

BANG IN SOME BEANS



VEGPOWER

Feel the fibre programme guide

Timings: Launching 28th September and available any time after.

Summary: This programme 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 and special 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 school caterers, and individual schools in your portfolio work to different menu cycle and term dates – so we have designed this to be flexible - there is no one single structure that suits all, it's a toolkit to support you.

Below is our basic suggested timing framework You could run this programme at any time from 28th September 2026. The resources will be available for at least two years to support the new school standards.

Stage 1 – one menu-cycle before campaign - benchmarking

Benchmark uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with hidden beans. 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 you to maximise the prevalence of hidden beans on the menu.

Stage 2 – one-menu cycle - campaign

Run the same menu in schools for another cycle, the key difference is that the dishes should 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.

This should be supported with comms out to families + activities in schools (see below). Encourage the school to use the Discover Beans activity to encourage children to embrace beans. Measure uptake and waste on a school menu cycle with beans visible on menu.

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. If schools want the ones we have funded by the National Lottery, they will need to register directly with us at <https://partners.vegpower.org.uk/>. If you are able to fund printing and delivery of stickers yourselves you are welcome to use as you wish with your schools.

Stage 3– one-menu cycle – post campaign assessment

Campaign and supporting activities will have stopped. We suggest you 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 suggest measuring uptake and waste against the benchmark and campaign live data.

We hope you will then be able to leverage the campaign to introduce more visible beans on the plate as well as menu in future terms.

Looking for recipes? We recommend Pro Veg for beans recipes: <https://proveg.org.uk/school-plates/>

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

We know that recruiting schools to do such programmes is really challenging at the moment and we are trying to make it as easy as possible.

This is what we are saying to schools.

"This is a caterer led programme in schools, but your support will greatly increase the impact. It has been 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."

The most important thing is to get the flyer we will provide to you for families out to parents and carers via email or whatever system the schools normally use to send out your menu and other notices. This is key to engaging the parents, which we feel is essential for success.

In addition, we will have the following available free online for schools from mid-September:

- Assembly with PowerPoint and video
- KS1 /P1-3 and KS2/P4-7 lesson plans on beans with support activities.
- KS1 /P1-3 and KS2/P4-7 lesson plans on fibre with support activities & video.
- The Discover Beans Chart and activity to encourage children to "discover" the beans already on their school menu. "Who knew that our pizza has beans in the sauce" This helps children to accept and enjoy beans.
- A range of arts and craft and handy rainy-day activities.
- A poster they can print out and put up to inform families
- Two excellent and easy cook-a-longs from the education team at Leith's Cookery School
- A full guide to the programme

In addition, if schools want participation stickers they will need to register directly with us <https://partners.vegpower.org.uk/>.

There is a flyer you can send to schools here <https://vegpower.org.uk/bang-in-some-beans/feel-the-fibre>. We can adapt that and add your logo, just contact our team. You'll also find that full programme guide for schools on that page.

As of 7th September, we have 700 schools already directly registered with us to participate. We'll send lists out to our regular caterer contacts or please ask our team on hello@vegpower.org.uk

Activation: Parents

Engaging parents is essential; here is what we have planned to create momentum outside of school.

There is generally a trending media and social media presence on fibre and beans which will create a strong background for this programme. We are growing on that by:

1. We have partnered by Good Food, Netmums and First News who will be talking more about fibre and beans and supporting this programme taking the message to millions.
2. We have partnered with networks of thousands of community projects through Felix, Feeding Britain, Bread & Butter Thing, the Community Fridge Network to send out resources to help over 1 million families facing cost of living pressures.

3. A wide range of businesses will be supporting the drive for fibre including Sainsburys, Waitrose, Coop, Bold Beans and Merchant Gourmet with promotions and offers.
4. We are asking schools to 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.
5. Those will direct parents to our **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 have expert tips from home cook and presenter Lauren Leyva.
 - 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.
6. 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. Our social media supporters have a combined reach of over 3 million, and we have more joining as this project gathers momentum.

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