



About School Food Matters

School Food Matters is a charity on a mission to ensure that every child enjoys fresh sustainable food at school and understands where their food comes from. We work with children, schools, parents, local authorities and government departments to get the very best food for children during their time at school for their health and happiness.

Since 2007, School Food Matters has been devising, developing and delivering exciting food education programmes which have reached tens of thousands of children across London and beyond.

For the purpose of this response document we will reflect on the proposals within the six priority areas and highlight our work to support good food in London. Our response is framed around our areas of expertise; school food, food education and issues relating to children's health and wellbeing.

1. Good food at home; help to tackle rising levels of household food insecurity and ensure all Londoners can eat well at home.

- We support the recommendations under 'What you can do'
- We welcome the Mayor's commitment to reducing holiday hunger through the scheme Kitchen Social. We encourage the expansion of Kitchen Social to provide additional funding to reduce the reliance on voluntary contributions of food and staffing. The school infrastructure offers a unique opportunity for delivering nutritious holiday food and a safe and trusted place for children therefore we would encourage further investment replicating the Welsh Food and Fun programme piloted in Cardiff.
- We welcome the Mayor's acknowledgement that food poverty is partly due to low income and the promotion of London Living Wage
- We are encouraged by the Mayor's support of the annual publication of "Beyond the Food Bank" as it challenges the London Boroughs to secure children's access to food 365 days a year.
- We support the suggestion that businesses should donate more surplus food to charities. We would caution however, that whilst this is a positive move, it does not replace essential efforts businesses must take to decrease the amount of surplus food produced.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- For the past seven years, we've partnered with Borough Market, FareShare London and United St Saviour's Charity to deliver our Young Marketeers¹ programme. Children at schools in LB Southwark learn about food surplus and raise money for FareShare London by selling fruit and veg they've grown at school or soups and baked goods created in the school kitchen, to raise money for FareShare.

¹ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/young-marketeers>

- This year we'll be piloting a holiday food and fun programme in partnership with Belazu Ingredient Company, Harrison Catering and Kitchen Social to allow children from low-income families in Northolt to access a hot meal and fun, safe enrichment activities during the summer holidays.
- School Food Matters is a London Living Wage employer.

2. Good food shopping and eating out; support food businesses to improve London's food environment and make healthy, affordable options more widely available to Londoners.

- We support the recommendations under 'What you can do'. We suggest that businesses might appreciate some guidance on how best to communicate the 'healthier options' to consumers.
- We whole-heartedly support the Mayor's plans to consult on a ban on advertising of food and drink that is not healthy across the TfL estate. This will support children's health and wellbeing by limiting their exposure to unhealthy messages.
- We are encouraged by the Mayor's acknowledgement that food plays a part in making streets healthy places, where people are surrounded by more healthy food and less marketing and promotion of unhealthy food. We know that obesity is now seen as a 'normal response to an abnormal environment'² so this focus on healthy places is welcome.
- We are pleased that the Mayor recognises that the food sector is a great route to employment and skills development and would like to see the Mayor encourage restaurants and food businesses to offer work experience and outreach projects to local schools.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- We promote and support local food markets through our Know your Onions³ programme, which invites secondary school students to grow veg to sell at their local community market.
- We are supporting and contributing to the VegPower campaign⁴ to build support for a permanent advertising fund to increase consumption of veg in the UK.
- We are promoting the Soil Association's Out to Lunch⁵ campaign which encourages businesses to think about their food offer by ranking them according to their commitment to creating healthy menus for children.
- We have partnered with Belazu Ingredient Company to create Fresh Enterprise⁶, a programme that offers local secondary school students the opportunity to learn about product development and explore a whole range of careers in food.

² https://www.gsttcharity.org.uk/sites/default/files/Bite_Size_Report.pdf

³ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/know-your-onions>

⁴ <https://vegpowers.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.soilassociation.org/our-campaigns/outtolunch/>

⁶ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/fresh-enterprise>

3. Good food in public institutions and community settings; work with public sector partners to improve their food procurement for the communities they serve.

