

TESCO



Free Fruit & Veg for Schools: Impact Report

September 2026



Helping the next generation

Every child deserves to thrive.

Good nutrition gives children the foundation they need to learn, grow and thrive. Yet we know that many children are not eating enough fruit and vegetables, despite the important role they play in a healthy diet.

That's why Tesco provides Free Fruit & Veg for Schools. It's a simple idea: making fresh fruit and vegetables available during the school day to help more children try and enjoy them, while supporting the efforts of teachers and parents.

Since launching two years ago, the programme has reached 515 schools across the UK, helping introduce millions of portions of fruit and vegetables into classrooms and school communities. Together, we've donated almost 20 million portions of fruit and vegetables, with up to 186,000 children attending schools taking part in the programme.

Most importantly, we're beginning to see strong evidence of the impact the programme can have. This year's report shows improvements in children's nutrition, with participating children eating fruit and vegetables more frequently. Teachers also tell us they have seen positive changes in behaviour, engagement and attitudes towards healthy food. These are early but important signs that simple interventions can help children develop healthier habits.

This report highlights the progress we've made so far, but it also shows the opportunity ahead of us. From September 2026, we're expanding to a further 1,000 schools, with the aim of reaching up to 347,000 children. It's an important milestone on our journey towards our long-term ambition of helping one million schoolchildren access free fruit and vegetables.

While the numbers matter, what matters most is helping children build positive habits around healthy food from an early age. There is no single answer to improving children's health, but practical actions, delivered consistently and in partnership, can play an important role.

None of this would be possible without the support of so many people. My thanks go to our partners at the British Nutrition Foundation and Groundwork for their expertise and commitment, to Tesco colleagues who have helped bring the programme to life, to the customers whose support has helped it grow, and to the teachers and school staff who make it work every day.

Together, we've built something that is already making a positive difference in schools and communities across the UK. I'm excited about what we can achieve next as we work to reach many more children in the years ahead.



