



# The Nottingham Seed-to-Fork Primary Education Guide

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*Growing healthy habits in Nottingham City Primary schools and Community*

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A collaborative project with schools, Nottingham Growing Network and Nottingham City Sustainable Food Partnership



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## 1. Introduction



This guide brings together the local food system to support healthier schools and healthier futures. It was developed in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, the University of Nottingham, Nottingham City Council's AchieveWell team, Public Health Nottingham, local schools, community gardens and the Nottingham Growing Network,

It is designed for Nottingham City schools and helps embed a whole school approach to food education by linking growing, cooking, eating and sustainability across teaching, the school environment and the wider community. The framework provides support for clear planning and self-evaluation so that schools can offer coherent and meaningful gardening and growing food experiences for all pupils.

This work is shaped by a Seed-to-Fork (S2F) framework, which describes the journey from growing food to preparing and eating it. The toolkit uses this model to help schools build connected and practical learning, offering guidance, criteria, and examples of effective practice. It also aligns with statutory requirements and supports wider aims related to health, wellbeing and sustainability, helping schools review their current provision and identify priorities for development.

To support this process, the guide includes a simple self-assessment, a stage guide, planning materials based on the Seed-to-Fork cycle, links to local growers and organisations and an action plan template to turn priorities into practical steps.

## 2. How the toolkit supports statutory and award frameworks



# ACHIEVE WELL IMPACT AWARDS

Developed around the statutory curriculum and health and wellbeing requirements. It supports clear progression in Science, Design and Technology and PSHE by guiding staff to develop coherent learning that builds knowledge, practical skills, and confidence. It also offers strong evidence for Ofsted personal development through its focus on healthy eating, environmental responsibility, character building, and inclusion.

The structured approach encourages the whole school community to reflect on current practice, celebrate strengths, and identify manageable next steps. This reflective process links closely with the Achieve Well Awards, which recognises schools that demonstrate commitment to health and wellbeing through leadership, curriculum integration, pupil engagement and community partnership. The toolkit therefore provides a helpful way to meet statutory expectations while supporting schools that wish to work towards local quality assurance awards such as Achieve Well awards recognition.

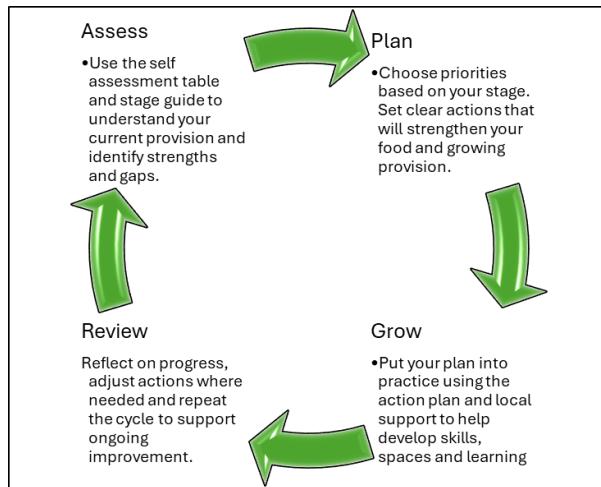
### 3. How to use the toolkit: The Seed-to-Fork cycle



At the heart of this toolkit is the Assess, Plan, Grow, Review cycle, a practical framework shaped around the natural rhythm of growing and learning. It reflects the view that food education is strongest when it develops gradually, season by season, and becomes part of everyday school life rather than a stand-alone project.

The cycle supports a whole school approach by linking leadership, curriculum, environment and community involvement in an ongoing process of reflection, action and improvement. Each stage builds on the one before it and connects with the core themes in this toolkit, helping schools create provision that is sustainable, inclusive and fully embedded across school life. The cycle is flexible, allowing schools to begin at any point and move at a pace suited to their setting, resources and priorities.

Over time, this steady and iterative process supports confident practice, stronger partnerships and meaningful growth that reflects the needs and values of the whole school community.



