportunity for them to share ideas of how they can get involved. It is fairly common in schools that many of the staff do not actually live in the local community, so holding a meeting that involves local people ensures their involvement from the start.

Running a community meeting isn't as daunting as it might sound.

Why hold a meeting?

Many meetings take place in a school and an effective meeting is an efficient communication tool. Meetings enable face-to-face contact between number of people at the same time. They provide a useful opportunity to cover the following.

- Co-ordinate or arrange activities.
- Give information to a group of people.
- Report on some activity or experience.
- Obtain assistance.
- Put forward ideas for discussion.
- Create involvement and interest.
- Gain useful local knowledge in terms of resources, people and activities.

There may also be an opportunity for some training as part of the meeting.

Meeting documents

Agenda

It is usually considered good practice for an agenda to be sent out to all prospective attendees prior to the meeting so that they can prepare adequately in order to make a valuable contribution.

An agenda is a list of topics to be discussed at the meeting. Items are listed in a certain order and numbered for easy reference. See CE5 for an example agenda. Once a date has been set for the meeting details need to be sent out to confirm the place, day, date, time of the meeting and agenda.

Have copies of the agenda ready at the start of the meeting.

CE5 Example agenda
Minutes

An accurate written record of meetings is essential not only for all those who attended the meeting but also for those who were unable to attend. There are different types of minutes but for an informal meeting the best type to use is what’s known as ‘minutes of narration’. These minutes are a brief summary of the discussion that took place, actions to be taken and decisions made. Each minute is numbered as this facilitates indexing. The order in which the minutes are typed always follows the order in which the items appeared on the agenda. As they are a record of what has taken place, minutes should be written in past tense, using third person and reported speech. See CE6 for example minutes.

The first meeting

Invite people to attend via the school newsletter, posters in school reception, etc, giving the date, time, venue and a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting. Ask them to confirm their attendance so that you know how many people to expect.

Try to keep the meeting as informal as possible. If the attendees do not know one another it is a good idea to ‘break the ice’ with a warm up activity. One example of this is to get the attendees in pairs and give them five minutes to ‘interview’ each other. Information they might gather could include the person’s name, relationship to the school, hobbies, reasons for their interest in attending the meeting, etc. Once they have gathered the information each person in turn introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group. This can take 15-20 minutes for about 10 people so make sure you allow enough time. Another warm up activity could focus on an area of food education, and this is an opportunity to offer some basic training.

It is at this stage that the facilitator should explain the main purpose of the meeting, which in this case, is how to engage the community in growing activities in school, at home and in the wider community. Discussion needs to take place as to how this has been done in the past and ideas for future engagement. To help focus the group carry out the activity ‘All aboard the hot air balloon’, see CE7. This activity sets the scene for more detailed planning at future meetings.

Producing an action plan

Taking into account the outcomes of the ‘All aboard the hot air balloon’ activity at the initial meeting, an action plan can be produced.

Split those attending into four groups. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper and a marker pen. Ask them to consider the ideas/suggestions from the initial meeting and write down their thoughts relating to the following four areas.

- Resources
- Community contacts
- Possible problems/difficulties
- Ideals

After 5-10 minutes move the groups round to the next sheet which they continue to add to until all four sheets have been completed. Ask the group as a whole, to choose three suggestions from each sheet they think are the most important. Concentrate on developing these suggestions into an action plan and allocate tasks to individuals so they immediately feel ownership of the project. See CE8 for an example action plan.
Follow-on meetings

Don’t forget to set a date for the next meeting and make sure you keep those who were unable to attend up to date.

Circulate the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting with actions clearly marked.

At the start of the next meeting, begin by going through the actions and look at progress made.

Supporting documents

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5 Holding events

Holding an event is an excellent and fun way to get the community working together. The involvement of the school and wider community brings benefits to all including promoting a friendly, safe and respectful environment.

The following gives some advice and guidance for holding an event.

**Types of events**

There are many different types of events that schools can hold throughout the year. Some suggestions are listed below.

- Festivals, eg Christmas, Diwali, etc.
- Award ceremony.
- Growing/cooking workshop.
- Summer fete.
- Bring and buy sale.
- Produce show.
- Digging day.
- Hosting a meal for local senior citizens.
- Parents’ and pupils’ breakfast day.
- Coffee morning.
- Seed/plant swap.
- Themed days, eg apple day, pumpkin day.
- Careers fair.
- Joint event with neighbouring school.

**Invitations**

Notify people that an event is to take place. Invitations can be displayed in different styles, eg poster, letter with reply slip, etc. Include the following information.

