



**Report**

---

**Qualitative Impact Evaluation  
of the Food for Life Partnership  
programme**

**David Teeman  
Gill Featherstone  
David Sims  
Caroline Sharp**

**June 2011**



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research aims and objectives	3
1.3 Research design	3
<b>2. Context and implementation</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Where schools started from	7
2.2 How schools implemented the FFLP	9
2.3 What support the schools received and needed	19
2.4 Challenges	24
2.5 Chapter summary	25
<b>3. Outcomes</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 Outcomes at the school level	27
3.2 Outcomes for school staff	32
3.3 Outcomes for pupils	33
3.4 Wider outcomes	39
3.5 Chapter summary	43
<b>4. Conclusions and implications</b>	<b>45</b>
4.1 Conclusions	45
4.2 Implications	47
4.3 Final thoughts	51
<b>Appendix 1: FFLP award criteria</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Schools taking part in the evaluation</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>57</b>



# Acknowledgments

The research team would like to thank the schools who agreed to participate in the evaluation and in particular the staff, pupils, parents and community partners who kindly agreed to be interviewed. We would also like to thank colleagues from NFER who provided invaluable research input and support, namely:

- Karen White who led on all elements of the case study and undertook field visits to schools
- Ellie Mundy who contributed to all elements of the project and undertook field visits to schools
- Kelly Evans who undertook field visits to schools
- Neelam Basi, Project Coordinator, who has provided outstanding administrative support to the research team.

The research team would like to thank the Food for Life Partnership for commissioning and managing this evaluation, and in particular Libby Grundy and Linda Gorton for their consistently cooperative, responsive and facilitative support and research management. Finally, we would also like to thank Amanda Donnelly, James Cleeton, Anna O'Sullivan and Judy Allies for their invaluable input and support.

The summative views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Food for Life Partnership.

# Executive summary

## Background and research design

In July 2010, the Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the FFLP programme.

The FFLP aims to improve healthy eating and food awareness among children and young people. It does so by creating a positive food culture within schools, and for this impact to cascade into home environments, by supporting schools to serve fresh, seasonal and ethically sourced food and to deliver a programme of activities which educate young people about nutrition and food provenance issues through a range of activities. By focusing on practical food education, FFLP aims to give school children the opportunity to be healthier by teaching them how their food choices impact on their health and that of the planet. The Partnership intends that the 'hands on' experience with cooking and growing food will help children to enjoy and connect with 'real food'.

At the time of writing this report, FFLP had successfully enrolled 3600 schools. These schools received a range of materials to assist them in promoting practical food education including posters, recipe cards, DVDs, cooking and growing resources, access to advice lines, invitations to workshops, as well as a listing in the Partnership's online schools database, a personal webpage and access to national and regional networks. The Partnership offers an award scheme to acknowledge progress towards excellence. Schools complete an application and provide evidence of their progress for assessment by the FFLP before an award is granted. Schools report their progress against Bronze and Silver assessment criteria, but the Gold award requires an additional external assessment by FFLP (see Appendix 1 for details about awards). Schools joining the FFLP commit to achieving a Bronze award or higher within two years.

By July 2010, the FFLP had granted 109 schools with 'Flagship' status and aimed to recruit a total of 180. Flagship schools were identified as having demonstrated an advanced level of awareness and commitment to food culture and education and, therefore, receive an additional level of support and funding from the FFLP, which intends to fast-track them towards an award. In return, they are expected to act as role models for Partnership schools (defined as all other schools working towards the FFLP awards without Flagship status) and disseminate their ideas and experiences.

The overall aim of the study was to better understand the impact the FFLP had on the whole culture of schools (and by extension children, families and communities), with special emphasis on the school food culture. Employing a qualitative approach, evaluators systematically selected 15 schools, reflecting a range of FFLP and school

contexts. Each school was visited once and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of respondents including school staff, pupils, parents and community partners. Hence, the FFLP evaluation provides a qualitative insight into the implementation and outcomes of the FFLP; it does not, however, measure the long-term ultimate outcome of the FFLP.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the evidence gathered during school visits, this evaluation strongly suggests that the FFLP has been, to an extent, effective in terms of meeting its overarching aim of enabling schools to transform their food culture and provide positive outcomes for children, families and communities. The FFLP offered knowledge, ideas and inspiration to schools in meeting their aspirations for future development. Importantly, rather than operating in isolation, evidence illustrates how the FFLP plays an important role in contributing to health-related development within schools, hence the FFLP provides added value to the schools involved.

### **Focus, momentum and sustainability**

The FFLP had been flexibly adopted by all of the schools visited, in each case building on and complementing pre-existing activity and school ethos. All reported a high level of buy-in and drive from their senior leadership teams. The schools established School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAGs) – action groups including pupils, cooks and teaching staff. They also introduced experiential learning about food and integrated the initiative into the curriculum. In this way, the FFLP provided focus and momentum and helped build and embed a sustainable whole-school approach to health-related activity within all of the schools visited. Further, the FFLP had, in most cases, demonstrated its potential to flexibly contribute to and facilitate the development of whole-school approaches. Partnership schools had been successful in using FFLP activity and development to successfully apply for funds from a wide range of sources and, overall, some schools had begun to return profits from school meal provision. Interestingly, the evaluation found that partnership schools were progressing at the same rate as Flagship schools.

### **School culture and environment**

The FFLP had helped schools in different ways to transform their food culture and more generally their social environments. Interviewees reported that making meal times more attractive to the school community, through improvements to the food available and the dining environment had led to increased meal uptakes and improved social cohesion within schools. As a result of FFLP activity, there was raised awareness of and knowledge about food sourcing, production and healthy eating and this had resulted in positive changes in the level and sophistication of school-based, health-related dialogue. There was also evidence that the changes in food provision had resulted in

pupils trying new foods and in some cases selecting more healthy options for meals at school. The most successful schools had embedded the programme into the curriculum, thereby reducing the impact of two of the main challenges of the programme, namely time commitment and sustainable funding.

## **Improving pupil outcomes and ‘closing the gap’ in attainment and health**

As a result of FFLP, interviewees reported that the improved quality of meals, increased school meal uptake and improvements to the social cohesion at school had contributed to improvements in pupils’ attainment and behaviour. Examples included better nutrition, behaviour and attention in lessons. Headteachers mentioned the link between improved nutrition (especially for pupils from deprived backgrounds) and better attainment, thereby helping to close the gap. The experiential learning resulting from FFLP activity also appears to have been particularly effective at helping engage or re-engage pupils with learning issues and challenges.

## **Experiential learning and curriculum enrichment**

According to school staff, the FFLP provided a useful opportunity for experiential learning. Popular with pupils and parents, school staff welcomed the opportunity to develop innovative and diverse provision reflective of local contexts and needs, and tailored to meet the specific requirements of their pupils.

## **Partnership**

Interview evidence showed how the FFLP had helped to bring together schools, the local community and local businesses and so helped schools tap into the social capital of local communities. The partnership working that FFLP facilitated and motivated enhanced schools’ roles as a community resource. Contact with local farms, food suppliers and community groups had also helped build and enhance school profiles.

## **Engaging parents**

Engaging parents was viewed by schools as challenging, but the FFLP had provided some schools with a range of opportunities to engage and involve parents. Interview evidence showed that the FFLP had both direct and indirect impacts on parents, helping raise awareness of and knowledge about health, food sourcing and production, and in some cases changing behaviour.

## Key challenges

The implementation of the FFLP was not without its challenges; according to staff in a minority of schools visited, there had been (or could be) some key challenges when implementing the FFLP:

- Although the majority of the schools viewed the FFLP as sufficiently flexible to allow them to implement it in a variety of ways, some had found the prospect of what they considered to be very prescriptive award-related criteria daunting and unrealistic.
- It is essential to have someone driving the programme forward in each school. But some FFLP coordinators pointed out that there was a danger of the programme becoming too dependent on their personal input, commitment and championing.
- The cost, availability and sourcing of both local and organic produce was mentioned by many catering staff and FFLP coordinators.

## Implications

### School meal uptake and school improvement

The FFLP's reported positive impact on school meal uptake, especially amongst children receiving free school meals (FSM), is very encouraging because:

- such increases contrast starkly with those nationally from non-FFLP schools
- the introduction of higher standards<sup>1</sup> throughout the school meal system means that pupils consuming school lunches should be eating a nutritionally balanced meal
- previous research suggests that school lunch consumption is associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption combined (Teeman, D. *et al*, 2010).

With the potential for school meals to deliver a nutritionally balanced diet, it is important for schools to adopt strategies that increase school meal uptake. When this is seen in the context of a developing body of evidence that links nutritional intake to positive outcomes in attainment and behaviour (for example see, Belot and James, 2009), it is clear that the FFLP has the potential to make a significant contribution in terms of school meal uptake and school improvement.

### Structure and sustainability

In many schools a particular member of staff tends to be the 'champion' of health-related activity, including the FFLP. It is also important to gain active support from the school's senior leadership team. However, the model of implementation provided by the

---

<sup>1</sup> The FFLP menus aim for a higher standard of nutritional balance than the national standards already require.

FFLP, based on experiential learning, cross-curricular integration and whole-school involvement, helped to:

- coordinate planning and activity
- share responsibility and workloads
- better ensure continuity and consistency
- ensure professional development for staff
- build in sustainability.