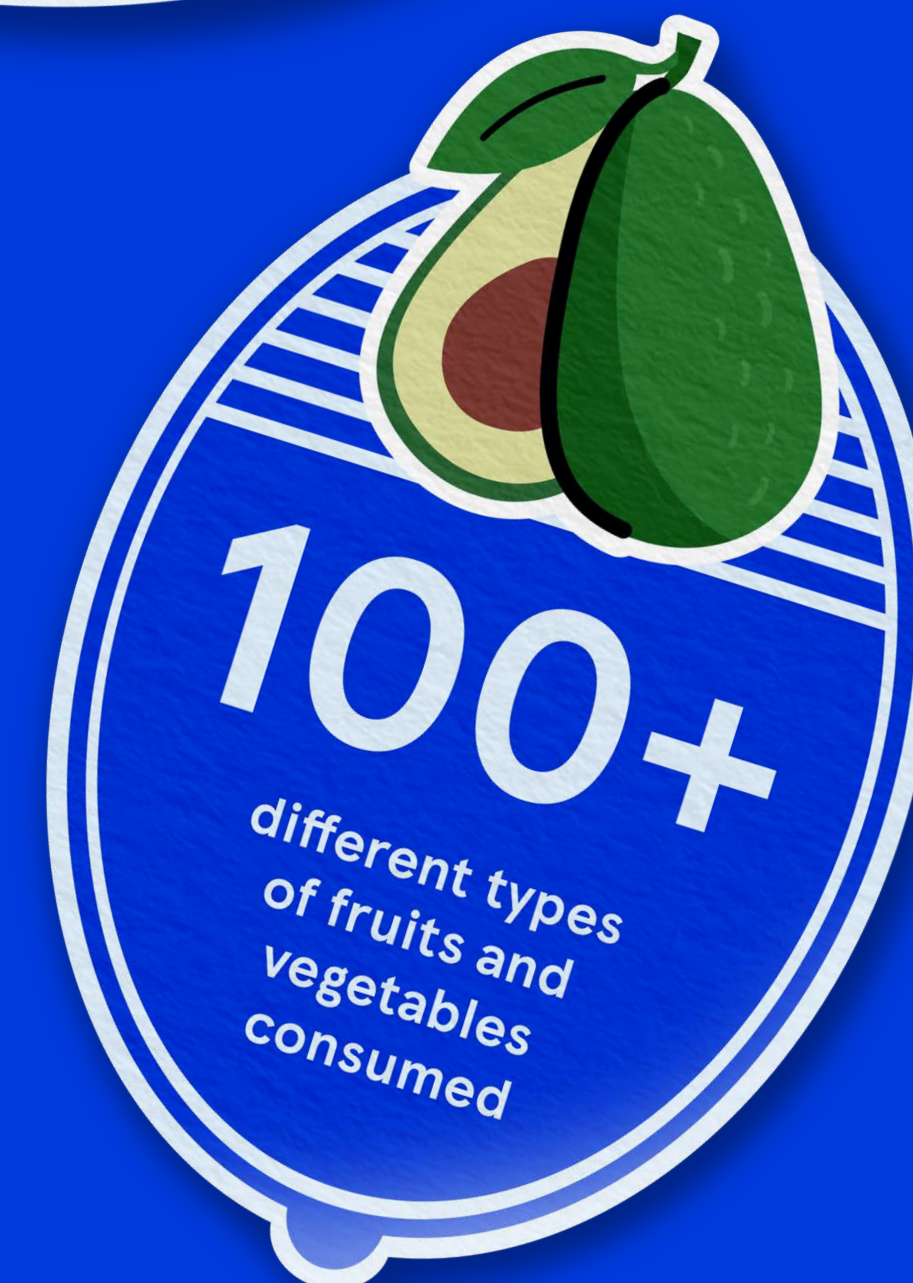
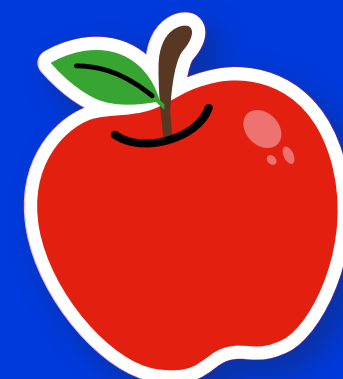
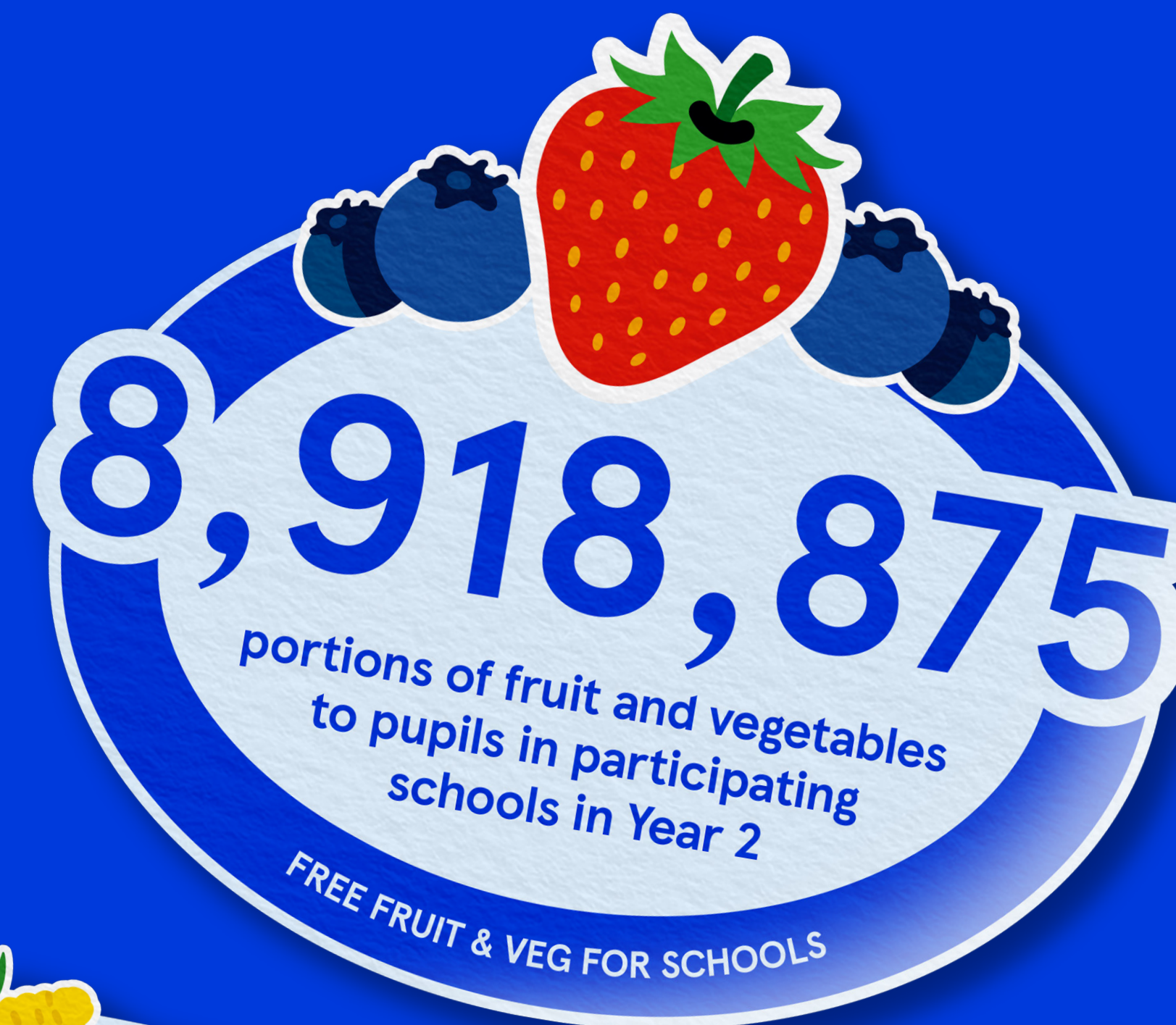
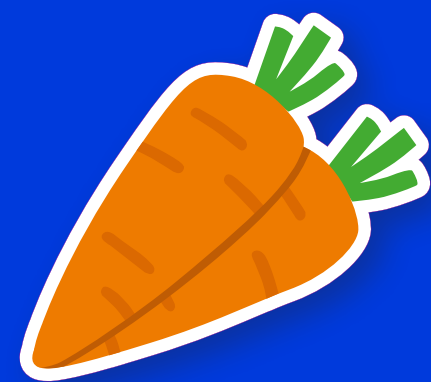
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Ken Murphy
Group Chief Executive