- What the event is.
- Where it is to be held.
- Who is invited and who is inviting them.
- Time, date, and duration of event.
- Information about replying, if appropriate.
- What refreshments will be available.

Send out invitations in plenty of time, so that people can enter the event in their diaries.

Keep a list of all invitations sent, and note returns, so that accurate numbers attending the event can be provided. This is particularly important where catering arrangements have to be made.
Normally when an event is to be organised a team of people is formed to deal with the practicalities. One person will have the main responsibility for overseeing the event with other people responsible for carrying out allocated tasks.

**Information for participants**

Participants are all those people who will be attending the event including those who are organising or taking part in it, contributors, eg stall holders, and visitors.

Make sure that all people involved in the event have the necessary information. Information about dates, etc is usually included in the initial invitation or correspondence. However, follow-up information is often needed to ensure that the event runs smoothly.

Compile a list of participants and confirm this with the person organising the event. Issue the invitations and keep a list of those who have agreed to attend. Other more detailed information such as dietary requirements, disabled facilities, etc may be needed to ensure the smooth running of the event.

**Venue**

A suitable place for holding the event has to be agreed before final arrangements can be made.

Most schools have a school hall, playground and/or playing field. A neighbouring school could also be a possible location. Check the availability of the venue with the appropriate person, eg school secretary, and make a formal booking.

The venue should be big enough to accommodate all the participants. This may be for a range of activities, eg produce show, harvest festival, seed sowing workshop, etc. Work out accurate numbers for the event.

- How many will be seated.
- The size of workshop groups.
- The numbers who will require refreshments.

Note: The number of people using a room is limited by fire regulations.

**Refreshments and food arrangements**

Agree the refreshments to be provided with the organiser of the event. Refreshments can include the following.

- Table refreshments – water, fruit juice, and fruit/nuts.
- Coffee and tea.
- Breakfast – taken informally in the school dining room.
- Lunches – can range from sandwiches and fruit to light meals or a barbecue.
- Dinners – the main meal, and if it is included as part of a programme it is usually a more formal affair, eg hosting a meal for the local senior citizens.

**Top tip**

**Choice of venue**

When organising any event ensure the suitability of the venue. This will depend on a number of factors.

- Size – how many people will be attending?
- Who will be coming?
- Budget.
- Type of event.
- Availability and location.
- Equipment and other facilities required.
- Car parking/public transport links.

**Showcase skills**

Events are a good place to showcase the school’s catering expertise or standard of school meal. Pupils could also be involved with preparing refreshments, such as making soup from school-grown produce.
The following people may be able to help organise/prepare refreshments.

- Parent/teacher association.
- Pupils.
- Volunteers.
- School catering staff.
- Teaching staff.

The provision of any special dietary requirements should always be checked in advance with those preparing the refreshments. There should always be a vegetarian choice.

**Equipment**

Check if any of the following types of equipment will be needed, so that it can be organised in advance.

- Overhead projector.
- Whiteboard.
- Flip chart and easel.
- Video camera/player.
- Computer presentation.
- Data projector.
- Portable display system and show board.

**Seating/tables**

Depending on the type of event, eg a presentation, seating may be required. Seating should be arranged so that everyone can clearly hear and see the speaker(s).

For workshops a number of tables with seating may be organised for informal discussion in small groups.

If there are stalls to set up or practical activities taking place make sure the tables are of the correct size and height and that you have enough to accommodate the number of people participating. Make sure that each activity/stall is clearly labelled so that participants are aware of what is happening at each station.

**Name badges**

It can be helpful for all participants to have name badges. These could be made by the pupils prior to the event or have blank labels available for the participants to fill in for themselves.
**Briefing contributors and core staff**

*Contributors*  Contact the contributors, eg stall holders, about their willingness to participate in an event by letter, email or telephone. Once they have agreed to take part, confirm the following with them in writing.

- Date, time, and duration of event.
- Venue.
- Purpose of the event.
- Their exact contribution to the event.
- Any equipment they will need.
- Materials and information they will provide.
- Support they need prior to the event, eg setting up stand/stall.

The final briefing may take place prior to the event in two forms as follows.

- By telephone to check that they have all the information needed.
- At a meeting of all contributors arranged by the main organiser.

*Core event staff*  The main organiser has responsibility for all arrangements. Those involved in the carrying out of other tasks for the event will need to work very closely with the main organiser over the arrangements.

At the initial briefing there will be discussion of the following.

