

BANG IN SOME BEANS



Autumn 2026 Programme: Caterer Briefing

Timings: September - November 2026

Summary: This is a multi-faceted campaign that leverages the need and awareness of greater fibre intake to increase bean and pulse consumption 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.

Objective: To increase the uptake and consumption of blended dishes containing beans & pulses in primary schools. Moving beans & pulses from hidden to “discovered”, accepted and never needing to hide again. This will create a foundation step towards more ambitious bean & pulse inclusion in future menus and greater uptake of vegetarian dishes.

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

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.

The heart of the problem is the parents who perceive the use of beans as the caterers being cheapskates and cheating their children out of a “proper” meal. Parents spread that negativity to the children causing the uptake to drop and waste to increase. Parents complain to the schools, the schools complain to the caterers, and the beans get dropped.

The Fibre Factor

How do we get parents and schools on board with beans & pulses? Fibre. Fibre (#Fibremaxxing) is trending this year and offers strong immediate, and valued benefits to a child - improves digestion, prevents constipation, helps children feel fuller for longer and aids weight management. We are going to harness the fibre trend to direct families to more beans & pulses.

Target Audience & Messaging

Parents

Who...	1/ Are unaware of the importance of fibre for their child 2/ Are unsure how to add more fibre and beans to their child's diet 3/ Think that beans are cheap and tasteless
To...	1/ See beans as good for their child and to move from "cheap" to savvy/smart 2/ Welcome and select dishes with beans on school menus 3/ Add more beans and veg to their own cooking at home
By...	With the support of celebrity and expert voices show them the immediate health benefits for their child as well as the simplicity and savings of using beans & pulses at home.

Schools

Who...	Do not see beans or fibre as a relevant issue
To...	Support our programme at lunch, in class and in their comms to parents
By...	1/ Explaining the role low fibre has on post-lunch hunger and attention, and the value of beans for fibre (as well as wider health and climate) 2/ Supporting families with increasing food costs 3/ Readiness for forthcoming school food regulations with more beans 4/ Giving a sense of bigger, exciting, society wide campaign 5/ Giving them easy to use, curriculum supporting, high quality and low intensity resources

Children

Who...	Are unfamiliar and cautious about beans & pulses
To...	Move beans from "hidden" to "discovered" and thereafter "visible" on the menu to build familiarisation which we can turn into a habit at home and acceptance of beans visibility on the menu and plate at school.
By...	Gamifying the discovery of beans & pulse in the dishes they already enjoy at school.

Campaign Structure

We recognise 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, we will run a basic timing framework but have built in the flexibility for caterers and schools to adapt this to suit their individual timings. You could run this programme at any time and to any schedule to suit your menu cycles and the coordination with the schools.

Stage 1 – April – September 2026 - Recruitment

Engage and recruit schools, caterers, local authorities, influencers, and media partners.

Stage 2 – 2nd September - Benchmarking

Benchmark uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with hidden beans

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

Campaign in full effect with activities in schools, on social media and media partners. Measure uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with beans visible on menu

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

Campaign and activities stop. Measure uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with beans visible on menu

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 your menu cycle. We are keen to get expressions of interest and to understand how you plan to use this your way in May, so we can support you and work together with on-boarding schools.

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, though you can flex this to suit your cycle. 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 (see evaluation below)

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

Run the same menu in schools for another cycle, the key difference is that the dishes 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 you can add to menus, boards etc. Ideally also show which beans are used and where possible communicate this to the teachers so they can run supporting lessons plans for different beans.

We will have a limited supply of participation stickers. They are expensive to print, and expensive to post, but so effective. We'd love every school to have participation stickers, but we don't have the funds to match the expected demand. We will be working to find solutions – would your wholesale suppliers consider delivering them (or even sponsoring them)? Can we persuade local authorities to fund them? Would you consider funding them, and/or delivering them. They cost us about 75p for a roll of 100 stickers excluding delivery. No pressure here though, stickers are a great bonus.

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 menu in future terms.

Evaluation

This campaign won't be a magic wand but should give a strong step in the right direction if done properly and we'll need to do more over the next couple of years. We need to understand how well this works so we can learn and develop the next stage. We also need to prove the value of our work so we can continue to get funding from organisations like The National Lottery to continue to support good food in schools.

In our ideal world we love you to provide before, during and after uptake and waste data on the same menu cycle. We appreciate that this will not often be possible. Please let us know what you can do.

As well as that hard data will also be:

- Looking for one-to-one follow ups with all our catering partners
- Running a short online survey for schools
- 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: Schools

Recruitment in April. May and June for a campaign in September-November. We need to educate schools on the importance and benefit of beans as a source of fibre to help families navigate the increasing cost of living. To support the recruitment phase, we will:

1. Create a **digital flyer** which we can own brand and modify for caterers to send to schools (available here: <https://vegpower.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/BISB-A4-catflyer-fin2026.pdf>)
2. Supported by a **web page** with more information for schools <https://vegpower.org.uk/bang-in-some-beans/>
3. An online form for schools to **register their interest** and receive updates, <https://mailchi.mp/6b2b51c11235/bang-in-some-beans-2026>
4. Veg Power will announce in our termly **schools email newsletter** we send to 6,000 schools in late April.
5. We'll be rallying our **local authority** public health partners to promote to their schools
6. We will run announcements / issue awareness comms on **Linked In**

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

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 their activities with their school caterers.**
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 explain 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. Supporting **lessons plans** on the campaign, all about fibre and different beans

This is about changing perceptions “the things I like contain beans”, it’s 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 creates the opportunity for the parents to add beans to their recipes.

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

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 **promotion video** featuring a diverse galaxy 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 Campolucci 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 contact Soraya Ulrich-Khan, Soraya.ulrich-khan@vegpower.org.uk with your feedback. We are keen to hear of any concerns and ideas for improvements, your thoughts on how you might deploy this, and what evaluation you can feedback