#### 4. Assess



Start by using the self-assessment table, which is built around the six core themes developed together with schools, universities, local growers, community gardens, and public health partners. They reflect what these stakeholders felt matters most in real school settings and captures the essential ingredients of effective food education. Together, they cover ethos, pupils' needs, curriculum, learning environments, safety, and community engagement. These themes provide a clear whole school picture and offer a straightforward way to assess current practice and identify where improvement is needed.

#### **4.1. How to use the assessment table.**



Use this matrix to assess your current Seed-to-Fork (S2F) provision and identify strengths and areas for development. The 12 sub-themes cover curriculum, leadership, environment, and community engagement, helping you take a whole-school view. Each area should be scored using the RAG system to support planning and tracking over time.

**Scoring guidance:**

- **Red (1 point):** Not yet in place or minimal activity
- **Amber (2 points):** Some activity or early-stage development
- **Green (3 points):** Well-established and consistently applied

Once scored, total your points (out of 36) to see where your school sits within the four-stage matrix below.

#### 4.2. Self-assessment table (use this table to score each theme using the RAG system and add your total at the end)



Theme	Subtheme	Good practice examples	R	A	G
1. Whole School Seed-to-Fork Ethos	School vision and policies include sustainability, health, and food education	The school has a clear, shared vision for food, growing, and healthy living that is understood by staff, pupils, and families. Policies recognise the value of practical food and growing experiences and support staff to build them into everyday school life.			
	Seed-to-Fork program is adequately resources, prioritized and monitored	Named Seed-to-Fork coordinator, link governor, staff time or budget, review process and impact assessment in place.			
2. Meeting pupils needs	Growing and cooking are accessible for all pupils	All learners can participate in a full Seed-to-Fork cycle, engagement is tracked and monitored for differences in demographics. Inclusion of different cultural, religious, dietary, and neurodivergent needs is clear and evident.			
	Pupil voice shapes Seed-to-Fork provision	Pupils voice is regularly sought, and food and growing provision is shaped by pupils' input.			
3. Comprehensive Seed-to-Fork in PSHE and the wider Curriculum	The wider school curriculum includes growing, cooking and eating while building understanding of the natural world.	There are clear cross curriculum links between subjects that connect growing, cooking, and eating.			
	Curriculum address Key concepts at age-appropriate levels	Key ideas about food, growing and sustainability are introduced in age-appropriate ways. Pupils learn where food comes from and how it changes through the seasons. Growing and food topics appear across relevant subjects, so concepts build over time.			
4. Learning is applied inside and outside school	All Pupils are actively engaged in growing, harvesting, cooking/preparing and eating what they grow on a regular basis.	All year groups are engaged in all parts of the Seed-to-Fork growing cycle. Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in a range of curricular and non-curricular activities from growing, preparing or preparing and eating produce as well as composting, weeding and harvesting.			
	Activities build practical life skills.	Pupils develop practical skills such as sowing, planting, harvesting, preparing, and cooking produce that is grown. Skills build progressively across year groups with age-appropriate tasks that pupils can complete with increasing independence.			
5. A safe, supportive environment	Safeguarding and pastoral support are embedded with clear monitoring and reporting.	Safeguarding concerns are recorded and reported through school systems and provision follows statutory best practice in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education guidelines when involving volunteers.			
	Food that is grown is served is safe for consumption.	Catering staff oversee food storage and preparation, and any food work with children is properly assessed and supervised. Buildings, equipment and growing areas are regularly risk and hygiene assessed.			
6. Engaging local networks families and the wider community	All staff are confident in supporting a Seed-to-Fork curriculum delivery	Staff feel confident supporting food and growing activities and have access to relevant CPD. Training is recorded and used to shape planning and improve practice.			
	Information is shared with families to promote Seed-to-Fork at home	The school links with external food and gardening networks for support. Families receive simple information to support growing and cooking at home. Practical resources are shared, such as recipes, tips or QR links. The school connects families with local gardens and growing networks. Families are asked for their views on food and growing plans. There are regular chances for families to take part in food and growing activities.			
		Total score			