What's the impact?

In the second year...

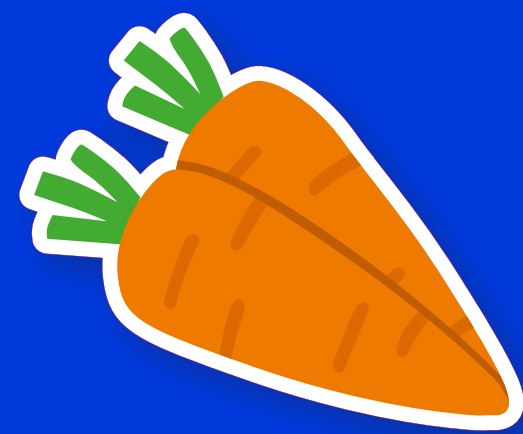


What's the impact?

Totalling almost...



20M
portions* provided for
children over two years



*A 5 a day portion equals 80g of fruit or vegetables.
That's approximately the weight of a medium piece of fruit.

Health and nutrition

Almost nine million portions of fruit and vegetables, delivered as part of the second year of Free Fruit & Veg for Schools, go a long way towards boosting pupils’ intake of key nutrients.



+4.2%

Vitamin C

Needed for healthy bones, gums, teeth and skin.

The produce purchased provided the equivalent of approximately 4 days’ worth per pupil, representing a 4.2% increase compared to average intakes.

+1.7%

Vitamin A

Supports the immune system, vision and healthy skin.

The produce purchased provided the equivalent of approximately 9 days’ worth per pupil, representing a 1.7% increase compared to average intakes.

+2.1%

Fibre

Important for gut health and disease prevention later in life.

The fruit and vegetables provided the equivalent of approximately 0.3 days’ worth per pupil, representing a 2.1% increase compared to average intakes.

+1.8%

Folate

Supports the immune system and helps to make red blood cells and reduce tiredness.

The produce purchased provided the equivalent of approximately 3 days’ worth per pupil, representing a 1.8% increase compared to average intakes.



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Good nutrition in childhood lays the foundations for lifelong health, learning and wellbeing. We are delighted to be partnering with Tesco on Free Fruit & Veg for Schools, providing nutrition and education expertise, alongside insights into its impact. The findings to date are encouraging and suggest that increasing access to fruit and vegetables in schools can have a positive impact on children’s eating habits, supporting healthier outcomes for the future.

Elaine Hindal, Chief Executive of the British Nutrition Foundation

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Schools play an integral role in the health and wellbeing of children and young people. They are a place where children engage with and learn about food, so it is vital that schools are equipped with the tools and resources needed to help children access and learn about healthy food. Tesco’s Free Fruit & Veg for Schools is an excellent initiative to get more children to eat more fruit and vegetables and I’m excited to see the programme grow even further in the coming years.