Overall, evidence points towards the FFLP's potential to contribute to:

- enabling schools to adopt the FFLP programme in a way and for reasons that fit with individual school contexts
- encouraging the take-up of school meals, especially by those entitled to FSM
- school improvement in terms of environment, behaviour and attainment
- helping 'close the gap' for disadvantaged children in terms of their health and academic attainment
- improving schools' abilities to address the well-being of pupils
- enriching the curriculum and providing opportunities for cross-curricula learning
- enabling schools to increase pupil, parent, staff and wider community involvement and engagement
- enabling schools to build strong partnerships with other schools and their local community.

Interviewees from both Partnership and Flagship schools considered that the FFLP had successfully delivered on their school-level expectations and its stated aims and objectives, and all the case-study schools intended to sustain their engagement with the programme in future.

### **Wider use of the FFLP and targeting**

Evidence suggests that the FFLP programme provides schools with a programme of work that can be adapted and implemented to meet a school's individual context and need, and so could be effectively replicated and implemented in a wider range of schools and perhaps other family-orientated settings. A key challenge going forward though is narrowing or closing health inequalities. With this in mind, FFLP may wish to consider targeting the FFLP towards groups where health improvement is most needed, for instance:

- schools with higher than average FSM pupils
- targeting efforts towards harder-to-reach parents, perhaps by working with Sure Start and local family centres.

## **Final thoughts**

Set against what we understand are the developing priorities for health and education in England (see current Health and Education White Papers), we feel the weight and constancy of the evidence collected is very encouraging. Although the FFLP was designed and introduced before the 2010 change in government, our evidence suggests that the programme has the potential to fit well with the developing priorities for education and health in England.

Popular with the whole school community, FFLP helps expand, enrich, embed and enhance health-related teaching and learning, through increasing school staff competence and confidence, complementing other initiatives and positively impacting on pupil, staff and parental knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In July 2010, The Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the FFLP programme.

The FFLP aims to improve healthy eating and food awareness among children and young people. It does so by creating a positive food culture within schools, and for this impact to cascade into home environments, by supporting schools to serve fresh, seasonal and ethically sourced food and to deliver a programme of activities which educate young people about nutrition and food provenance issues through a range of activities.

The FFLP is a school-based initiative located within a broader range of policy-led activity related to healthy eating and sustainable development in the UK. It includes a national award scheme for any school committed to transforming their food culture and rewards step-by-step progress by schools and caterers for food quality and education. The organisations involved in the Partnership are the Soil Association, Health Education Trust, Garden Organic and the Focus on Food Campaign. The FFLP is funded by the BIG Lottery fund until March 2012.

At the time of writing this report, FFLP had successfully enrolled 3600 schools. These schools received a range of materials to assist them in promoting practical food education including posters, recipe cards, DVDs, cooking and growing resources, access to advice lines, invitations to workshops, as well as a listing in the Partnership's online schools database, a personal webpage and access to national and regional networks. The Partnership offers an award scheme to acknowledge progress towards excellence. Schools report their progress against Bronze and Silver assessment criteria and complete an application form, but the Gold mark requires an external assessment by FFLP (see Appendix 1 for details about awards). Schools joining the FFLP commit to achieving a Bronze mark or higher within two years.

By July 2010, the FFLP had granted 109 of these schools 'Flagship' status and aimed to recruit a total of 180. Flagship schools have been identified as having demonstrated an advanced level of awareness and commitment to food culture and education and, therefore, receive an additional level of support and funding from the FFLP which intends to fast-track them towards Gold award status. In return they are expected to act as role models for Partnership schools and disseminate their ideas and experiences.

By focusing on practical food education, FFLP aims to give school children the opportunity to be healthier by teaching them how their food choices impact on their health and that of the planet. The Partnership intends that the 'hands on' experience with cooking and growing food will help children to enjoy and connect with 'real food'.

The health and well-being of young people is high on the political agenda. A Health Select Committee report (2004) stated: 'Obesity has grown by almost 400 per cent in the last 25 years and on recent trends will soon surpass smoking as the greatest cause of premature loss of life'. According to the recent Health White Paper Department of Health (DH), (DH, 2010), 13 per cent of children starting school are overweight, and a further ten per cent are obese. These figures rise to 14 per cent overweight and 18 per cent obese by the end of primary school and there is a rising trend in obesity among young people aged 16-24 (DH, 2010). Contributory factors identified in the White Paper include over-consumption of sugar and a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables, with only 19 per cent of 16-24 year olds consuming the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, compared with 27–34 per cent of people in older age groups.

Although the solutions to issues such as obesity need to be multi-faceted, schools can play a crucial role by helping to promote healthy eating and physical activity. The National Healthy Schools Programme was introduced in 1999, aiming to equip young people with knowledge and skills to make healthy food and life choices. The Labour Government also introduced food and nutrition standards in schools in 2006–2008. These standards applied to all local authority maintained schools in England and covered hot, cold and packed lunches.

Besides nutrition and health, the FFLP aims to increase awareness of food provenance issues and environmental issues. This relates to a number of policy initiatives, including 'Sustainable Schools' (Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF), 2006 and 2010). In addition, a national food strategy (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), 2010) sought to address its priorities through 'enabling and encouraging people to eat a healthy, sustainable diet' and 'increasing food production sustainability', and the 2011 White Paper *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature* (Defra, 2011) emphasised the importance of natural environments and encouraged learning outdoors.

The evaluation reported here comes at a very important time in terms of a political realignment in relation to how services aimed at addressing social and health inequalities will be financed and delivered. This is particularly pertinent to the content of the 2010 education and health White Papers (Department for Education 2010, Department of Health, 2010): With school autonomy and choice a government priority, funders will increasingly be challenged to show that commissioning decisions are based on what work and provide value for money; hence, intervention providers will find it hard to secure funding or attract clients without such evidence. Further, it is likely that funders, intervention providers and practitioners, at the local and national level, will be

challenged to integrate their efforts, pool their resources and coordinate research programmes.

## **1.2 Research aims and objectives**

The overall aim of the FFLP's evaluation study is to better understand the impact the Partnership has had on the whole culture of schools (and by extension children, families and communities), with special emphasis on the school food culture. In addressing this aim, the evaluation took account of the circumstances in which the FFLP is implemented, the activities that it supported, and the ways in which these activities were incorporated into whole-school activity and ethos. Hence, the specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- establish empirically (both for the Soil Association and for other possible funders) the extent to which the FFLP approach has the potential to achieve positive outcomes for children, families and communities
- better understand the importance of the school's cultural context in determining different success levels and outcomes for the programme
- examine the impact of the FFLP on particularly disadvantaged or socially excluded groups and, by extension, the programme's potential for narrowing existing learning achievement gaps
- understand more fully the challenges and opportunities for schools and school staff looking to engage with FFLP or similar programmes in order to suggest more meaningful practical solutions
- provide evidence of support for the emerging narratives around FFLP-related impacts on education, public health, community cohesion and sustainability
- gather evidence that will help to promote the programme and its approach more generally to a wider audience.

## **1.3 Research design**

A two-strand strategy was employed, combining a desk study of FFLP documents and previous evaluative outcomes, with a series of case studies (including document reviews, individual interviews and focus groups). Our rationale for using case studies was that they would provide the opportunity to examine the context of a particular location or school and that we could speak with a range of people who are involved and impact on the implementation of the programme. This allowed us to collect rich, multi-perspective and in-depth information, which provides robust descriptive and explanatory power to the research. These two strands were set alongside integrated analysis and stakeholder dialogue. The strands, while undertaken sequentially, were able to build on and benefit from each other. Further information about each strand follows.

### **1.3.1 Strand 1: Scoping study**

This strand enabled the evaluation team to develop a clear overview of the ways in which schools are implementing the FFLP programme. Using document reviews and three interviews with FFLP staff, the research team developed an analytical framework against which to qualitatively examine the implementation and impact of the FFLP.

This framework helped the team refine the issues that needed to be explored. The resulting portfolio of information provided a context for the case-study work and enabled the team to develop a better understanding of specific local objectives and activities. It also helped to inform the design of research instruments for interviews with pupils, parents, teachers and other partners.

This strand also involved the review of existing evaluative information already held on the FFLP.

### **1.3.2 Strand 2: Case studies**

#### **Case-study selection and recruitment**

It was important to adopt a systematic school selection process, primarily so that resulting data would reflect a variety of FFLP and school-level variables and contexts. Based on a detailed systematic selection matrix, agreed with FFLP, 15 schools were selected. To achieve a sample of 15 schools, and allow for schools declining involvement and wastage, 45 schools were selected, with 15 first choices, each being matched to two 'reserves' (Appendix 2 contains further details of the schools in the case study sample).

The main rationale underpinning selection was to sample schools based on their degree of involvement with FFLP and their current FFLP status, with an emphasis on Flagship schools (the focus being to gain insight into models of successful working). The sample was also selected to reflect the range of schools involved in FFLP and a range of school-level factors, such as measures of disadvantage and academic achievement – this ensured that the study was able to explore the impact of the programme in a variety of settings. The schools were selected to reflect a range on each of the following criteria:

- phase (6 secondary, 7 primary and 2 special)
- type of area (13 urban and 2 rural)
- percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals; 7 high, 5 medium, 2 low and 1 school for which there was no FSM data
- attainment; 3 high, 3 medium, 7 low and 2 not known
- government region (4 South West, 3 West Midlands, 1 North West, 1 East Midlands, 1 South East, 1 North East, 2 Yorks & Humber and 2 schools in London)
- FFLP award (2 Gold, 7 Silver and 6 Bronze)

- FFLP Flagship status (10 Flagship and 5 Partnership schools).