- Delegate list, if appropriate.
- Timing and date of event.
- Possible venue.
- Draft programme.
- Invitations.
- Information and documents required.
- Possible contributors and staff involvement.

Intermediate meetings may then be held to agree and finalise all of the above arrangements. The final briefing consists of checking on finalised details and discussion of any last minute arrangements.

**Facilities**

There are a number of facilities that may be required.

- Parking.
- Facilities for the disabled.
- Audiovisual facilities.
- Refreshment facilities.
- Toilet facilities.

**Arrangements on the day and after an event**

A great deal of careful planning goes into organising an event. The attention to last minute detail can make all the difference to the smooth running of the event.
Final check of facilities, venue and equipment

On the day of the event make last minute checks.
- Satisfactory room temperature and ventilation.
- Room has been set out as required.
- Health and safety, eg fire exits are not blocked.
- Notices and signs have been placed inside the building and outside to clearly indicate the location of the event.
- Sufficient programmes and leaflets.
- Confirm arrangements for refreshments.
- Confirm any equipment requested is available and in working order.

Meet and greet

Prepare a rota for greeting people arriving at the event. There should always be someone available throughout the event to relay messages and greet late arrivals.

Depending on the type of event have the following resources and information available.
- Name badges, pens.
- Delegate list.
- Delegate register/signing-in sheet for records in case of emergency.
- Spare programmes.
- Information about the venue, cloakroom facilities, parking, room location, fire exits, toilets.
- Feedback forms, if appropriate.

Back-up plan

Careful planning should minimise any last minute problems. However, unexpected events can occur. The problems that can arise fall into the following categories.
- People – illness or delay of key participants.
- Venue – failure of heating or ventilating systems.
- Equipment – lack of suitable working equipment.
- Printed materials – shortage or lack of publicity materials.

Top tip
Check progress
Regular updates on the progress of arrangements for the event should be carried out on an ongoing basis.

Top tip
Staffing levels
More people may be needed at the beginning and end of the event, and during breaks.
When planning events it is a good idea to have a contingency plan.

**Venue**
If the venue is unavailable for any reason, it may be possible to use an alternative room. Put up notices at convenient points in the building informing people of the change of venue.

**Equipment**
If back-up is needed for equipment it may be useful to have the following.

- List of types and location of audiovisual equipment on-site.
- Contact details of local equipment hire companies.
- Contact details of local stationery and equipment suppliers, eg suppliers of overhead projector bulbs.

Always make sure you have the following spare items.

- Flip chart and marker pens.
- Blank overhead transparency sheets and marker pens.
- Spare name badges.
- Lined paper, pens, and pencils.

**Printed materials**
The following measures can be taken to ensure back-up of printed materials.

- Delay in receiving materials from printer – photocopy sufficient copies from originals or from file on computer.
- Photocopier out of action – use alternative on-site copier, or take to a print agency for copying.

**Monitoring the event**
The progress of the event should be monitored at the following key points.

**Start of the event**
Ensure attendees are being greeted, room is organised, materials and refreshments are available, deal with any enquiries from attendees, eg parking, dietary requirements.

**Refreshment breaks**
Check with key personnel that the event is proceeding according to plan, pass on any messages that may have arrived.

**Close of the event**
Collect feedback forms, if appropriate; deal with any enquires, thank people for attending.

Provide the key people at the event with contact details for the main organiser and/or each other, during the course of the event if emergencies should arise.

Inform the school reception staff about the event and contact details.

**Post event de-brief meeting**
This is very useful to assess what was particularly successful and gather ideas/suggestions to aid the planning of future such events.

**Further information**
Food Growing Manual
A1 Hosting an annual event
A2 Organising a gardening day
T1 Event checklist
6  Supporting documents CE1-8

This section includes a template risk assessment form, and example documents which have been referenced throughout this booklet. These resources provide useful guidance to help you in the recruitment of volunteers and the successful running of community meetings.