Professor Greta Defeyter, Trustee of the British Nutrition Foundation



Building healthy habits

And the impact goes beyond nutrition. Teachers are seeing children try a wider variety of fruit and vegetables and build healthier eating habits that support them throughout the school day and beyond.

98%

of teachers surveyed reported that children were eating a wider variety of fruit.

91%

of teachers surveyed reported that children were eating a wider variety of vegetables.

98%

of teachers surveyed reported children were developing healthy eating habits.

98%

of teachers surveyed reported children increased their daily intake of fruit.



“
My favourite part was trying different fruits and vegetables... I even tasted some foods I’d never tried before!

Year 5 pupil at Pinehurst Primary School in Liverpool

Trying new fruit and vegetables

From mangoes and nectarines to parsnips and sugar snap peas, the Free Fruit & Veg for Schools programme is helping children to access healthy foods they haven't tried before.

Smith's Wood Primary Academy in Solihull told us that pupils have been able to sample a wide variety of fruit and vegetables that would have been unavailable to them outside of school. Students and staff were both excited about the opportunity to try new fruit and vegetables.



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I love the fruit that's available at break, my favourite is the watermelon as it is fresh and juicy.

Willow, pupil at Smith's Wood Primary Academy

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We love the fruit at breaktime, it's great to have a choice, there is a big selection and it's really tasty!

Isla, Year 3 pupil at Smith's Wood Primary Academy

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The children have enjoyed the variety of fruit on offer at break time, this has led to an increase in mental well-being and a large increase in concentration, particularly in lessons later in the morning!

Mr Mallinder, ICT Network Manager at Smith's Wood Primary Academy

Pupils at Overfields Primary School in Middlesbrough are also getting to try new fruit and vegetables and quickly finding new favourites.

Free Fruit & Veg for Schools is helping many pupils at Overfields Primary experience and learn about a wider variety of healthy fruit and vegetables.

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I have asked my mum to get peppers at home as I love the taste.

Pupil at Overfields Primary School



Trying new fruit and vegetables



The Giant Fruit & Veg Challenge

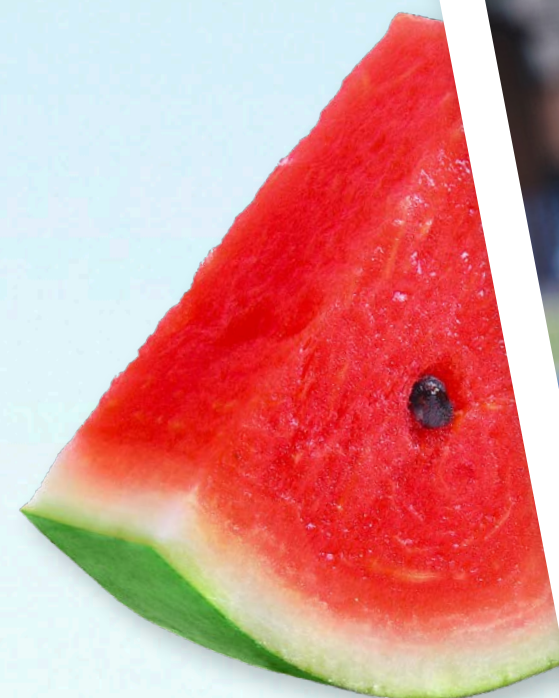
In April 2026, we encouraged children to be more adventurous with fruit and vegetables through the Giant Fruit & Veg Challenge.

The Giant Fruit & Veg Challenge invited children to take part in a nationwide competition by coming up with their own fruit and vegetable packed dish. Entrants had the chance for their recipe to be included in school menus up and down the country, a visit from JLS' JB Gill, a set of Fruit and Veg plushies and much more.

The recipes were judged by JLS star turned farmer JB Gill and his son, Ace, alongside a panel of experts and nutritionists.

Khalessi, a pupil at Pinfold Street Primary School, took the crown with her 'Swamp Monster Crunch Eyeball Jelly', a creative snack made using kiwi, blueberries and cucumber.

The Giant Fruit & Veg Challenge helped to engage thousands of children across the UK in tasting and learning about all different kinds of fruits and vegetables.



Healthy habits, better learning

The Free Fruit & Veg for Schools programme is not just helping children of all ages get more fruit and vegetables in their diet, it's having a positive impact on their learning experience, too.

98%

of teachers surveyed reported that the scheme offers new opportunities to support pupils, with all teachers saying that it makes a difference to children's lives.