The sample included a higher proportion of Flagship schools than Partnership schools in order to enable the evaluation to explore the impact of additional support provided by the FFLP to these schools and their role in supported Partnership schools.

### **Case-study respondents and methods**

The team visited each school once, and conducted interviews with a range of school staff, pupils, parents and other programme partners (such as staff from farms). This enabled the research team to triangulate data and explore multi-perspectives on common factors or issues. Interviewees in each school were selected to enable the research to explore the FFLP in a way that reflected how each school had implemented the programme. The team conducted interviews with the following people:

- 65 school staff, including 17 headteachers or senior management team members, 13 FFLP coordinators, 10 teachers, 10 support staff and 15 catering staff
- 100 pupils including 44 male and 56 female pupils
- 29 parents
- 8 community partners (at 7 schools, e.g. farmers).

Interviews were carried out individually or in small groups, using semi-structured interview schedules. The majority of interviews took place face to face on the school site (where this was not possible the interview took place over the telephone).

### **Ethical considerations**

Schools were asked for written agreement to participate; each school also provided consent for the pupils to be interviewed. The team provided schools with a letter for parents, explaining the study and giving parents the opportunity to withdraw their child from the study. This is known as an 'opt out' parental consent. However, it was left up to schools' discretion as to whether they used the letter and sent it home with pupils. On the day of each visit, interviewees and/or focus group participants were also provided with a full explanation of the research and asked for their agreement to participate.

### **1.3.3 Analysis and presentation of findings**

Data was analysed using an electronic software package. Each key variable or theme was explored to see if interviewee responses varied according to the range of criteria used for school selection. In cases where responses varied we have mentioned them in the report. The report is divided into a further three chapters:

- Chapter 2, *Context and implementation* describes why schools became engaged with FFLP, explores how the programme was implemented, support received from the FFLP and the challenges experienced.
- Chapter 3, *Outcomes* presents evidence about the impacts of the FFLP.
- Chapter 4, *Conclusions and implications* concludes the presentation of findings and discusses implications going forward, and sets future programme development in a framework of political and societal change.

The report also includes Appendices which provide information on award criteria (Appendix 1) and school selection (Appendix 2).

## 2. Context and implementation

This chapter focuses on how schools found out about the FFLP and the reasons why they decided to take part. It goes on to examine how schools were implementing the FFLP, who was involved and the extent to which FFLP had become embedded in school life. It also explores the level of support that schools had received and the challenges they had faced in working towards the awards.

It is important to note that there was no evidence of a consistent difference in the responses of Flagship and Partnership schools in relation to the rate of progress made. The reasons for this are explained in the conclusion to the chapter.

### 2.1 Where schools started from

Schools found out about the FFLP in a variety of ways. Around half of the Flagship schools had found out about the FFLP through Local Authority (LA) catering managers who had been asked by the FFLP to identify potential Flagship schools. Others (including Partnership schools) had heard about the FFLP through members of school staff, through the Healthy Schools programme or had chanced upon web-based information while searching for resources.

Almost all of the schools reported that they were already taking part in the Healthy Schools Programme<sup>2</sup> and had made good progress with this before commencing on the FFLP. This was the case for both Partnership and Flagship schools, which means that all of the schools had an existing commitment to healthy eating principles at the point of joining the FFLP. Most of the schools had already adapted their school meals to some extent and revised or introduced new rules in relation to the food brought into school. Two reported that they had brought their catering back in-house (as opposed to using an LA or regionally based catering company) which had enabled them to take greater control of the offer. Headteachers in three schools (all of which had high levels of free school meal (FSM) entitlement) explained their belief that poor diet is linked to poor attainment and that this had already inspired them to make these changes.

Schools had taken some steps then, prior to FFLP, to ensure that the food available to young people during the school day was healthy and balanced<sup>3</sup>. Both Flagship and Partnership schools were looking for support in 'taking the next step' towards promoting

---

<sup>2</sup> The Healthy Schools programme was launched in 1999 and was a joint initiative between DCSF (now DfE) and Department of Health (DH). Following the publication of the Schools White Paper in 2011 by the new coalition government, Healthy Schools has completed its project work but will continue to be available as an online toolkit.

<sup>3</sup> This should be seen in the context of the implementation of mandatory food-based and nutrient-based standards in the period 2006–2007/08.

healthy eating, following the implementation of national standards for nutrition in school meals. Their decision was influenced by a combination of the following aspirations:

- **Wanting to educate young people and their parents about how and why it was important to make healthy and ethical food choices** so that the impact extended beyond the school gates and into children's homes and ultimately the rest of their lives. While staff reported that they covered these issues to some extent through their basic curriculum (predominantly in Science, Personal, Social and health Education (PSHE), PE and Design and Technology), they were keen to embed them further into the curriculum. The FFLP offered knowledge, ideas and inspiration. In particular, the opportunity to build *skills and capacity* to undertake activities such as cooking and gardening were highlighted as providing a vehicle to better promote understanding about food sources and ingredients, through active learning.
- **Considering healthy lifestyle choices to be central to the ethos of the school** and seeing the programme as a focus for the holistic development of both learning and relationships within the school. Three schools were looking to raise standards by developing a more *creative* curriculum, to better engage young people and provide more opportunities for practical or outside learning. Two of the schools had sports specialist status and felt that the programme was well aligned with their goals. Another school aimed to introduce an ethos focused on 'sharing and caring, and not just yourself, but for the wider environment. For three schools, the FFLP had arrived at just the right time, given that they had recently experienced a change in status or structure and were looking for a focus for their new direction. As one headteacher of a Flagship school said: 'We liked what they were offering, and it gave us an opportunity to have a single identity for the school: something that could be the hub of what we do in the school.'
- **A belief that the structure and awards process of the programme would provide both a framework and momentum** for change. One coordinator in a Flagship school explained why the awards structure held a particular appeal:

*FFLP helped a great deal because a personal preference for me is I like to work to targets and goals and I had to achieve and that makes me more efficient... so it was ideal... because we had gone as far as we could at that time [with Healthy Schools] but I wanted to keep it going.*

Additionally, while many identified that they already had *pockets of activity* taking place in the school, such as gardening or cookery clubs and a curriculum that touched on healthy eating, some highlighted the attraction of a programme that could *bring it all together* and *provide coherence* in relation to the link between healthy eating and sustainability. As a coordinator in a Flagship school said:

*We knew as a school that because we have got so many areas that we need to develop that this could be a way for us to really smarten our thinking about our areas, but it was all kind of... there was no joined-up thinking about anything that was happening.*

- **Some hoped the status of the programme might help to raise the profile of food issues** within the school and bring staff, students, catering staff and community members 'on-board'. A headteacher in a Flagship school highlighted the FFLP requirement for schools to have a single food policy as central to a high-profile approach:

*We had quite a few [policies] in terms of healthy eating, safe food prep... but we raised the profile with all the staff, because in a school like ours, where the standards are so low, cookery seems to be the last thing we need to focus on.*

In addition to the reasons identified above, a number of interviewees credited their involvement to the raised profile of food standards in school, and twelve interviewees specifically cited the role of the television chef Jamie Oliver in campaigning for higher standards in school meals. Given that involvement in the FFLP was driven by concerns which were considered fundamental to the direction and success of the school (for example, raising standards, enhancing the curriculum, promoting a new ethos), it is unsurprising that the majority of schools reported a high level of buy-in and drive from their senior leadership teams.

## 2.2 How schools implemented the FFLP

As detailed in Chapter 1, FFLP recognises progress through Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. Our sample included schools at different stages of development, in relation to these awards. However, we noted that Partnership schools appeared to have progressed at an equal rate to Flagship schools in respect of implementation, despite the types and sources of support they had received (see section 2.3.).

Each school had a FFLP coordinator, who was usually a member of the teaching staff but some were members of the school leadership team or the catering manager. Coordinators were appointed because of their personal interest in FFLP issues, although in some cases it was because their curriculum subject was felt to link particularly well. Some schools highlighted the need for either all or a core group of staff to be involved in delivering the programme so it was not left to one person (namely the coordinator) to 'drive it forward' and is more sustainable in the case of staff turnover. Having the active support of at least one member of the school leadership team was also considered vital.

The following section explores how schools had implemented the FFLP.

## 2.2.1 Examples of leadership in developing the FFLP

This section reports on the development of school food policies and the role of the School Nutrition Action Group in FFLP schools.

### School Food Policies

A school food policy ratified by the school governors is a Silver award criterion (which builds on a review of food culture actions prepared under the Bronze award). However, all of the schools had a school food policy in place before their involvement in the FFLP, as this was a requirement of Healthy Schools. Interviews said that the FFLP had added further sophistication, focus and detail and was viewed as more of an action plan that was developed by and disseminated to all concerned. Schools reported that their school food policy created under the FFLP was likely to include the type and balance of food that would be served or permitted to be brought in by the pupils, guidance on how the school would seek to promote healthy and active lifestyles, the areas of the curriculum to which food education would be linked, and the quality of the canteen experience.

Schools had involved students in the school food policy to differing extents, which appeared to be more related to their perception of 'involvement' than any other factor (such as their Flagship status or award status). One school said that it had developed a children's version of their food policy and another had included the policy on the school Moodle (an interactive virtual learning platform) for comment. Generally, schools were keen to ensure that the 'food education' elements of the policy would ensure that young people ultimately had the information to make good choices for themselves.