**4.3. Stage Matrix (use your score to see which developmental stage your S2F provision is at and how you can build on this)**



<p><b>Score: 31–36: The Blooming Stage</b>      Seed-to-Fork is fully in place across the school. It's part of teaching, part of the environment, and clearly valued by staff and pupils.</p> <p><b>Key Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The self-assessment table shows mostly green ratings, with strong activity across all themes.</li> <li>Provision is well embedded, and the themes consistent and supported across the whole school and is formally embedded in a whole school approach through policy and school vision.</li> </ul> <p><b>How you could build on this</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider sharing surplus produce with local food banks or community food projects and link this to wider pupil development.</li> <li>Explore more complex food preparation such as juicing, drying or simple preserving.</li> <li>Develop small pupil led enterprise ideas that make creative use of harvests.</li> <li>Build specialist partnerships with growers, chefs or food producers.</li> <li>Look for opportunities to support other schools or contribute to local growing networks.</li> <li>Look at longer term planning so that food and growing remain consistent over time.</li> <li>Consider simple ways to track the wider impact on pupils' wellbeing and engagement.</li> <li>Look at joining food, sustainability and climate work into one shared strategy.</li> <li>Look at how food and growing can form part of pupil and family transition.</li> <li>Consider building monitoring or reflection into leadership reviews.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score: 25–30: The Budding stage</b>      The school has made a good start with Seed-to-Fork, and there are clear signs of progress. Most elements are working well, and there's an interest in building what's already in place.</p> <p><b>Key Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The self-assessment table shows mainly amber ratings with some green, reflecting developing activity.</li> <li>Provision is becoming more established, with increasing consistency across most themes but is not yet formally embedded into policy or school vision.</li> </ul> <p><b>How you could build on this</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out a formal audit or review to assess consistency, curriculum coverage, and gaps among pupils, parents, and staff.</li> <li>Maintain or strengthen your working group, ensuring representation across year groups, subject leads, and a link governor to support accountability and governance.</li> <li>Integrate S2F more deeply into curriculum planning, across subjects such as science, DT, PSHE etc.</li> <li>Consider expanding use of outdoor space, ensuring it is accessible, timetabled, and increasingly used as a teaching and learning environment.</li> <li>Broaden access to training and ensure that all staff can lead or support S2F activity confidently.</li> <li>Formalise community partnerships and visit opportunities, developing termly or annual cycles that include visits, guest speakers, or collaborative growing/cooking projects.</li> <li>Offer pupils in classes wider leadership roles, such as mentoring, leading small projects or seasonal tasks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Score 18–24: The Seedling stage</b>      The school is exploring how Seed-to-Fork could be part of its wider offer. Some activities may already be taking place, but they aren't yet consistent, planned across year groups, or supported by specific roles.</p> <p><b>Key Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The self-assessment table shows a mix of red and amber ratings, with inconsistent activity across the themes.</li> <li>Provision is emerging with some themes becoming evident but still mainly isolated practice with no overall whole school approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>How You Could Build on This:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete or update a whole-school audit, focusing on curriculum links, space, staff skills, and external opportunities.</li> <li>Ensure a working group is in place, with representation from across staff teams and a link member of SLT or a leader involving a governor with an interest in food or sustainability.</li> <li>Refine your S2F vision and priorities, linking them clearly to school improvement, inclusion, wellbeing, and pupil voice.</li> <li>Deliver activities like growing, cooking, or food-themed lessons.</li> <li>Develop and strengthen relationships with local partners, such as organising trips to gardens or exploring food systems.</li> <li>Track participation, feedback, and start shaping a simple monitoring approach that can grow with the programme.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Score: 12–17: The Sprouting stage</b>      The school has not yet focused on Seed-to-Fork as an area of development. There may be interest, but no structured work, coordination, or long-term planning is in place.</p> <p><b>Key Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The self-assessment table shows mostly red ratings, with limited activity across themes.</li> <li>Practice across the themes is minimal and not yet established.</li> </ul> <p><b>How You Could Build from Here</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run a school-wide audit of existing provision, curriculum links, physical space, staff confidence, and community partnerships.</li> <li>Establish a working group (including staff and an SLT link) to guide next steps and coordinate efforts.</li> <li>Gather pupil and parent voice to shape priorities and build shared ownership.</li> <li>Create a shared vision for Seed-to-Fork that aligns with school values and priorities and agree realistic short and long-term goals.</li> <li>Identify training needs and plan CPD linked to growing, cooking, and curriculum integration.</li> <li>Develop the foundations for quality assurance, including an action plan and monitoring methods.</li> <li>Engage with local groups, including community gardens, food educators, or council services, to explore early opportunities for visits or partnerships.</li> </ul>