88%

of teachers surveyed reported the scheme has increased children's opportunities for cooking and improving their food skills.

94%

of teachers surveyed reported improved behaviour amongst the children.



“

I really enjoy the fruit and vegetable scheme at our school! Sometimes I feel hungry in the afternoon, so it's great that we can have a healthy snack in class – it helps me stay focused on my work.

Year 6 pupil at Limehurst Primary School in Oldham

Making an impact where it matters

Children of all ages across primary schools (ages 4–11) and secondary schools (ages 11–18), are experiencing the programme’s benefits in helping to increase their focus and energy – particularly around important moments in the school year such as exams.

Staff at Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy, a coeducational secondary school in Runcorn, are seeing this first hand. “Our partnership with Tesco Free Fruit & Veg for Schools has made a meaningful difference to our students each day,” says Principal Kathryn Evans, “Most importantly, this simple provision is supporting students’ progress, ensuring they are better prepared to learn and engage in their studies. It’s a small initiative that is having a powerful impact on our whole school community.”

Lucy, a Year 11 student at Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy getting ready for her GCSEs, agrees, “I love the morning fruit. It has helped me improve my attendance and punctuality as well as focus to do my best in my GCSE year. It has been great in supporting me sitting my Mock exams as I feel full of energy and concentration.”

Many schools for children with special educational needs also receive funding for Free Fruit & Veg for Schools.

Knocknavoe School in Northern Ireland, where all 170 pupils aged 3 to 19 have additional educational needs, has embedded the fruit and vegetables provided across numerous aspects of school life, including sensory learning, helping children to communicate, and supporting maths, literacy and healthy living.



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Sharon Cassidy, principal at Knocknavoe School, explains:

From a curriculum perspective, there is so much that it lends itself to... they are using it in maths, life skills, literacy, communication, healthy living... all are opportunities we can use for teaching and learning.

For SEND schools, the fruit and vegetables are not just a teaching and learning opportunity. It has been particularly helpful in providing low-pressure opportunities to explore new types of food through touching, smelling, licking and tasting, helping pupils to gradually try and accept new foods.

Joe, a Year 10 student at Pioneer House High School in Manchester, began to feel more confident by touching, smelling and comparing different fruit and vegetables. With thanks to the programme, he has now tried several new fruits and vegetables. Joe says he now feels “**braver trying new things**” and likes having “**lots of colours to pick from**”.

Learning and engaging through fruit and vegetables

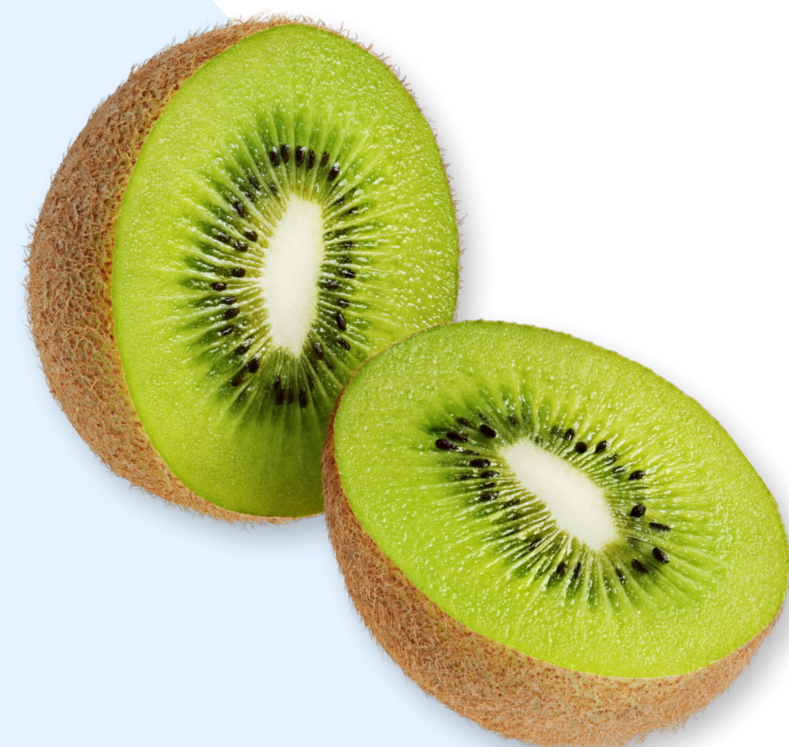
The fruit and vegetables provided by the programme don't just help children access the food they need to live a healthier life and support their education. They also provide a tool to engage pupils in the classroom so they can learn new skills.