### School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG)

In order to achieve the Bronze award, schools were also required to set up a School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG). Most schools said that their SNAG had had a role in developing the school food policy. All schools had a SNAG apart from one Partnership school which had kept their Healthy Schools council in place. A special school (with Partnership status) had incorporated the SNAG into the school council to enable students with complex educational needs to contribute.

The wide membership was also felt to contribute to the whole-school approach. The membership of the SNAG varied across schools but the majority consisted of representatives of the pupils, staff, senior leadership team and governors. Schools also aimed to involve community partners, catering teams, and parents, although the membership of these people was often more sporadic and dependent on the issues being addressed at the time. Some Flagship schools reported that a FFLP regional advisor had sat on their SNAG in the early stages of implementation to introduce the programme and get it 'up and running'. The majority of schools sought pupil representatives from across the year groups, while others limited it to the older children (particularly in primary schools). Schools that maintained the composition of the group across academic years highlighted the benefits this had for the continued momentum of activities. SNAGs were often chaired by the coordinator and while some felt that it was

important that the SNAG was chaired by a member of the school leadership team (to give it status), others believed that that the group should be independent of the direct influence of the Senior Management Team (SMT). In terms of recruitment to the SNAG, pupils were generally encouraged to nominate themselves, often followed by an election. Some schools reported that they had an 'open-door policy' so that anyone could come along and meet with the core group should it take their interest.

SNAGs were most likely to meet on a termly basis, which was considered adequate given the challenges with respect to staff time. The SNAG performed a range of functions in schools but primarily acted as a discussion and decision forum for whole-school food issues. The SNAG was often expected to share information on food issues with other pupils or consult them on key issues. In a minority of schools the SNAG was given the opportunity to take part in FFLP activities to a greater extent than other pupils.

Interviewees considered that the SNAG provided the FFLP in their school with greater momentum, kept food issues *high on the agenda* and ensured that actions were defined and reviewed. One headteacher noted the importance of the SNAG for keeping up the momentum: 'It helps us really to ensure that the FFLP initiatives continue to be a priority, in school there is so much going on...'

More details about the impact of the SNAG can be found in section 3.1.1 about the outcomes of health-related planning and activity.

## **2.2.2 Changes to food culture and eating environments**

Schools implemented some fundamental and strategic changes to the school food culture as a result of the FFLP. These consisted of changes to the:

- types and balance of food available in school
- canteen and dining room environment
- curriculum to enhance the delivery of food education.

### **Changes to the types and balance of food available in school**

As mentioned earlier in this section, the schools involved in FFLP had already begun to make changes to the food available in the school as part of the Healthy Schools programme and school nutrition standards. However, evidence showed that, as a result of the FFLP, there had been an added momentum and impetus away from frozen, processed food to hand-prepared food with a focus on healthy options and a better balanced diet. Schools also reported that they were now more likely to involve students and their parents in selecting menu items (which was confirmed by student and parent interviews), and introducing them to new ingredients, by holding taster days and consultations. Schools sent menus and an explanation of their nutritional content home with students, put them on their websites and displayed them on school notice boards.

Unsurprisingly, evidence shows that the food offer within a school was influenced by the catering arrangements. Schools that had in-house catering clearly had greater control of their food choices, while those managed by an external catering company relied on them to put healthy eating principles into practice. Generally, external catering companies were reported to have been sympathetic to the aims of the FFLP.

Some interviewees maintained that these changes were also influenced by a shift in the national perspective about school food, which featured particularly high on the government agenda at the time (see section 1.1 for a summary of relevant government policy and interventions). One catering manager said: 'I don't think it's just food for life. I think school dinners have changed generally anyway.' Nevertheless, interviewees highlighted how the FFLP programme had encouraged them to consider food provenance as well as focusing on nutrition. Therefore, despite schools identifying similarities between Healthy Schools and the FFLP, they felt it was the food provenance element that distinguished the FFLP.

Chapter 3 focuses in more detail on the outcomes of these changes.

### **Changes to the canteen and dining room environment**

Changes to the school canteens and dining rooms were seen as an ideal way to foster food education, and enable young people to make healthy choices by creating an enjoyable dining experience. A review of the school dining environment is a Bronze level criterion. Canteen changes were reported to have been an ideal area of focus for the SNAG and for involvement of the whole-school population. This aspect is also encouraged by the Healthy Schools programme and so some of the schools had begun to make changes to their canteen prior to the introduction of the FFLP. Through the FFLP schools had decided to:

- **Ensure a calmer, more sociable environment.** Many of the schools had changed their queuing systems and the order in which groups of pupils were invited to dine. Some had introduced additional serving hatches to reduce waiting times. One manager in a Flagship school said, 'It's not the old fashioned "all troop down", like a prison.' Some schools had changed the seating plans so those eating school meals could sit together with their friends having packed lunches. Two schools had introduced a 'top-table' to reward good behaviour, although this had been unsuccessful in one school which found that students preferred to sit with their friends. Some interviewees said that staff tried to make more effort to speak with children over lunch in the canteen and that music was played for a more relaxed environment. One school had also reported that the level of interaction had increased by establishing *child servers* so that pupils could take an active role in serving others.
- **Make the canteen a more attractive place to dine.** To this end schools had decorated the area with pictures and murals, focused on presenting food in an appetising way (for example, by introducing salad bars), introduced proper cutlery and plates (in place of 'flight-trays'), or changed the tables and chairs. A catering manager in a Flagship school said:

*Our dining room was very institutionalised. It was rows of benches and trestle-tables... the colour scheme was very bland... From the feedback they [pupils] wanted it to look more like a bistro or Starbucks, so through capital funding we have all kinds of things like green and black chairs... we got samples and they all got a sit and chose what they liked... they have booths like in McDonald's...It was about the eating experience as well.*

However, in this particular instance, the students we spoke to did not welcome the changes and implied that style had perhaps been prioritised above function:

*We filled in a form, it was about our views on how it [the canteen] has changed. If anything it is worse, there are less tables... you have to queue for ages, you don't get a lot of time for dinner... the dinner ladies are rude.*

- **Encourage pupils to make healthy eating choices.** Interviewees described how canteens had been decorated with posters depicting healthy diets and information about food. Menus were also a common display feature with most highlighting the nutritional content, while some also detailed the food source. Many were now presenting food alongside dietary information. One secondary school had gone as far as implementing a 'cashless' payment system (where money is loaded onto a swipe card at the start of term) to make students more likely to spend the money given to them for food in the school canteen and enable the school to monitor eating habits.

Overall, changes to the dining experience, although expensive in some cases, were deemed to have raised the profile of the FFLP in their school and acted as a *morale boost* to those involved. It had also led to the stronger involvement of the catering manager and team in school life (see also section 2.2.3). More detail on the outcomes of these environmental changes is included in section 3.1.2 on food culture.

### 2.2.3 New activities

Activities introduced to school life as a result of the FFLP included:

- **Growing produce.** To achieve the FFLP Bronze award, pupils must have the opportunity to grow and harvest food and make compost and this learning should be shared with parents and the community. To gain Silver, growing should be organic, and to gain Gold, *all* students should participate.
- **Cooking.** To achieve the FFLP Bronze award, pupils must have the opportunity to take part in cooking activities and this learning should be shared with parents and the community. Committing to provide a minimum of 12 hours of cooking lessons a year by 2011 for all pupils up to and including key stage 3 is a Gold award criterion. Additionally, to gain Gold, schools should provide community members with food and cookery education outside school hours.
- **Special events.** To achieve the FFLP Bronze award, schools must hold an annual event on a food theme and share FFLP learning with the wider community. In addition, inviting parents and community members in to share meals with the students is a Silver award criterion.

- **Farm links.** At least one annual trip to a farm is a FFLP Bronze level criterion, while schools must maintain links with a farm throughout the year to achieve Silver or Gold.

The following section explores schools' experiences of these activities in more detail.

### **Growing produce**

Most FFLP schools were growing their own produce and this was generally considered to be a successful aspect of the programme. There was no clear difference between Flagship and Partnership schools, nor by school phase, in relation to progress that had been made. Schools reported that they had set up small gardens and raised beds in the school grounds or had acquired space in an allotment. Most schools had introduced extra-curricular gardening clubs, although some had integrated the activities into curriculum time or given responsibility for plots to a particular year group. A vast range of fruit and vegetables was reported to have been grown by both students and staff. Produce had been taken home by pupils, used by the canteen for school meals or special events, sold at events or in the playground to parents, given to charity or used in competitions. Some pupils had been involved in preparing their produce for meals and others had been given seeds from the school garden to grow at home.

Schools were particularly keen to encourage pupils to grow their own produce to engage pupils in food provenance issues and make them more willing to try new ingredients. Staff also felt it important that students see how an item developed 'from seed to plate'. A teacher in a Flagship school said:

*It is about introducing the vegetables to the children because when we asked the children where they came from they were saying Tesco or whatever. They arrive in a plastic bag and they couldn't really imagine how they were growing.*

Interviewees credited Garden Organic (an organisation working in partnership with the Soil Association to deliver the FFLP) with helping them to set up their garden and to build their initial skills, knowledge and confidence to grow their own produce.

### **Cooking**

The majority of schools in the sample had a cooking club or covered some element of cooking in the school curriculum. In some cases cooking had been a feature of school life prior to the FFLP, but others stated that the cooking club had been introduced in order to meet FFLP award criteria.

