

BANG IN SOME BEANS

VEGPOWER

Autumn 2026 Programme: Schools' Briefing

Summary

Timings: September - November 2026

Summary: This campaign supports children to eat more fibre by consuming more beans & pulses, as well as fresh fruit and veg at school and at home. This will bring together a large primary school programme with collaboration between schools and caterers and supported by a significant social media campaign and media partnerships which will reach well beyond schools.

Objectives:

1. To **increase the uptake and consumption of blended dishes** containing beans & pulses at school, moving beans & pulses from hidden to "discovered", accepted and consumed.
2. In addition, this campaign will educate and **support your families** to blend more beans, pulses and veg into their dishes at home increasing fibre, five-a-day and helping families navigate rising food costs.
3. Educate and support parents & carers to ensure that at least one of their child's daily **snacks are a fresh source of fibre** and one of their five-a-day such as an apple, pear or carrot sticks.

What are we asking schools to do? Our programmes are designed to be flexible to suit individual schools. At the lightest end, you simply need a little coordination with your caterers and to send information out to your parents & carers. As you wish, you can engage more with an assembly, lesson plans and other activities which will be fun and rewarding for children and teachers, as well as supporting essential curriculum objectives around health, diet, food provenance and sustainably.

Funding: This programme is 100% funded by The National Lottery

Why Beans & Pulses?

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey shows that 86% of primary school aged children are not getting enough **fibre**. This is important for their digestive health but also materially impacts their school day. Children without enough fibre will be hungry an hour or two after lunch, their sugar levels will drop, their concentration will decline and their behaviour might become disruptive.

Fibre (#Fibremaxxing) is trending this year and offers strong immediate, valued benefits to a child. Fibre improves digestion, prevents constipation, helps children feel fuller for longer and aids

weight management. Parents & carers will be more aware of fibre because of all the media attention around this issue and will be keen to find out more and be supported on it.

Many of your families will also be under increasing **cost of living pressures** due to increased food and fuel prices. Beans & pulses are a smart way to increase protein and fibre and reduce meal costs or pad meals out to go further. Exactly the tips and support parents are going to need.

What's more, beans and pulses are an amazing crop, kinder to the environment and excellent at regenerating soil.

Beans offer benefits on multiple fronts: improved dietary health, enhanced classroom concentration, reduced living expenses, and greater environmental sustainability.

The School Challenge

The feedback we have from interviews and workshops with caterers is that beans which are discreet on the written menu and hidden on the plate (i.e. blended in) are eaten as they are not noticed. But when visible, either in prominence on a written menu or on the plate the beans are rejected, waste increases and meal uptake declines.

Under proposed **new regulations for school food standards** in England recently published by DfE and due to come in to force from September 2027, there will be a significant increase in beans and pulses in school meals. This campaign will help your school and families prepare for that change and avoid uptake decline, complaints and increased waste that a sudden change might cause.

Our research and the feedback from caterers is that **the key challenge is the parents** who perceive beans as the caterers being cheapskates and cheating their children out of a "proper" meal. Many parents see beans and pulses as a "cheap" choice rather than hugely beneficial to their child. Parents spread this negativity to the children, many of who are unfamiliar with beans and pulses causing the uptake to drop and increased waste.

With 1.85 million children having participated in our programmes in schools Veg Power is a well-known, independent, not-for-profit company supported by unquestionable expert leaders in nutrition, home cooking and raising children to be healthy. In an independent survey of 3,000 parents of primary school aged children 85% of those parents who participated in our programmes say their child has eaten more veg; it has made it easier for them to serve veg at home and that they wish to take part again. Parents trust us on this issue and they welcome advice from us, more than they might from a caterer or directly from their school.

Programme Structure

We recognise that schools have different priorities at different times, that not all school caterers work to a three-week menu cycle, and term dates vary – there is no one single structure that suits all. So, this is a guided ideal framework which you can adapt to suit your requirements.

Stage 1 – April – September 2026 - Recruitment

Veg Power to engage and recruit schools, caterers, local authorities, influencers, and media partners.

Stage 2 – 2nd September - Benchmarking

Caterers to benchmark uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with hidden beans

Schools need only prepare during this stage

Stage 3 – 28th September – 16th October - Campaign

Programme in full effect with activities in schools, on social media and media partners. Caterers to measure uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with beans visible on menu

Stage 4– 19th October – 13th November – Post Campaign Assessment

Programme and activities stop. Caterers to measure uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with beans visible on menu

Activation: Schools

April-June: Please register your interest and to receive updates here:

<https://mailchi.mp/6b2b51c11235/bang-in-some-beans-2026>

As with all our programmes we are making this super flexible for busy schools. When the programme starts from 28th September, we will ask you to deliver these two essential activities:

1. **Communicate the campaign to parents** using a digital flyer for parents and a 60 second short video we are creating using a diverse mix of our ambassadors (see below).
2. **Coordinate your activities with your school caterers.**

And these additional optional activities:

3. Run the campaign **launch assembly** and short video featuring CBBC presenter Stef Gates talking about all the fun of fibre, digestion, poo, farts and explaining the programme.
4. Run a lunchtime **bean treasure hunt** activity which encourages children to “discover” all the beans now highly visible on the menu wording. They will also learn in class about different beans. “Wow, who knew that our pizza contains beans OMG!!!!”
5. Curriculum compliant **lesson plans** on beans & pulses, all about fibre, the provenance and use of different beans and sustainability. These will be complete with activities, supporting worksheets and craft projects for KS1 & KS2 / P1-7

The goal is to change perceptions i.e. “*the things I like contain beans*”. It is also about normalising the acceptance of beans within meal-choice. “*I eat beans*” “*I like beans*” + creating talkability. The child will take home excitement around beans at schools, about discovering all the things which contain beans and so create the opportunity for the parents to add beans to their recipes at home.

To support schools, we will create a digital PDF programme guide and an online teaching resources page for this campaign.

Activation: School Caterers

We are asking caterers to deploy the campaign across as many of their schools as possible and to flex the campaign to suit their menu cycle.

Stage 2 – 2nd September - Benchmarking

We are asking caterers to quietly run a full menu cycle at the start of Term 1 in early September. The beans & pulses (not baked beans which are not part of this campaign) should be present but discreet on the menu, and not visible on the plate - as they are widely today. We would encourage the caterers to maximise the prevalence of hidden beans on the menu.

During this period, we'd like caterers to benchmark on uptake and waste.

Stage 3 – 28th September – 16th October - Campaign

Run the same menu in schools for another cycle, the key difference is that the dishes will prominently mention their bean content. Not so it appears to be a different dish, but so that parents and children are much more aware of the presence of beans and their acceptance grows. This is a big reveal moment, discovery not change.

We will provide a “contains beans” icon that they can add to menus, boards etc. Ideally it will also show which beans are used and where possible, communicate this to the teachers so they can run supporting lessons plans for the different beans.

We will have a limited supply of participation stickers for lunchtime.

During this period, we'd like caterers to measure uptake and waste against the benchmark data.

Stage 4– 19th October – 13th November – Post Campaign Assessment

Campaign and supporting activities will have stopped. We would like caterers to continue the same high prominence of beans on the written menu - beans have now been “discovered” and should remain visible thereafter.

During this period, we'd like caterers to measure uptake and waste against the benchmark and campaign live data.

We hope caterers will then leverage the campaign to introduce more visible beans on the plate as well as on the menus in future terms.

Evaluation

As well as the uptake and waste data from caterers we will also be:

- Looking for one-to-one follow ups with all our catering partners
- **Running a short online survey for schools, which will only take you five minutes to complete**
- Running our annual survey of 3,000 parents of primary school aged children in March/April 2027. We have just run the 2026 survey with plenty of benchmark questions on beans - we hope this campaign will move those key indicators in the 2027 survey.

Activation: Parents

Parents & carers will activate in support of this campaign as follows:

1. There is generally a trending media and social media presence on fibre and beans which will create a strong background.
2. Schools will push out our **fibre digital flyer** and **promotional video** featuring a diverse mix of high-profile expert voices on the importance of fibre and beans as a source of fibre.
3. Those will direct parents to our parents facing **digital channels** which will include:

- a. A deeper dive short form video on the nutrition of fibre and beans featuring Celebrity nutritionist Rhianon Lambert.
 - b. A deeper dive on the science of fibre, digestion and gut health featuring BBC presenter Professor Giles Yeo.
 - c. A series of short-form video guides on how to add more beans and veg to family favourite dishes without waste and battles such as Spaghetti Bolognese, Curry, Fajitas, Lasagne and Mac & Cheese. These will be created by our in-house chef.
 - d. A series of short-form video guide to different beans featuring ITV's chef Shivi Ramoutar, chef and food writer Melissa Hemsley, celebrity nutritionist Charlotte Stirling-Reed and chef Tom Hunt
 - e. A large collection of celebrity bean recipes
 - f. Downloads, jokes, and other fun stuff for the kids.
4. All the **influencers** listed above will also be supporting on social media with ideas, recipes and inspiration as well as chefs Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Jeff Boadi, Bettina Campolluci Bordi, Niki Webster / Rebel Recipes, Claire Thomson / 5 O'clock Apron and Tom Aikens (all confirmed). Our social media supporters have a combined reach of over 3 million and we have more joining as this project gathers momentum.

Finally, we are in deep discussion with **media owners** and other partners to take the core messages around fibre and beans to millions more. More announcements to follow when we can, but we are already confident this campaign will have significant momentum outside of schools to help trigger engagement in schools and beyond.

Next Steps

Please register your interest and to receive updates here

<https://mailchi.mp/6b2b51c11235/bang-in-some-beans-2026>

We will send you further information as it becomes available and you will have plenty of opportunity to retract your interest even as late as early September.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please email our team at hello@vegpower.org.uk