At Oasis Academy Long Cross in Bristol, the fruit and vegetables provided support literacy, maths, science, cooking, outdoor learning and even physical development. Nursery-age children (3 to 4) have been using the free fruit and vegetables to support the development of their fine motor skills by chopping and cutting the food.

“

These are the same muscle groups you are going to need for writing, so these physical development skills are precursors to being able to hold a pencil with really good grip.

Sarah, Nursery Teacher at Oasis Academy Long Cross



“

One Year 4 pupil said:

It was so much fun making the World Cup flags with fruit. We had Belgium and used strawberries, pineapple and blackberries. I have never tried a blackberry before.

“

Beth Perryman, a teacher at Park View Academy, said:

Thanks to the funding, we have been able to provide a range of exciting opportunities for children to explore and enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables through food tasting workshops and engaging class-led lessons.

Schools are finding imaginative ways to use fruit and vegetables as part of everyday learning. At Topcliffe Primary School, Reception pupils brought *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* to life by making porridge and preparing their own fruit toppings.

Meanwhile, at Lacey Gardens Junior Academy, pupils marked the World Cup with a creative fruit activity, using strawberries, pineapple and blackberries to recreate the colours of different national flags. For some children, it was also a chance to try unfamiliar fruit for the first time.



Park View Academy in Knowsley, Liverpool, even used an exercise bike powered blender to make their fruit and vegetables into delicious smoothies, combining physical activity and healthy eating in a fun and engaging way.

Taking healthy habits beyond the classroom

Across the programme, schools are finding ways to extend the impact of fruit and vegetables beyond the classroom, using community outreach activities, workshops and events to engage families and the wider community in healthier eating.

At St Clare's Catholic Primary School in Birmingham, this has included interactive cooking workshops that bring parents and pupils together. Families prepare affordable dishes such as stews and curries, explore new ingredients and build practical cooking skills, before taking home vegetables and a recipe card to recreate the dish in their own kitchens.

“

As Mrs Zaman, Community Health Educator at St Clare's, explains:

It's also been a wonderful way to help parents set aside time and bond through the sessions, as they can dedicate this time to their children without getting distracted by daily life and learn something new together.



Parents are seeing the difference at home too, with one reporting that their children are now more engaged at mealtimes and proud to help recreate the recipes they have learned at school.

At Inverclyde Academy, the programme is reaching beyond the school gates and into the wider community. Pupils helped prepare and serve a Christmas dinner for a nearby community centre, using fruit and vegetables from the programme and providing fruit bags for guests to take home – extending the programme's impact beyond the school day.



Flexible ways to access free fruit and vegetables

Schools taking part in Free Fruit & Veg for Schools can access their produce in different ways, helping them find an approach that works for their pupils and staff.

Children can also access free fruit outside school, with a free apple available in Tesco stores during the school holidays.

For some, visiting a Tesco store creates valuable opportunities for learning and engagement beyond the classroom.

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As Headteacher Denise explains:

They are coming into me saying... raspberries, you're getting 2 for £3, that's good value!

At Inverclyde Academy, collecting fruit and vegetables from the local Tesco store has become an important learning opportunity. Before visiting the store, pupils explore practical topics including budgeting, purchasing, food storage and how to recognise fresh produce. They then put those skills into practice by choosing and buying the fruit and vegetables for their school.

The programme has also helped strengthen the relationship between pupils and their local Tesco. At Park View Academy, students have built a strong relationship with Donna, the store's Community Champion: **“My store colleagues and I have built a great relationship with the school, and it's brilliant to help bring the scheme to life for the children. We've suggested different fruits for activities like smoothie-making and even lent them a shopping basket and carrier bags to create a mini supermarket to teach younger children where the fruit comes from. Visiting the school and seeing the children trying new things makes it really worthwhile.”**

This year, we've trialled a free online delivery service that allows schools to order fruit and vegetables directly to school.

At Milton Primary, online ordering is making it quicker and easier to keep pupils supplied with fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the week. With orders placed easily online and deliveries arriving reliably at the start of the week, the school can plan ahead with confidence.

“

As staff explain:

The online ordering has been a game changer! It is so easy and quick to do... It is usually always delivered by 9am on a Monday – just excellent.

Other schools are looking forward to making the most of the online delivery when it rolls out in September. They expect it to free up more time for preparing the fruit and create more opportunities to incorporate healthy eating and learning where food comes from into the curriculum.



Customers helping the programme grow



Customers continue to play a direct role in helping more children access free fruit and vegetables through our You Buy, We Give campaign.