<p>| CE1 | Risk assessment | Page 22 |
| CE2 | Example job description | Page 23 |
| CE3 | Interview checklist | Page 24 |
| CE4 | Example reference request | Page 25 |
| CE5 | Example agenda | Page 27 |
| CE6 | Example minutes | Page 28 |
| CE7 | All aboard the hot air balloon activity | Page 29 |
| CE8 | Action plan | Page 32 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard Identified</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Worst Case Outcome</th>
<th>Probability Rating</th>
<th>Score Risk Level (Outcome x Probability)</th>
<th>Control Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High – Certain Death</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium – Serious Injury</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low – Treatable Injury</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Low – Injury Unlikely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Remotely</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Volunteer Gardener</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Any School, School Lane, Coventry  CV8 3LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line manager</td>
<td>Joe Green, Garden Club Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>Hours to suit volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other working relationships</td>
<td>Other volunteers, teaching staff, school caretaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main purpose of job</td>
<td>To help in the maintenance of the school garden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Job content

- Carry out horticultural tasks for designated areas of the garden, and other areas of school grounds as necessary.
- Tasks to be carried out as part of a team and alone when the need arises.
- Machinery should only be used on completion of induction training on the equipment and must comply with the health and safety guidelines.
- Work safely, paying attention to the safety of others including the general public.
- The post holder will be expected to comply with the no smoking policy in place.

### Other information

All gardening supplies and equipment will be provided. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Bring sunscreen and insect repellent.

Date: XX-XX-XXXX
CE3 Interview checklist

Before
- Familiarise yourself with the job description.
- Read any information potential volunteer has sent you.
- Make sure people who will be working with the volunteer will be available at the time of interview.
- Arrange the interview at an appropriate time and place.
- Book the room, if necessary.
- Inform the applicant well in advance, providing all necessary details.
- Notify school office/reception.
- Ensure you have drinking water and glasses.

During
- Start on time.
- Start with a welcome
- Seek to establish a rapport.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Ask relevant questions.
- Allow the applicant time to tell you how they think their skills and experience will be of benefit, and listen actively to what they say.
- Provide brief information on the school and the role of the volunteer.
- Allow sufficient time for the applicant to ask any questions.
- Take brief notes.
- Summarise.
- Close on a positive note, thank the applicant and let them know what will happen next.

Afterwards
- Compare the skills and experience of the applicant against the job description.
- Decide where their placement will have most benefit.
- Follow-up the interview with a letter, thanking them for attending and details of their volunteer placement.
Dear Mr Choudry

Jenny Cole has kindly offered to be a volunteer for Any School in Coventry, in the role of gardener. At our request she has named you as a referee and we should be grateful if you would complete the attached form and return it to us. The aim of this is to confirm the identity of the volunteer and ensure their suitability for the role. There are no legal implications for you in supplying this reference and your returned form will be treated as confidential. Jenny’s role will involve:

- Weeding
- Planting
- Pruning
- Sowing and potting-on
- Other general garden maintenance

I would like to thank you in advance for your help in acting as a referee for this volunteer. Volunteers are very valuable to us, so your help is appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Amelia Johnson
Volunteer Co-ordinator
**Referee response form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of volunteer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of referee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long have you known this person?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your relationship to them (eg friend, colleague, employer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please say whether you feel that this person is suitable for the role described.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please give a brief character description of the volunteer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your signature............................................................................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**

*Any School, School Lane, Coventry  CV8 3LG*
### CE5 Example agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Any School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee name</td>
<td>Garden Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place, day, date and time of meeting</td>
<td>A meeting of the Garden Group will be held in Meeting Room 1 on Monday 14 February XXXX at 4pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the heading AGENDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These three items of ordinary business are included on every Agenda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special business is listed separately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish all agendas with these final two items of ordinary business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Food Growing drop-in day
5. Trip to Garden Organic, Ryton
6. Herb growing workshop
7. Composting in school
8. Any other business
9. Date of next meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>JG/KL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>7 January XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minutes of a meeting of the Garden Group held in Meeting Room 1 on Monday 14 February XXXX at 4pm.

PRESENT
Mal Choudry (Chairman), Liz Allman, Siobhan Brown, Michael Deakin, John Granger, Laurie Greenwood, Baljit Kaur, Vicky Rhodes, Kerry Smith, Andy Simpson (Head teacher), Joanne Thurlaston, Teresa Waters, Laura Whitlow (Assistant head), 6 pupils

ACTION
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
No apologies were received.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING
The minutes of the last meeting were signed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING
There were no matters arising.

4 FOOD GROWING DROP-IN DAY
To encourage pupils and their parents to grow plants at home it was decided to hold a Food Growing Drop-in day. The date of 11 March was agreed with the Head teacher. Mal Choudry would take the lead in organising the event with involvement from the Garden Club pupils. John Granger agreed to run drop-in training for parents and their children during the day. Kerry Smith proposed that the school cook be asked to run cooking activities alongside.

5 TRIP TO RYTON GARDENS
It was agreed that Year 4 pupils would visit Garden Organic during the spring term. Laura Whitlow would phone Garden Organic to arrange a date for visit and pre-visit risk assessment.