- We support the recommendations under ‘What you can do’
- We welcome the Mayor’s promotion of Food for Life as it demonstrates clearly that fresh sustainable food is affordable but would urge the Mayor to lead by example by making Food for Life Served Here bronze a minimum standard for all outlets within the GLA Group and Family
- We celebrate the Mayor’s commitment to funding for a programme to introduce water refill schemes and to find locations to install 20 drinking water fountains in London in 2018 but suggest a more ambitious target of 2,020 new drinking water fountains by 2020!
- We’re encouraged by the Mayor’s support for creating environments where those who wish to breastfeed can do so, but feel that this must be a requirement of all settings within the GLA Group and Family.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- School Food Matters worked with LB Richmond and Kingston to transform the food served in 60 primary schools by developing a stringent food specification. Primary schools across both boroughs now deliver menus meeting the Food for Life Gold standard and we continue to work with Achieving for Children to get the best school meal service for parents and their families.
- We have created a template food specification for schools to use when tendering a school meal contract to support them to get the very best school meals.
- We use the platform of London Food Board and its boroughs working group to promote our projects and campaigns to encourage local action.
- We took the lessons learned from Richmond and Kingston to both Department for Education and Defra and contributed to both the School Food Plan and the Plan for Public Procurement.
- We’re working with Guy’s & St Thomas’ Charity to establish Healthy Zones⁷ in three Southwark schools; places where children’s health and wellbeing is consistently and actively promoted through the policies and actions of the whole school community.

4. Good food for maternity, early years, education and health; using good food to help give Londoners the best possible start to life.

- We support the recommendations that Londoners take an interest in the food their children eat at school and apply for free school meals. However we would go further and suggest that:
 - a. Parents/carers are encouraged to be proactive and ask their school or local authority if they are entitled to Free School Meals. The new eligibility criteria, introduced with Universal Credit, have caused some confusion. If in doubt, parents/carers should go to Department for Education’s eligibility checker⁸.

⁷ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/healthy-zones>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

- b. Londoners encourage their schools to work towards a Healthy Schools London Award **and** a Food for Life Award. Healthy Schools London is a broad framework to measure the actions schools take across the whole health and wellbeing agenda, whilst Food for Life is a better measure of the steps schools are taking to ensure that children receive healthy sustainable food and quality food education.
- We are encouraged by the Mayor's commitment to continue to support Healthy Schools London (HSL) but would recommend a review of the award criteria. Currently schools can be awarded Gold without offering a school meal service.
 - We wholeheartedly support the Mayor's commitment to implement new policies to restrict hot food takeaways opening within 400m of existing and proposed schools.
 - We support the move to convene a Child Obesity Taskforce.
 - We are pleased that the Mayor will support measures to increase uptake of Healthy Start vouchers to 80% of eligibility but would recommend a target of 90% in line with Food for Life Silver school award for take-up of free school meals.
 - We fully support any initiatives by local authorities to increase take up of free school meals and consider extending eligibility to more families, particularly in view of the new eligibility criteria introduced in April 2018 which could create confusion within schools and leave some families without access to free school meals.
 - We will actively support all the suggested priorities to be led by external partners.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- Our Founder/CEO is co-Chair of the School Food Plan Alliance tasked with championing the School Food Plan and its 17 actions.
- With charity partners, we are actively lobbying government to deliver the actions on the Childhood Obesity Plan chapters 1 and 2.
- We are working with The Children's Society on campaigns around access to free school meals and continue to work with charity partners to protect the policy of universal free school meals for all infant school children.
- We are contributing to Ofsted's Advisory Panel on obesity, healthy eating and physical activity and continue to campaign for Ofsted to measure the steps schools take to support children to keep themselves healthy.
- We are actively campaigning for the Department for Education to deliver the Healthy Rating Scheme described in the Childhood Obesity Plan chapters 1 and 2 as a means of monitoring and evaluating school's efforts to tackle childhood obesity.
- We are determined to ensure that secondary schools are included in the Healthy Rating Scheme (HRS). Despite great improvements being made in primary schools, secondary schools are being left behind and require special attention from government to address the complex issues of feeding 1000s of students (rather than 100s) in a canteen style arrangement which lends itself to snacking and poor food choices. By including them in the HRS, secondary schools can be guided towards becoming Healthy Zones and develop a culture that normalises healthy eating and where unhealthy snacking is the exception rather than the rule.