Some of the cooking clubs were open to all pupils, while others limited it to certain year groups. Two or three ensured that all students had a go by rotating membership termly or, as would be expected, covering cookery in Design and Technology classes. The majority ran classes throughout the school year (although some were limited to a set number of weeks). Schools appreciated the equipment and utensils that had been

funded by the FFLP, but most found they were still facing limitations imposed by space and facilities.

Some schools were using produce from their school gardens where possible, but the majority bought ingredients in using school funds. Staff felt cooking clubs were an ideal way to teach students life skills and engage them in a better understanding of ingredients, and consequently food provenance issues, science and healthy eating.

Flagship schools had a visit from a Cooking Bus, which provided staff and students with cookery lessons for a week. Staff found this particularly useful in terms of building basic skills and, consequently, confidence amongst staff, students and parents. All the Partnership schools in our sample had taken part in the 'Let's Get Cooking' programme (another initiative funded by the BIG Lottery) to fund their cookery clubs and reported this to have been particularly successful. FFLP Flagship schools were not permitted to acquire additional funding and support from this source and one school voiced disappointment about this.

### **Special events**

Whole-school special (one-off or repeat) events provided FFLP schools with a good opportunity to involve all staff and students, and in many cases, parents and community members, in food education. It is also a FFLP Bronze level criterion.

The most common type of whole-school event was for schools to invite parents or community members (for example, a group of elderly people or students from a nearby school) to taste the canteen food at lunch or breakfast. Themed weeks, days or meals were also common and sought to teach young people (often their parents too) about both food provenance issues and introduce them to new tastes and cultures. For example, a FFLP coordinator in one of the Partnership schools said:

*We went on the world trip about a year ago; we decided to visit all the continents. Africa Day we did wildebeest pie, camel curry and springbok steaks...we went to France and we did frogs legs and snails, and Australia, this is where the good bit comes in, we did crocodile steaks...and ostrich and the famous kangaroo pie...the children really talk about it, there was a spark of excitement.*

In some cases, staff reported that the special events were linked to current curriculum topics such as World War II, or held around the time of national days such as Mother's Day or St Patrick's Day. A few schools had held events based on well-known television programmes such as 'Ready, steady, cook' and 'Masterchef'. Another concept was to plan a whole event around one key ingredient such as an apple (learning how it is grown, then harvested and juiced) or a hog roast (to learn about the anatomy and life of a pig). In some schools, all the students had been given the same piece of practical homework to do with their parents in the holidays, such as growing a seedling or baking muffins. FFLP schools also sought to introduce students to new eating environments and cooking methods such as picnics and barbeques. Flagship schools received

funding from the FFLP to support the delivery of events and this funding was welcomed by staff. However, interviews showed that Partnership schools were just as likely to have held these sorts of events without additional funding.

### **Farm links**

Every FFLP Flagship school had the chance to visit a farm with support of the Farm Links programme. The Farm Links team look for working organic farms as they provide a mix of arable and livestock, and therefore, potentially have the broadest range of learning opportunities, although this was not exclusive and did not form part of the award criteria – many Flagship schools are linked to non-organic farms. Practicality was a key consideration in selecting farms for Flagships. Schools welcomed the farm visits as they felt they gave students the opportunity to see where their food comes from and how it is produced. As one FFLP coordinator in a Flagship school said: ‘...some people don’t know how bread is made, where meat comes from. They know that meat comes from cows but don’t understand the process the farm plays.’

The experience of visiting a farm was a good opportunity to widen the experiences of young people. One school used their farm visit to induct year 7s into their school and build relationships with staff. A headteacher in another school said:

*It’s not only good for our youngsters in terms of learning about food, and about farms, but it’s also giving out important messages to them about their world... Some people have never been out of [town] so, therefore, they go further afield.*

Some schools linked their farm visits to curriculum subjects and integrated different activities to broaden the learning experience (for example, setting a ‘food trail’ so the pupils could consider air miles while at a local farm).

Although the FFLP had provided Flagship schools with funding to assist with farm visits, a number of schools said that they were not able to visit the farm as often, or with as many children, as they would have liked. This was mainly due to the distance of many of the farms from the schools and the associated transport costs. Some schools had continued to fund the visits themselves or had reverted to visiting more local farms, but were grateful to the FFLP for having established the idea. Schools felt it would be ideal for students to visit the farm at least twice a year in order to experience it through the different seasons. One school had approached this issue by sending a different class throughout the year and asking them to cascade their learning to their year group on return. The same school organised a wheat growing race with the farm so that those who were not able to visit the farm had access to the learning. Pupils themselves remembered the farm visits and were able to recall large amounts of detail about the experience of the visit and their learning about food provenance.

Partnership schools had also set up farm links but had done so via personal relationships or sourced funding from alternative organisations such as Defra.

## Curriculum linkage

The FFLP promotes a whole-school approach to food education and one of the ways to achieve this consistently was to cover food education in the school curriculum. This impacted on the extent to which both staff and students were involved in activities.

Most schools reported that they covered FFLP principles and concepts across the curriculum. Staff suggested that the cooking, growing, special events and farm visits provided good inspiration and resources for lessons. However, for around half of the schools, this kind of linkage pre-existed the FFLP and/or was rather ad hoc in nature. Subjects most commonly reported as linked to the FFLP were Science (for example, bacteria and composting), PSHE (for example, health and nutrition), and Citizenship (for example, ethical trade). Some schools also drew on the FFLP to deliver Mathematics (for example, weighing of ingredients) and English (for example, reading instructions and recipes).

Seven schools talked about FFLP principles and concepts being embedded more thoroughly into the curriculum which ensured that more staff and students were both involved in and able to benefit from food education. The extent to which FFLP was embedded into the curriculum did not appear to be related to the role or seniority of the FFLP coordinator. Four of these schools reported that they had planned FFLP into their main curriculum subjects, while a further three schools (all primary) used the FFLP as a resource and focus for whole-school topics or had arranged for each class to take part in gardening and cooking for a lesson each week. One of these schools credited the FFLP with helping them to implement their 'creative curriculum'.

Those who had adopted this approach saw it as key to maintaining momentum of the programme. As a coordinator in a Flagship primary school explained:

*In order to sustain everything that we are doing, our creative curriculum – which happens three times a week – is going to have to be focused on FFLP strands...so that FFLP becomes a key part of the children's learning...*

One school had also introduced new qualifications in hospitality and catering to reflect their commitment to FFLP principles.

Due to the 'embeddedness' of FFLP in these schools, staff were adamant that students would not necessarily be explicitly aware of the FFLP, and did not consider it to be particularly important. One coordinator of a Flagship Gold award school said:

*If you said to students 'do you do FFLP in your curriculum?' they would say 'no' because it is not a lesson or a heading ...I don't think the average student on a day-to-day basis would be aware of the FFLP because it is integrated in school. They know that food, nutrition, healthy eating and food sources play an important role in school but if you ask them 'is the FFLP behind that?', they would say 'no'.*

Indeed, students, when prompted, were able to recall a large range of activities relating to FFLP and spoke at length about the experience and learning outcomes. While most said they *were* aware of the FFLP this may be because teachers had briefed them in preparation for their interview. Members of SNAG groups had a particularly high level of awareness of the FFLP.

### **Involvement of community members, partners, parents and catering staff**

Involvement of community members and partner organisations, parents and catering staff in the FFLP is also a common feature of the awards criteria and was built into the programme with the aim of widening its impact. This was, therefore, another feature of 'embeddedness' and is discussed below.

Schools were most likely to have involved **community members** by inviting them to special events or to eat with the students at lunch (the latter was more common in primary schools). Community members and partners also provided a rich resource of knowledge and support for implementing activities such as gardening or cookery clubs. Involving communities of expertise such as allotment societies was common, as was involving elderly members of the community. Staff highlighted the mutual benefits of involving older people, as one coordinator in a Partnership school recounted: 'It's so they [elderly members of the community] can see that teenagers aren't hooligans and the children can see that old people aren't dodderly, you know?'

Three schools reported that they had invited members of ethnic communities in to cook with the children while one school had invited young offenders to join their gardening club; another engaged volunteer gardeners from a major local employer. Food suppliers also played a prominent role in some schools and were often involved in presenting to students about their work. The majority of these partners had been directly approached by the school itself. Some were keen to be involved because their children had attended the school, while others were keen to promote what they did and raise awareness (especially farmers, who had often taken a more proactive approach to engaging with schools).

**Parents** were involved in similar ways to community members. However, given their potential to influence the eating habits of students, schools were particularly keen to involve parents more fully. To this end, parents were regularly invited to special events, taster sessions, meals and had the opportunity to take part in after-school clubs or sit on the SNAG. Some schools also offered adult education cookery or gardening classes. A number of schools were disappointed with the level of parental engagement to date but accepted that working parents found it difficult to commit, as did those who lived a significant distance from the school. Some staff suggested that parents may lack the confidence to help children with activities that they were not skilled in themselves. With this in mind, one school had successfully aligned FFLP activities with a pre-existing English as a second language (ESL) group, and these parents now came in and helped with the canteen. In place of committed involvement, therefore, schools had worked

hard to raise awareness amongst parents through one-off events, on going opportunities to share school meals, homework assignments, garden-grown produce being taken home and communication using media such as newsletters, posters and the website. The enthusiasm of their children, who recounted their experiences of FFLP activities at home, had helped to promote parental awareness. As a result, parent interviewees did seem to be aware of the FFLP and the activities that were taking place.