For every fresh fruit and vegetable product bought in Tesco stores or online during the campaign period, we donate to Free Fruit & Veg for Schools.

The money raised helps provide more free fruit and vegetables to schools, turning everyday shopping into a simple way for customers to support the programme's growth.

Our April 2026 You Buy We Give campaign saw Tesco donate one penny for every fresh fruit, vegetable and salad product sold, raising £2.6m to fund Free Fruit & Veg for Schools.

Earlier this year, customers got involved by purchasing one or more of our Fruit and Veg Plushies with all profits from each sale helping schools buy fruit and vegetables through the programme. In April alone, plushie sales generated £193k for the programme, helping to extend its impact even further.



Fruit and Veg Grants

Tesco's Fruit & Veg Grants help schools, charities and community organisations improve children's access to fresh fruit and vegetables, with grants of up to £1,500 available for activities such as breakfast clubs, cooking, gardening and healthy snacks.

Every four months, customers use blue tokens in Tesco stores to help decide how funding is shared between shortlisted local projects.



Where do we go next?

We're proud of what Free Fruit & Veg for Schools has achieved so far – but we know there is much more to do.

That's why we've expanded the programme to cover over 1,000 schools across the UK from this September onwards, more than doubling its reach and taking us another step closer to our ambition of helping one million children access free fruit and vegetables.

And as we expand, we'll keep listening to schools and young people, learning what works and finding new ways to make the programme have an even greater impact.

But improving children's diets needs to go beyond what happens in schools. As the UK's largest food retailer, we have a wider role to play in making healthier choices more affordable and accessible for families – from the products we sell and the way we promote them, to how we help families feel inspired to cook and eat well.

There is no single solution, but by continuing to work alongside schools, families, experts and the wider food industry, we can help make eating well easier, more accessible and more enjoyable.



Plumbert, Tesco's Fruit Giant, shows how marketing can be used to make healthy food exciting.

Created to bring the expansion of Free Fruit & Veg for Schools to life, Plumbert is made entirely from fruit and vegetables and has been travelling across the UK, sharing his produce with children and schools.

He's a playful example of how Tesco can use its creativity and reach to tell positive stories about healthy eating – helping make fruit and vegetables something children can get excited about. And this is only the beginning of Plumbert's adventures.