## 5. Plan

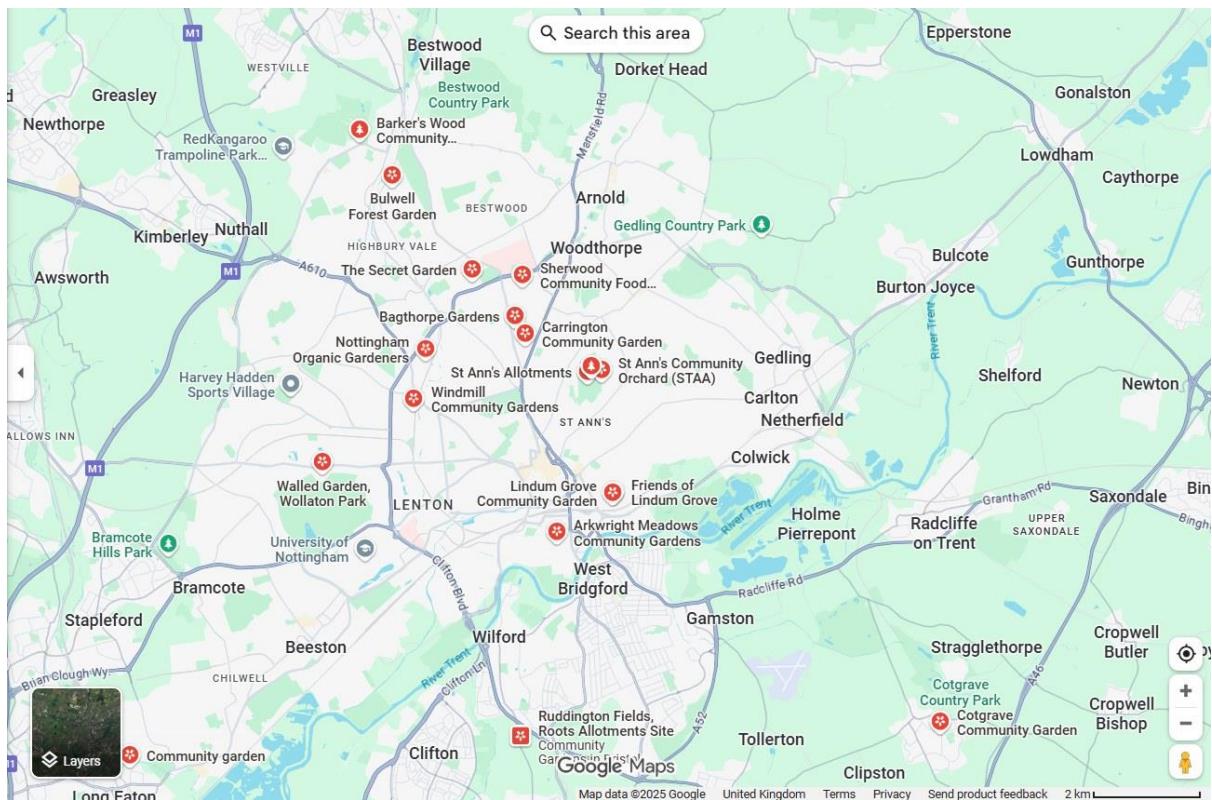


This phase is about setting clear, achievable steps before moving into delivery, using the planning tools and local links provided in the toolkit. After completing the self-assessment and identifying your stage, use this phase to decide what you want to improve. Focus on a small number of priorities that will have the greatest impact on pupils, staff and the wider school environment. These priorities should link to the areas where your RAG ratings were lower or where practice is inconsistent. Use the planning section to outline clear actions, responsibilities and timescales so you have a realistic path forward before moving into delivery.

## 5.1. Resource table (links to community gardens and other providers who work with schools, case studies and examples to aid planning)

## 5.2. Map of Nottingham's Community Gardens

*Find a community garden near you*



## 6. Grow



By this stage you should have completed your self-assessment, identified your level in the stage matrix and chosen your priorities for development. This section now helps you put those plans into action and grow your Seed-to-Fork provision.

Use your assessment results to identify the gaps you want to strengthen, and your stage in the matrix to understand the direction you want to move towards. The action plan then helps you turn these priorities into practical steps that will develop your Seed-to-Fork provision over time. Draw on the local partners and resources in this toolkit to support delivery and build steady, confident progress across the themes.

### 6.1. Seed-to-Fork Action Plan

Use this aide to identify priorities from your self-assessment and plan manageable next steps. Choose one or two areas (or however many you feel is achievable) per term and involve your wider school team and local partners where possible.

Priority Area	Associated theme	Current Status (RAG)	What Needs to Happen?	Who is Responsible?	Timescale	Support or Partners Needed
e.g. Include Seed-to-Fork in school development planning	Whole school ethos	Amber	Add to next SLT agenda and include in Wellbeing/Environment strand	SLT link & coordinator	By end of term	SLT, Governor, School Improvement Advisor
e.g. Make growing spaces more inclusive and accessible	Learning applied inside and outside of school	Red	Audit access, create sensory space, involve nurture groups	SENCo, Gardening Lead	Spring term	Local Growers Network, SEN team