Four Flagship schools reported that **caterers** had a lead role in relation to FFLP. One coordinator described the important role played by their caterer:

*To work towards FFLP Gold [award], you need a key member of staff who is going to take it forward. I think in this school it's been our catering advisor, our head cook – she dedicates a lot of time in her own time as well... She puts together a newsletter every half term which goes out to parents, it's not just her, it's her team and she motivated her team to want to do that.*

Most schools reported that catering staff had been supportive by being open to new ideas and willing to make changes. They also played a key role in educating the pupils as they served them their food and responding to any questions that were posed. Involving catering staff in the SNAG was often key to getting them 'on-board' and with half of schools having a member of the catering team on the SNAG. Caterers in Flagship schools had also been able to access training provided by the FFLP which proved instrumental in increasing their skills and awareness (see section 2.3.1). In schools with some element of external catering management, the school catering manager was most likely to be responsible for liaison and negotiating any flexibility in food sourcing. The involvement of school catering teams in special FFLP-themed events was vital. Overall, the FFLP was acknowledged to have increased the level of involvement of catering staff in school life.

## 2.3 What support the schools received and needed

This section focuses on the support that was available and was accessed by both Flagship and Partnership schools and additional support needs that we identified by schools. It then goes on to examine the key challenges faced by schools in respect to implementation of the FFLP.

### 2.3.1 Support provided

Flagship schools were entitled to an advanced level of support in order to 'fast-track' them to Gold award status. The support package included:

- access to a **regional coordinator** (FFLP personnel) who would guide the set up and implementation of the programme in their school
- an initial **workshop with Garden Organic** on the school site to set up or expand their garden. Funding is also available for gardening equipment

- a **Cooking Bus**, courtesy of the Focus on Food Campaign, which visited the school for one week to teach basic cooking skills and techniques. A selection of cooking equipment was also funded by FFLP
- **Farm Links** worked with the school to ensure structure and regularity of farm visits and identify a partner farm. FFLP contributes to the cost of travel, staff cover and the farmer's time
- catering staff had access to a two-day **catering course** (run by an educational catering consultant) and to a cook's network.

All Flagship schools had indeed received this package of support and were very positive about its influence.

**FFLP regional coordinators** were considered to be hugely supportive and influential in 'getting it off the ground'. For example, interviewees reported that regional coordinators had attended initial SNAG meetings and helped to guide the process of establishing a whole-school policy. One teacher said: 'They basically helped to set up the whole thing.' Regional coordinators had also provided schools with useful contacts and ideas for implementation.

While the schools needed most support during the first year of implementation, interviewees remarked that their FFLP contact had continued to stay in touch, encouraging them to maintain momentum. The regional coordinator's level of expertise was highly valued, coupled with their 'hands on' approach. FFLP staff were considered to be *very knowledgeable* and to have *high expertise*. Regional coordinators were described as 'doing... helping us' (many had physically lent a hand at events) and they were responsive when schools needed answers. One community partner considered it '*novel*' that where the regional coordinator was unable to answer a query themselves, they always made the effort to go and find out from someone who could. This suggests that support staff may not always need to be experts themselves as long as they are able to take a responsive approach and have a range of contacts at their disposal.

School staff made similar positive comments about **Garden Organic** personnel, as one headteacher said:

*I get regular phone calls from the people from Garden Organic... just to see how things are going and if there is anything we want and I think that is as useful as anything to be honest. Just knowing that somebody is there.*

Additionally, three interviewees in Flagship schools mentioned the high quality of FFLP resources such as leaflets, booklets and web resources.

**Workshops** provided by both Garden Organic and the Cooking Bus were considered to have been particularly well designed as they armed students, and the adults who would be working with them, with the skills and confidence to undertake new activities. The Cooking Bus was described as 'brilliant' by a number of interviewees. For instance, a teacher said:

*It was excellent. She [the facilitator] watched what we were doing with the children... and that again gave us brilliant training, because we have been doing cookery in the school for quite a few years and it gave us some new ideas. She showed us how to chop safely, and gave us lots of recipes we could use focusing on different age groups.*

In addition, a headteacher commented that:

*It's amazing....it really sparked the interest in doing cookery in school. We were taught how to do everything properly, even the little ones learnt. We all learnt loads, even the ones who thought they were good at cooking. It really took off in a positive way.*

Interviewees also welcomed the 'treasure chest' of utensils they received as a result of the Cooking Bus visit.

The Garden Organic workshop had helped schools to develop their skills in a similar way. For instance, a headteacher said:

*The chap from Garden Organic, he came and did a lot with us... he led workshops on planting, he gave us training on organic, on composting with the children. That was really practical support and it was support we needed... it was up-skilling us.*

And a teacher commented that:

*Garden Organic [gave us] lots of ideas... we probably didn't have so many ideas through the winter, so they showed us different things, what to do then: bird feeding, leaves and mulching them down.*

Partnership schools appeared to have made as much progress in growing produce as Flagship schools. Although they had not had the support of Garden Organic they had been able to draw upon the resources of knowledgeable staff and community members. They had also been able to access funding from alternative sources.

**The Cooks workshop** was also appreciated, because it provided ideas and helped to raise aspirations amongst catering staff. Comments about this aspect of the support package included this from a caterer:

*We learnt ideas, I've not been taught cooking skills. When we went on the course she said: 'I'm not here to teach you to cook, but it's the ideas, different ways to serve the food, presentation.'*

While Partnership schools did not have access to this element of support, they had been able to access alternative support through the 'Let's Get Cooking' programme (see below).

**Funding** from the FFLP was reported to have been influential in the early stages of implementation, and was widely used to transform spaces such as canteens and gardens. Schools also received funding for additional equipment and events. However, although schools welcomed this aspect of the support package there was some confusion about how to get funding from the FFLP. It would seem that some schools had been better able to navigate the funding channels, supported by their regional advisors. Schools felt that it had been easier to access funding in the first year of implementation and a few complained that funding levels and criteria were not clear to them at the start of the programme. One headteacher described his difficulties as follows:

*The one frustration was that there was no clear budget from the outset, but I'm not sure they [the FFLP] know either, so we had to put bids in. We didn't want to miss out on any money if it was available....we didn't know the money would dry up in a year. If we knew at the outset that we had say £5000, we would have decided how to spend the money, and maybe been more efficient. At least we had the links to make the bids.*

Another headteacher made a similar point:

*I think I wouldn't have had the money to do it from school resources, so the money side I was very grateful for... but if I knew how much there was for me to play with I would have had a better plan for developing.*

Staff recounted how they had had to source alternative funding streams or earmark their own school funds towards FFLP activities so that they would know how much income they had at their disposal (they were later able to claim the money back from the FFLP). In addition, some staff questioned the financial sustainability of the farm visits, although they welcomed the introduction to a farm capable of hosting school visits. Funding for this aspect of the support package had only been received in the first year and they would now need to source this funding from elsewhere.

On the other hand, the headteacher of a school that had integrated FFLP activities fully into the curriculum explained how this approach had enabled them to use resources more effectively:

*We haven't felt as though we have drawn on our funds at all, it's been natural use of curriculum money, so yes, it's been supported by our own funds but we've built it into the curriculum so it's a natural use of them rather than a bolt on which makes it questionable for sustainability.*

### **Other types of support**

Besides the support received by the FFLP, interviewees were also keen to express the level of support received from staff, community partners and catering companies. Further, two Flagship schools considered the support of external catering companies to have been instrumental in their ability to fulfil FFLP award criteria.

While Partnership schools had not had access to the full suite of FFLP support as Flagship schools, the following sources of support had been accessed by Partnership schools:

- All had sourced funding from alternative organisations such as government bodies (Defra) or large retail companies, rather than from the FFLP.
- One was unable to distinguish between the support they had received from the FFLP and Healthy Schools programme but felt that the latter had been more influential in terms of providing support and guidance. However, this school did feel that the FFLP had added value through its web resources.
- Two schools mentioned that they had received limited support from FFLP staff, such as feedback and help with providing evidence on the award criteria.
- All highlighted the support they had received from the 'Let's Get Cooking' programme as influential in helping them to achieve FFLP awards.
- Two schools reported that they had tried to access support from their partner Flagship school but both had found that they were 'further along' than the Flagship school and that their Flagship partner had achieved a lower or equal award to themselves. One also said that they were too far from their Flagship school to visit them.

### **2.3.2 Additional support needs**

When asked whether there was any more the FFLP could have done to support them, most interviewees said they were very happy with the support they had received.

Flagship schools were happy with the level of support received and most were unable to think of anything else they needed. It was clear that the programme of support for Flagship schools had been successful in providing schools with the means to drive the programme for themselves. For example, one catering manager said:

*I think the first year we perhaps had a lot of support and then after that initial year we were left to get on with it but I think because by then we had the confidence and we knew where we were aiming.*

The main suggestions for improvement centred on clarity and sustainability of funding and advice on the best way to maintain the momentum of the programme in the future. Promoting the FFLP activity and policies amongst new cohorts of students had been an issue for one school (which had merged with another school to become an academy) while another felt there could be more follow-up with schools to ensure they were still maintaining the awarded standard. One coordinator who asked for more help with maintaining momentum revealed that she was solely responsible for driving most of the activities. In another case, a catering manager thought that it would make more sense to have more local coordinators and networks and that schools with correlating backgrounds were encouraged to network.

