

Newcastle City Council - School Plates

Making school menus healthier and more sustainable

What is the School Plates programme?

School Plates is a nationwide programme that aims to make school food healthier and more sustainable. School Plates is all about increasing the quantity and quality of plant foods on menus to increase the nutritional value of school meals while reducing their carbon footprint.

How it works

School Plates is managed by school food NGO, ProVeg UK, and is currently working with 70 major caterers across the UK. As part of their services, ProVeg UK provides free training and cooking workshops, as well as menu and recipe development, helping schools to make plant-powered meals that are as healthy as they are delicious.

Through simple menu changes, increasing the uptake of healthy and sustainable meals is easier than you may think! School Plates is an evidence-based programme, drawing on research from the World Resources Institute and the latest behavioural science to encourage the uptake of plant-based school food.

- **Labelling.** Research also shows that terms such as 'vegetarian', 'vegan', and 'meat-free' can be off-putting. Instead, just adding a small (v), (ve), or a climate-friendly symbol at the end of the meal name can be much more effective. This is a more subtle way of identifying that the dish is plant-based or vegetarian and will increase uptake of the meal.
- **Use descriptive words.** To help encourage children to try more vegetable-based dishes, research shows that descriptive language can have a huge impact. In the meal name, ProVeg UK recommends dishes focus on four key themes:
 - Flavour: Sweet and Sour, Spicy, Smokey, BBQ
 - Texture: Sticky, Chunky, Crispy, Creamy
 - Provenance: Italian, Mexican, Homemade, American-style, Cornish
 - Child-friendly: Marvellous, Rainbow, Campfire, Monster
- **Positioning.** Positioning plant-based dishes at the top of the menu (for at least half of the week) creates a more even balance of positioning between dishes, and helps to remove any unintended bias created by positioning. Research tells us that meals on the top row will be chosen far more often than those underneath it, which is why it's always a good idea to put healthy, sustainable options at the top.

School Plates Awards

To recognise the caterers who have gone above and beyond with these changes, ProVeg UK also runs a national accreditation scheme - The School Plates Awards. We are delighted to announce that **Newcastle City Council is the latest caterer to receive a Bronze School Plates Award for providing and promoting exceptional school food that's good for children and our planet.**

To learn more about the School Plates programme, visit proveg.com/uk/school-plates-programme/