### 7. Review





This stage brings you back to the start of the cycle and gives you time to reflect on how your Seed-to-Fork provision has developed. It is an opportunity to recognise what has been achieved, understand what has changed and identify what still needs attention as your work continues to grow.

**During this stage you should aim to:**

- Update your self-assessment to see what has improved.
- Check your stage in the matrix to understand your progress.
- Review your action plan to see what has been completed and what still needs attention.
- Decide your priorities for the next cycle.

Begin by returning to the self-assessment table and rescore each of the six themes. This update will show where progress has been made, where practice has strengthened and where further improvement may still be needed. Looking at your new colour ratings alongside your original ones helps you see development over time.

Once the table has been updated, total your new score and revisit the stage matrix. This will help you see whether your school has moved to a different stage or whether you are consolidating practice within the same one. Comparing your current stage with your previous one gives a clear sense of direction and helps identify realistic next steps.

Alongside this, review your action plan. Note which actions have been completed, which are still underway, and which may need adjusting or replacing. This reflection helps you understand what has worked well, what barriers you met and what support or resources might be needed moving forward. Use the outcomes of this review to reset your priorities and re-enter the Assess, Plan, Grow, Review cycle with a refreshed understanding of where to focus next. This ongoing, seasonal process mirrors the rhythm of growing itself, with each cycle helping to strengthen and sustain your Seed-to-Fork provision over time.

## 8. From Seed to Success



This toolkit is designed to be flexible, practical, and scalable. Whether you're just beginning your Seed-to-Fork journey or building strong foundations, the framework, cycle, and action planning tools will help your school embed food education in a meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable way.

Rather than a one-off audit, treat it as a framework you return to overtime, as part of an ongoing process that connects pupils, staff, families and partners with a shared vision for health, equity and environmental responsibility. For more information and support please contact the achieve well team via [achievewell@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:achievewell@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)