Of the **Partnership** schools:

- One suggested that the FFLP could support the continuing momentum of the programme by keeping food issues high on the public agenda. This school would also welcome access to a cluster of schools to share ideas and experiences.
- Another would like more funding to support the programme.
- A third did not feel that any additional support was needed, saying: 'It's fairly straightforward... it's not rocket science unless you want to be really fancy.'

## 2.4 Challenges

Despite the positive comments reported above, there were some common challenges associated with the FFLP.

### 2.4.1 Sourcing of food

**Sourcing food in order to meet the food provenance award criteria** for local, organic and 'freedom' foods was highlighted as a challenge by almost all of the Flagship and Partnership schools. This was also the most common *perceived* challenge with respect to achieving higher award levels. However, although schools found it challenging to reach their current award status there was a sense of achievement in doing so. They, therefore, viewed the higher award criteria in a similar light: challenging but not prohibitive. The majority of schools (both Flagship and Partnership), therefore, planned to continue working towards Gold status. Identifying suitable suppliers had been a challenge for schools and would pose further challenge in respect of the Gold award. Those subject to external catering management felt that they had been well supported in terms of sourcing suitable suppliers (although the constraints of existing contracts with suppliers had slowed progress), while those managing it in-house found it time consuming. The cost of ethically produced food was considered problematic (and this pressure was expected to increase in the current economic climate), as was the need to evidence the provenance of the food given a 'complex supply chain'. One school faced a particular problem in sourcing meat which was both halal and 'freedom food' certified. Although they were achieving well in respect of other criteria, they felt 'penalised' by this aspect. Some interviewees also noted additional challenges in sourcing food which related to their geographical location. A greengrocer that worked with a Gold award school spoke of the challenges relating to food provenance:

*...they [the FFLP] have this desire to reach 30 per cent organic...then you are forced into a situation of either importing produce or transporting produce hundreds of miles. My attitude was that it's great having 30 per cent organic produce but if you're knackered the environment by driving it and flying it...then actually you are doing good with one hand and doing bad with the other. There is more than enough produce locally but not organic...organic is a niche product and quite expensive; then the schools don't want to charge too much for the meals.*

Some schools had found affordable ways to source the required proportions of local and organically produced foods by supplementing cheaper types of food such as eggs and milk with their organic counterparts (as opposed to sourcing organic meats, for example).

### 2.4.2 Time and commitment

The time and commitment necessary to deliver and sustain the programme caused concern. This concern was particularly relevant to maintaining the garden through the seasons. One headteacher in a Flagship Silver award school reflected on the need for whole-school involvement and integration in order to minimise the burden on individual staff:

*It's hard work, you have really got to be committed, you couldn't do it half-heartedly. But by getting everybody 'on board' it became easier. It is now something we don't think about, it is something we just do. It is just so much of what we are.*

Again, one of the schools that had integrated FFLP fully into their curriculum highlighted the impact this can have:

*[the regional coordinator] has always said it's a big commitment. I can see it's easy to think you haven't the time because there is always so much to do, but if you build it into your curriculum, it just fits in.*

Ensuring that FFLP did not get side lined as new and additional educational initiatives are introduced was a concern for two or three schools.

### 2.4.3 Other challenges

Interviewees in five schools highlighted parental involvement as a challenge and four schools had found it difficult to involve the community. One school had needed to foster support for organic principles amongst more elderly members of their gardening group, while two schools were proposing to offer community members 'ownership' of some of the school plot in return for their help with maintaining the overall school garden. Another school reported that they had been limited by an unsupportive school cook.

## 2.5 Chapter summary

The research findings indicate that the Healthy Schools programme had helped pave the way for the FFLP. However, interviewees felt that the FFLP enabled them to take the next step in implementing a more holistic, integrated and sophisticated programme of food education. It provided both a framework and provided some with a central focus for school development. Evidence suggests that there is not a specific 'successful' model or models of implementation; rather FFLP has provided a flexible template for

schools to build on, according to their individual contexts, varied expectations and ambitions.

It was interesting to find that Partnership schools had seemingly progressed at the same rate as Flagship schools. Support from senior staff and the engagement of community partners had been a vital source of support in terms of implementation for Partnership schools.

Schools had made some important changes to their facilities and equipment as a result of the FFLP and support from FFLP personnel had been influential in establishing policies and activities.

Schools appreciated the support and advice they received from knowledgeable FFLP personnel, especially when they were first establishing the programme. There was also some evidence to suggest that access to contacts in the community could be an effective source of support. Further, some schools would welcome the introduction of more school-to-school support.

The extent to which FFLP activities involved staff and students was generally determined by integration into the curriculum and it was interesting that two of the schools that had been most successful in this respect had both gained Gold award status. By embedding the programme into the curriculum, these schools had reduced the impact of two of the main challenges of the programme, namely time commitment and sustainable funding.

Access to further funding to sustain FFLP activities would be welcomed, but there was a general acceptance that, in the current financial climate, this might not be forthcoming and that schools need to identify their own solutions to ensuring the sustainability of the programme. The most pressing challenge which schools face in working towards the awards is sourcing a larger proportion of food which is both locally and organically sourced. This requirement does not appear to be stopping schools from working towards the Gold award but some schools fear it may be a barrier to them achieving it.

## 3. Outcomes

In this chapter we describe outcomes interviewees associated with the FFLP programme in relation to:

- schools' planning and activity around health and food
- school staff
- pupils
- wider impacts (for example, on parents, members of the community and FFLP partners).

### 3.1 Outcomes at the school level

In this section we present evidence about FFLP-related outcomes at the school level, in relation to FFLP's potential to contribute to:

- organising and focusing health-related activity
- development in school food culture
- school improvement
- developments in teaching and learning.

#### 3.1.1 Health-related activity planning and implementation

All of the schools commented on the contribution the FFLP made to helping them better plan, develop further and more effectively focus health-related activity; and specifically towards supporting a whole-school approach to policy development, planning and implementation. Further, several schools mentioned how FFLP helped initiate, develop and maintain momentum on health-related activity. One catering supervisor explained:

*The FFLP gives you a framework to work towards and I think from having regular SNAG meetings you put together your next thing and you want to tick things off as soon as you can and you are working towards the next thing.*

Generally, schools identified the FFLP awards structure as a key contributor to their health-related focus and momentum. In fact two schools, already at Gold, were left wondering 'Where are we going to go next?'

According to interviewees, the SNAG was another important FFLP element supporting health-related development within schools. This was seen as providing an effective but

flexible structure and a forum for joined-up and consultative strategic planning and direction, and was also important in delivering and sustaining momentum.

*What is important about SNAG, is that a core group of students are appointed because any action group with students in school has to sustain the momentum and getting that enthusiasm and sustaining that, is something we have been able to do. The group has a sense of impact and that keeps the momentum sustained.*

While issues, such as health, are often driven forward within organisations by individual champions, SNAGs were seen as an effective way of helping schools engage the wider school community in active ownership of the health agenda. In some schools, the FFLP had resulted in deeper and in some cases transformational change in the levels of engagement for the school community with health agenda, for instance, placing it higher on the school agenda and better embedding it in the school ethos. These points were exemplified by a FFLP coordinator:

*In terms of the whole school it's definitely changed our school ethos, the whole school is 100 per cent aware of what we're doing for food for life. We have things like staff meetings and then staff training and things. The whole staff are aware of it, it's also got quite key members of staff like me and x [a colleague] so we can kind of drive it. I drive it through to School Leadership Team (SLT) [and] she can drive it through support. She's in the children centre as well, so there's that kind of across the whole school we can really push things forward.*

And a caterer said that:

*That's the added value, it's [the FFLP] brought us together as a team, as adults, and it's linked us into what all the kids are doing. It's current, isn't it? It's a current thing, Jamie and his healthy school meals.*

### **3.1.2 Food culture**

As reported in Chapter 2, interviewees explained how their schools had made significant changes to the school in order to impact on the school food culture. Interview evidence suggests that FFLP has indeed contributed to developing and changing the food culture in all of the schools visited. A key outcome of changing food culture, which many interviewees associated with FFLP, was a general increase in school meal uptake.

*The thing is in the canteen about 75–76 per cent of our children use the canteen on a daily basis and nationally it's 33 or 34, something like that. That in itself has proved that the children support the canteen and what they get out of it as well.*

Interviewees in schools where meal uptake had been relatively high prior to FFLP said that, even though the room for improvement had been more limited, the FFLP had in any event led to some increase. Further, generally, schools also reported an increase in school meals consumed by pupils with FSM. For instance, in one instance school FSM meal uptake had gone from 53 per cent to 86 per cent, and according to the school this increase had been the direct result of their involvement with FFLP.

Increases in school meal uptake were also linked favourably to meal costs; in that a few schools said that their school meal service had moved into profit and was 'paying for itself' and that profits could be used for further investment in food culture improvement.

According to schools, underpinning increases in school meal uptake were a number of FFLP-related outcomes, arising from school efforts to achieve FFLP awards and/or in regard to their role as Flagship schools. The school food culture outcomes identified by schools included changes to a number of aspects including mealtimes, the food on offer and the wider awareness of food and health. These are explored in more detail below.