6 HERB GROWING WORKSHOP
It was decided that John Granger would run a herb planting workshop. The herbs to be used in the school kitchen.

7 COMPOSTING IN SCHOOL
It was reported that Master Composters for Schools training was available through Ryton Gardens, Coventry. It was proposed that Joanne Thurlaston would attend the course; date to be arranged.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS
There was no other business.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING
It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in Meeting Room 1 on Tuesday 1 March XXXX.

............................................................ (Chairman) ........................................... (Date)

JG/KL 17 February XXXX
The aim of this activity is to get people to discuss and brainstorm ideas of how community engagement has been attempted/achieved in the past and if any improvements can be made. It will help focus discussion on different areas of development. These discussions can then set the stage for future more detailed planning sessions, and be a useful source of reference regarding local contacts and potential community support for the school.

**Resources**

- A flip chart
- Coloured pens
- A large print out of the illustrated hot air balloon and smaller versions
- White tack for walls

**Activity**

1. Display the large picture of a hot air balloon.
2. Tell the group that the balloon represents community engagement in the school.
3. Together, the group need to think about issues around the future of it as follows:
   - Who needs to be on board? (Write inside the balloon basket)
   - What needs to be in place for community engagement to take off? (Write on the balloon)
   - What is holding back community engagement in the school? (Write next to tethering rope)
   - What can really make it fly? (Write above the balloon)
   - What might blow the balloon off course? (Write either side of the balloon representing wind buffeting the balloon off course)
4. The people are split into small groups and each group completes a balloon sheet.
   - Note: Feedback from each group is written onto one large balloon picture and can be debated as time allows.
5. Facilitator to draw conclusions together at the end of the session.
### Suggested answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who needs to be on board?</th>
<th>What is holding community engagement back in schools?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Head</td>
<td>• Lack of time/capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff</td>
<td>• Lack of resources (money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Senior management team</td>
<td>• Fear of unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pupils</td>
<td>• Mistrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents</td>
<td>• Bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grandparents</td>
<td>• Cultural divide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governors</td>
<td>• Lethargy/negativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caterers</td>
<td>• Lack of direction/guidance/management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Site manager</td>
<td>• Old ideas/lack of inspiration/embedded ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local residents</td>
<td>• Lack of recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local experts</td>
<td>• Lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local organisations (businesses, Local Authority, community liaison officers, councillors)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Old people’s homes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Horticultural society</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community allotments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Other local schools</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What needs to be in place for community engagement to take off?</th>
<th>What can really make it fly?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Positive engagement and clear perception of what schools mean by involvement</td>
<td>• Real sense of purpose and direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ownership for volunteers</td>
<td>• Valuing volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong volunteer policy</td>
<td>• Having open minded people in support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) process</td>
<td>• Free resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive attitudes of staff</td>
<td>• Community pride/ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trained staff (eg workshop on how to manage volunteers, staff skills audit)</td>
<td>• Local press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involvement of local stakeholders (knowing who to contact – WI, Rotary, churches, wildlife groups, scouts, youth groups, growing groups)</td>
<td>• Awards/rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Timetable/planning/timeline</td>
<td>• Strong ethos</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Time/capacity</td>
<td>• Strong, well organised team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>• Sharing leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Openness</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benefits</td>
<td>• Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agreed shared goal</td>
<td>• Support from outside individuals/organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideas/activities</td>
<td>• Celebration of project (events, food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication (variety of media) and clear aims and objectives, creating right task for the group, matching up talents and skills, clear reason why</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What might blow the balloon of course?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Individual agendas (people taking over/strong personalities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not valuing volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not valuing the celebration of achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No follow up/poor continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of organisation and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People leaving/heavy reliance on one person/change of personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-supportive head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• End of Food for Life Partnership project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bad press/reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complacency</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Illustration: David Tant
Any School - Garden action plan

Meeting held: 26 November XXXX

Garden Group

Liz Allman, Siobhan Brown, Mal Choudry, Michael Deakin, John Granger, Laurie Greenwood, Baljit Kaur, Kerry Smith