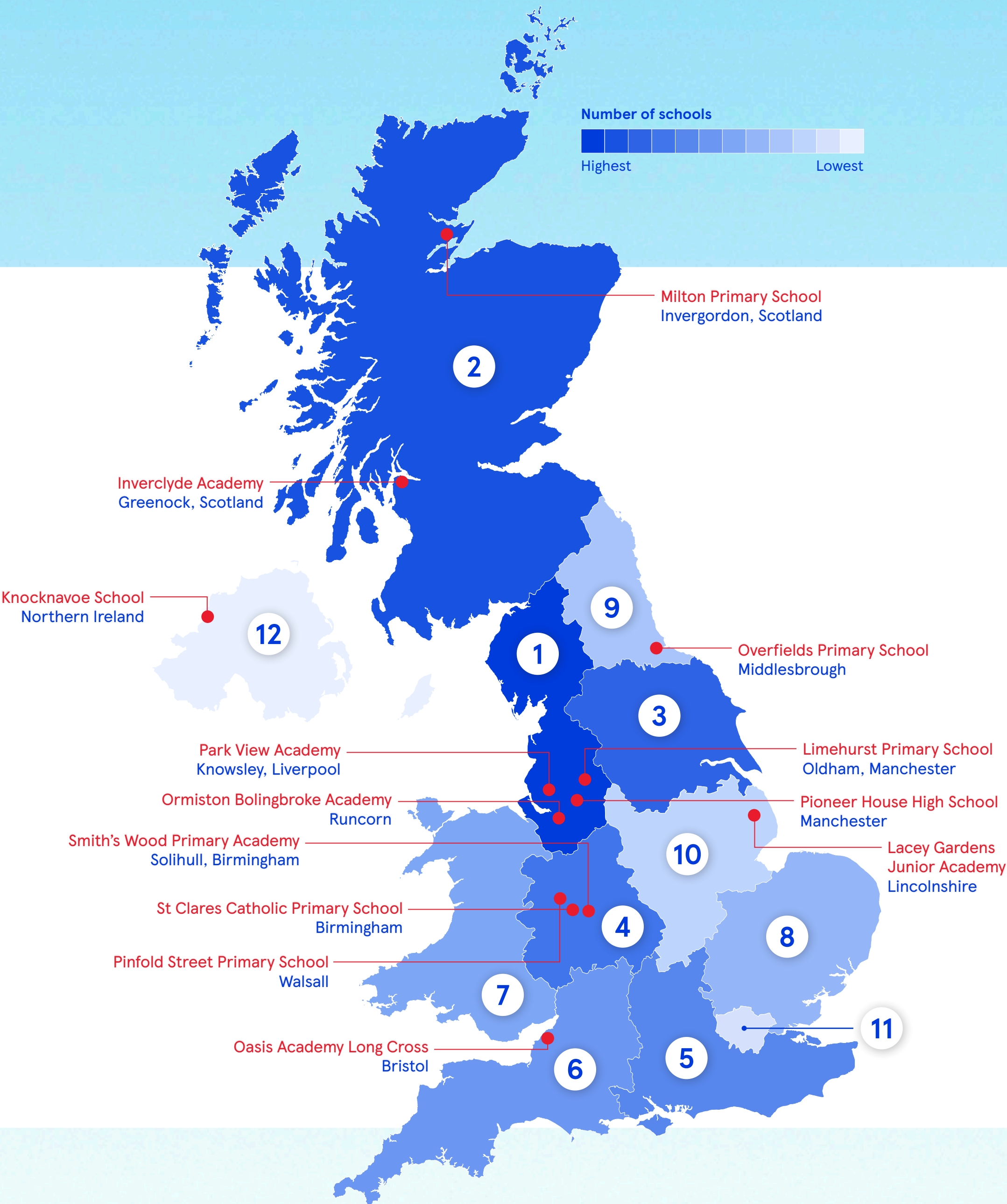
Reaching more schools, in more places

We're getting fruit and vegetables into more schools than ever before with over 500 new schools joining the Free Fruit & Veg for Schools for the 2026/27 school year. That includes seven new schools in Manchester, seven in Birmingham, 12 in Aberdeen, and 10 each in Brighton and Doncaster with many more new schools joining across the whole country.

These are first steps on the way to reaching more children in all four corners of the UK and we look forward to welcoming these schools to the programme.

1	North West	169 schools	7	Wales	87 schools
2	Scotland	138 schools	8	East of England	80 schools
3	Yorkshire & Humber	122 schools	9	North East	77 schools
4	West Midlands	115 schools	10	East Midlands	59 schools
5	South East	104 schools	11	London	56 schools
6	South West	89 schools	12	Northern Ireland	48 schools

Schools highlighted on the map are included in the report.



Appendix



How we measured results

Three quantitative teacher surveys, called the Monitoring Report, with all participating schools run and led by Groundwork.

In-depth qualitative research sessions at six schools run by The British Nutrition Foundation: The list of participating schools was reviewed by the British Nutrition Foundation team and six schools were identified that would provide a good cross-section of the schools taking part and provide a range of different sized primary and secondary schools and different locations, including urban and city centre, across the UK.

There were three schools in England and one in each of the other nations, ranging from 131 pupils to 1,128. Two schools were visited by two members of British Nutrition Foundation and the Community Team at Tesco, with one

school interviewed over Teams. Interviews, using standard questions for the visits agreed in advance, were undertaken with the head teacher, governors and parents (where possible), the school staff member responsible for Free Fruit & Veg for Schools, other staff members and the pupils themselves. The interviews were recorded, with consent, written up afterwards and then summarised.

Ongoing teacher feedback and case studies from schools and parents.

The British Nutrition Foundation calculated the number of portions and nutrients provided from the fruit and vegetables purchased based on data collated from the total number of purchases made as part of the scheme. The number of portions provided by the scheme was calculated based on the 5 A DAY portion size of 80g.

Calculations for vitamins and fibre were made based on nutritional values from the UK food composition database. Estimations of the increased contribution of fibre and vitamins from the produce purchased were based on comparison over 190 day period (one academic year) with average intakes for children aged 4-18 from the UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey. The estimated number of days of the recommended daily amount were calculated based on current UK reference intakes for each nutrient.

Year 1	864,182kg
Year 1 Restated	857,986kg
Year 2	713,484kg
Total (year 1 restated and Year 2)	1,571,470kg

*The Year 1 total kilogram figure has been restated from 864,182kg to 857,986kg following the identification of an incorrect pack weight applied to certain bean products in the underlying calculation. As a result, the kilograms associated with these products were overstated. The reported number of portions for Year 1 was unaffected. The calculation has since been corrected.

