

School Meals Scrutiny Review

Food for Life Partnership & Flagship Award Scheme

1. The Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. It brings together the expertise of four food focussed charities, helping schools across England to change their food culture and revolutionise their school meals.
2. The Partnership uses food as a way to improve the whole school experience – making lunchtimes a positive feature of the day and enriching classroom learning with farm visits and practical cooking and growing.
3. Over 4,500 Schools across England are enrolled on the programme. They are growing their own food; organising trips to farms; sourcing food from local bakers, butchers and farmers; setting up school farmers' markets; holding community food events; providing cooking and growing clubs for pupils and their families; and serving freshly prepared, locally sourced meals that follow a rigorous Food for Life Catering Mark.
4. 'Food for Life Partnership' schools are also embedding food education into their curriculum, and a focus on 'pupil voice' means pupils take ownership and decide their own priorities. The Partnership is about bringing people together – teachers, pupils, families, cooks, caterers, farmers and the wider community – to enjoy good, wholesome food and change food culture in England significantly.
5. Three major independent research programmes have shown the impact the partnership is having. They reveal that due to the Food for Life Partnership children are eating more fruit and vegetables; that the programme helps 'close the gap' in health and academic attainment between disadvantaged children and their peers; schools show a significant increase in free school meal uptake which is crucial in encouraging healthy eating habits; and twice as many primary schools received an Outstanding Ofsted rating after working with the programme.
6. The Food for Life Partnership runs an Award Scheme designed to implement positive changes in schools, that are achievable and sustainable in partnership with their caterers. The Food for Life Partnership Mark awards achievement at three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. For each award, there is a set of criteria centred around four areas of development:
 - Food leadership
 - Food education
 - Food quality and provenance
 - Food culture & community involvement