- We devise, develop and deliver food education programmes for schools to help them establish a whole school approach to food through cooking and growing food.
- We are delivering our Healthy Zones programme in three Southwark schools (see above)
- We disseminate updates on school food policy and free school meal entitlement to our mailing list of 6,000 and to our 6,000 followers on Twitter.
- We have a vibrant website to promote our campaigns and food education programmes to schools and families.

5. Good food growing, community gardens and urban farming; promoting the multiple benefits of food growing for individuals and communities.

- We support the recommendations under ‘What you can do’ and particularly the focus on schools getting involved in food growing initiatives.
- We welcome the Mayor’s commitment to use planning to protect and develop food growing spaces and areas for urban farming.
- We are encouraged by the fact that the Mayor acknowledges the value of food growing in relation to enterprise, skills development and job creation.
- We welcome the Mayor’s ambition for London to become a leader in urban agriculture and the commitment to invest in green infrastructure and would like to see efforts to link these urban agriculture/green infrastructure initiatives to London schools.
- We are delighted that the Mayor has committed to support the London Food Board to explore the potential for increasing social prescriptions of fruit and veg and referrals to food growing schemes.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- We have linked with local business and charities to support food growing in schools by offering programmes with an enterprise theme. Programmes include Schools to Market⁹ with Whole Foods Market, Young Marketeers¹⁰ with Borough Market and United St Saviour’s Charity and Know your Onions¹¹ with City Bridge Trust.
- We have managed School Garden Grants¹² for Whole Kids Foundation across six London boroughs dispersing £125,000 to schools to support food growing.
- Since 2012, we have been delivering a Food Growing Grants¹³ programme on behalf of ISS Education across five London boroughs dispersing £70,000 to schools along with training for teachers and children.
- Our Founder/CEO is chair of Capital Growth working group.
- We share good practice in schools on our website with Growing Ideas¹⁴

⁹ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/schools-market>

¹⁰ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/young-marketeers>

¹¹ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/know-your-onions>

¹² <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/school-garden-grants>

¹³ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/iss-food-growing-grants>

¹⁴ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/growing-ideas-retrospective>

6. Good food for the environment; reducing the environmental impact of our food system by making it more efficient and less wasteful.

- We support the recommendations under ‘What you can do’ but would add that Londoners should encourage their local school to engage with programmes such as Eco-Schools and link with their local food surplus charity such as FareShare London or The Felix Project to either donate or receive surplus food. These charities can deliver assemblies to educate young people about food surplus and waste to help them become environmental stewards.
- We celebrate the Mayor’s target to reduce food waste by 20% by 2025.
- We are encouraged by the Mayor’s commitment to promote the use of reusable water bottles but would recommend that the Mayor challenge schools to introduce a plastic water bottle ban in exchange for grants to install refill stations and issue reusable water bottles to students.
- We welcome the Mayor’s commitment to initiatives to engage Londoners with the provenance, values and environmental impact of food but would extend this to schools, highlighting schemes such as Food for Life, which promotes sustainable school food and educates young people about the impact of their food choices.

What is School Food Matters doing to help?

- With partners, we have designed food education programmes for schools with a focus on food waste. This includes Young Marketeers Winter Sale¹⁵ which challenges secondary school students to make soup from surplus to sell at Borough Market to raise funds for FareShare London.
- We educate children about food surplus and waste by partnering with FareShare London, delivering assemblies to schools as part of our Young Marketeers programme.
- We encourage schools to compost to make good use of food waste and to support food growing. We have partnered with Whole Kids Foundation to deliver Compost Matters¹⁶, a new programme for secondary schools.

This submission has been prepared by Stephanie Wood, Founder/CEO, School Food Matters with contributions from Dela Foster and Arianna Bastianini.

School Food Matters

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¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=10&v=uog-PYecPRM

¹⁶ <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/projects/compost-matters>