Next meeting to be held: 5 January XXXX

Ideas and Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to do and how</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When by</th>
<th>Progress/detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build bottle greenhouse</td>
<td>Mal, School staff / parents/ pupils</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>School to publicise project through newsletter to parents. Collect bottles!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composting in school</td>
<td>JG</td>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>JG to contact school bursar, re composting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herb growing for school kitchen</td>
<td>Baljit/ school cook</td>
<td>Spring term</td>
<td>Decide which herbs to grow and plant up in planters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Nov – Parents involved in conifer work. Visits to allotment Spring and repeat in Summer – dates to be arranged. Possible involvement of local church and local retirement village.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children and parents growing at home: “Food Growing Drop in Day”</td>
<td>JG</td>
<td>Thurs 11 March – date agreed with SB</td>
<td>JG to run drop-in training for parents and their children during the day. School to publicise this, JG to supply suggested materials. School Cook to be asked to run cooking activity alongside. Garden club pupils to be involved with engaging parents in school growing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pupil involvement: Trip to Garden Organic Ryton</td>
<td>School to decide</td>
<td>Spring term</td>
<td>School to select classes/pupils and book visit.</td>
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Other information

School cook to use produce, eg herbs from the garden. Local Authority caterers want produce to be washed before it is taken to the kitchen.

Further support available

Master Composter for Schools training, Ryton Gardens, Coventry. An opportunity for a member of staff to become fully trained in composting methods and how to pass this message on to other schools/wider community.
7 Case studies

Engaging with the local community raises the profile of the school and shows parents the school’s commitment to food and food culture.

It is not always easy to get community members into school and the following examples include inspiring ideas of ways in which schools have involved the community.

**Food festival, Boroughbridge High School, North Yorkshire**

The school held a food festival on a Saturday to which they invited parents, members of the wider community and local producers. They also invited the Year 6 pupils who would be starting at the school in the September, and their parents. The pupils and parents were really enthused by what the school was doing around food culture and were keen to help in the garden when they started at the school in September.

The event was located next to the school garden so that people could view the garden on their way into the main event. There was a variety of stalls selling local produce, many of which were manned by parents, and ex-pupils who had gone into business, including:

- butchers – who gave butchery demonstrations
- meat stall
- Goosemoor Organics – who sold organic vegetables
- pies
- pickles
- jams
- bakery

Other attractions included:

- Chef – who gave cookery demonstrations and tasting sessions.
- School kitchen had a stall selling refreshments.
- Recipe swop – with the older members of the community providing traditional recipes; the school hope to form a book from the recipes.
- Raffle and tombola – with prizes of local produce provided by the stall holders.
- The ASDAN group made elderflower cordial and marmalade, and planted tubs with tomatoes, basil and flowers for sale.

One person was heard to comment that she wished she hadn’t done her shopping beforehand, as there was so much fantastic local produce available. The day was very successful and the school plans to hold the event annually.
Seed sowing workshops, St Gregory and St Patrick Infant School, Whitehaven

This school took an unusual approach to engaging their community in food growing. An Education Officer from Garden Organic provided practical advice on seed sowing to a group of trainee teachers who were on placement at the school. These students then invited families into school and passed their skills and knowledge on to the community, showing them how to sow garlic and broad beans in paper pots. This helped them to demonstrate their ability to engage with the school’s wider community. Families were able to take their pots home and watch the seedlings grow.

Members of the community are also invited into school every year for a grounds day where as part of a large menu of activities they can help to plant fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers in the containers that are outside every classroom.

Farmers’ market, Lydgate Infant School, Sheffield

The school held a farmers’ market at the end of a school day so that every family attended. The pupils prepared labels, programmes, and printed bags and paper ready for the event. The school garden was open for people to view and the whole event received fantastic feedback from parents. There were a variety of stalls including:

- local farm sold radishes that the pupils had grown on their visit there. They also made smoothies for sale
- local museum
- international stall – parents made international dishes for sale and set up a display about how lentils, etc are grown abroad
- composting – demonstrating composting, compost recipe sheets

Every class prepared or grew something to sell. Items were labelled showing if they were organic or made from local produce including:

- pressed flower bookmarks
- plants
- cut-and-come-again salad
- cakes, baked by classes in the cooking club
- egg shells in which cress was grown

Competition – guess the weight of Lisa the school chicken.

Food prepared and sold by the school kitchen.

Pupils made ‘bug’ bookmarks and greetings cards for sale.
Garden Organic is the UK’s leading organic growing charity, and is dedicated to researching and promoting organic gardening, farming and food. We are driven by an enduring passion and belief, founded on over 50 years of research and practice, that organic methods provide a healthy, sustainable life for us all.

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Registered charity no 298104 Garden Organic is the working name of the Henry Doubleday Research Association.

The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. The Partnership is led by the Soil Association with the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. Together we work to revolutionise school meals, reconnect young people with where their food comes from and inspire families to cook and grow food.