- Mealtimes had improved through improvements to the canteen environment, which had resulted in mealtimes becoming more relaxed, popular and attractive venues and, therefore, positive social events. In some schools this had led to the canteen and meal times becoming a central feature of social and school community cohesion. For example, one FFLP coordinated explained that:

*The teachers don't dread lunchtime like they used to. It used to be challenging, like I said the teachers couldn't wait to get rid of the kids. They never wanted to share lunchtime with students. Now you have teachers come in and buy lunch, they will sit with the kids and eat lunch and the kids now have conversations with the teachers. It has become a nice part of the day.*

A pupil said:

*It's good because you can come in the canteen and it's all nice and fresh... you can sit and just chat with your friends... and there's a water fountain and it's free ... lunchtime is good in the canteen.*

- The food was healthier with attractive meal options and ethically sourced food. This involved local sourcing of produce (and/or organic produce), training for catering staff, improved menus and the provision of attractive healthier meal options.

The schools reported increased awareness of food issues and engagement with the discourse regarding food and health, which had resulted in the school community making more informed decisions regarding food from various perspectives. Catering staff reported being better able to produce attractive and healthy options and to talk with pupils about food sourcing and origins. Teaching staff also reported being more informed about food production, sourcing and origins which made them more engaged

with the issue of food and the importance of making informed decisions when selecting what to consume.

Students were generally positive about their school lunches, although due to raised expectations, students in three schools complained about the price of their school meals. In one of these, pupils also indicated their dissatisfaction with lunchtime arrangements and their perception that the food options available did not represent good value for money. Although the staff in this school reported that the students had been fully consulted on the canteen refurbishment and the new menu, this example demonstrates the importance of fully arming young people with all the information they need to make an informed choice (for example, see Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, (1992) for more information on levels of consultation). It also suggests that schools need to explain the benefits of changes and check that the new arrangements are achieving 'customer satisfaction'.

### 3.1.3 School improvement

Schools provided extensive and consistent evidence that showed how in their view FFLP had contributed to the wider agenda of school improvement and had, therefore, fulfilled their aims upon joining the programme. Most attributed these outcomes to improved teaching and learning methods (detailed in the next section), improved concentration affected by healthy diets and also improved interaction amongst staff across the school. Specifically, schools said that the FFLP had contributed to school improvement agendas by helping them to achieve the following aims.

- improved pupil attainment and pupil attendance. A headteacher said:

*We are a data rich school using a range of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of specific programmes, such as the Food for Life Partnership work on our students' progress and well-being.*

*Since we embarked on the Food for Life Partnership programme we have seen significant improvement across a number of our key performance indicators including attendance, attainment and achievement. In 2005, 50 per cent of our students achieved 5 or more good GCSE passes. We have seen a year on year rise (52 per cent in 2006, 58 per cent in 2007, 69 per cent in 2008, 70 per cent in 2009 and 82 per cent last summer) which has ranked us first in North Somerset for pupil progress from KS2 to KS4 for the last 3 consecutive years. This year our most recent progress data suggest that more than 90 per cent of our Year 11 will achieve at least 5 good GCSE passes.*
- improved pupil behaviour. For instance, one headteacher said that, as a result of more nutritious lunches:

*...Pupils are healthier, therefore, they are happier, therefore, they are achieving more in the classroom and in exams, that's the main stay of it, ... I think the children are better, happier and more successful. An example for me is we used to have after lunch time, a significant number of call outs for behaviour and we had something called the Senior Management Action Call Out Team, so if something was particularly happening in a lesson we would*

*go out and deal with a child, and before this [FFLP] happened we were doing something like 10–12 call outs in the one-hour lunchtimes; we did a survey two years ago, and we were down to four. I think there is a correlation there between improved food provision in school and the behaviour of children after lunchtime.*

- positive Ofsted outcomes, as a headteacher explained in relation to their involvement with FFLP, ‘all that was lovely evidence for Ofsted’.
- a greater sense of cohesion and community within the school. For instance a headteacher said that:

*I think it’s [the FFLP] been ‘healthy’ in helping various groups of staff pull together for the good of the school, in terms of our site manager, in terms of our teaching and learning assistants and teachers all working together and the catering department, so there is that adding to the unity of the school.*

- higher profile for the school with parents, within their local community and beyond, as one headteacher noted, ‘It’s [the FFLP] certainly raised our profile in town, we have had a lot of publicity in town-wide publications.’.

### 3.1.4 Teaching and learning

The FFLP had been used to initiate or support innovative developments in teaching and learning, enabling schools to develop cross-curricula learning opportunities linked to FFLP activities. Referring to FFLP, a caterer said:

*Well, I couldn’t put on a new menu without support of the school, and they couldn’t do their PSHE or RE, without the support of the kitchen, where years ago you plodded along on one path, and they had their set lessons, this [the FFLP] has overlapped.*

Schools had also used FFLP activities as a way of engaging pupils in experiential opportunities; this had been found by some schools to be particularly useful at engaging more vulnerable pupils. For instance, a teacher explained that, using FFLP:

*We are focusing on FSM children getting involved in that activity and improving attendance and that helps on another level. It means you are ticking the boxes already in the healthy food issues things like obesity. Our focus was FSM children not usually getting involved in activities, so we were focusing on their attendance.*

As reported in 2.2.2, schools had linked FFLP learning to the curriculum to differing extents. Hence, in many schools, FFLP had also facilitated a whole-school approach in terms of the involvement of most, and in a few cases, all pupils in learning food and healthy eating. A headteacher commented about the FFLP that:

*Every child cooks, every child is involved in the growing so it does involve everyone, it’s real to all of them. So they feel a connection. A lot of things*

*children do in school they are interested in but they are not involved; but with this [the FFLP], they have to be involved and that's the key.*

## **3.2 Outcomes for school staff**

In this section we explore FFLP outcomes on school staff in relation to the following:

- inspiration and innovation
- knowledge, behaviour and confidence.

### **3.2.1 Inspiration and innovation**

In general, staff considered FFLP to be stimulating for staff and pupils. In practice, the programme was reported to have inspired those delivering it, providing them with opportunities to develop new ways of engaging with the pupils and delivering lessons. FFLP was particularly valued because it gave those delivering it new ideas, resources and settings for delivering health- and food-related messages. Evidence showed that the FFLP had contributed to teachers' ability to integrate cooking, gardening and farm visits into science, citizenship and PSHE lessons, whilst catering staff had used FFLP to help transform menus and mealtime environments.

Furthermore, the programme had provided schools with impetus to develop new and beneficial relationships through engagement with other schools, with external partners and in some cases with parents. For instance, a member of catering staff said:

*It was a cooking course, just to go over healthy eating presentation and recipes. It was a two-day course, and all we did was cook and talk about it afterwards, it was lovely to talk to each other to be able to discuss recipes, see what they are doing, that was excellent! It was nice to talk to other school cooks, most had the Silver awards and were going for the Gold, which was what we were doing here, so it was nice to discuss what they were doing what they were going for.*

According to staff, their ability to innovate was underpinned and empowered by FFLP's extensive and continuing impact on their professional development; skills were developed as a direct result of FFLP initiatives and activities, such as the Cooking Bus and cooks network and as a result of the support of FFLP and Garden Organic advisors. The role and value of these support mechanisms have been discussed more fully in section 2.3.1 on support received.

### **3.2.2 Knowledge, behaviour and confidence**

The FFLP was considered by interviewees to have raised staff's awareness of and knowledge about food sourcing, safety and healthy eating. Furthermore, involvement in the programme had prompted some staff to assess their own behaviour and had

generated interest in activities like gardening. This resulted in staff trying new foods and helped them to act as role models for the pupils in their classes, as one teacher explained:

*...you are more aware, and I'm more conscious of cutting [vegetables], I think also we promote ourselves, we're not walking around the school eating chocolate and that's encouraging.*

And a member of support staff said:

*I think it [the FFLP] is increasing awareness of where food comes from all the time. It has personally changed my life a bit. I do try not to shop so much at supermarkets and I do check out the labels where food comes from and how far it comes from and the welfare of the animals and if I can get it across to a few children that it is very important—that's how the world goes, small units – everything downsized, more organic methods. I think organic methods, I am very passionate about them and if I can get it through to one or two children then I think it would make a difference.*

As a result of increased awareness and knowledge, staff also reported that they felt more confident. The consensus amongst those delivering the FFLP programme was that using the programme had developed their understanding of healthy eating food sourcing and safety, and this led to increased confidence. As a direct result, staff felt confident enough to integrate FFLP activity into the curriculum and often place it at the heart of school activity. A caterer commented thus:

*Yes, definitely. I have gained more confidence in knowing the direction in which we should be going. And had the support to take it in that direction which is really good and it has given me time to spend with the rest of the team and the children and the parents.*

For Partnership schools, the 'Let's Get Cooking' programme accessed outside of the FFLP had also been influential in contributing to transforming the knowledge, behaviour and confidence of staff in respect of cooking specifically.

### 3.3 Outcomes for pupils

All interviewees were asked what impact, if any, they thought the FFLP had had on pupils. Further, pupils, who had been involved with FFLP activities, were interviewed and their experiences of, knowledge about and views related to the following were explored:

- their involvement in decisions relating to FFLP and other health-related activity
- food sourcing, safety, cooking, gardening and farm visits
- health and diet (including exploring what balanced diet was thought to mean)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Pupils in primary schools were shown pictures of foods that, as part of a balanced diet, they should eat a lot of (fruit and vegetables) and pictures of foods that they should eat a little of (chocolate and crisps).

- any changes in their behaviour related to cooking, gardening and the food they were consuming.

Broadly it should be noted that there was little or no difference generally in the responses of pupils in relation to their age and/or gender. However, where such a contrast was found it is appropriately noted in the findings that follow.

### 3.3.1 Pupil voice

In general, as noted earlier, the FFLP had resulted in pupils being more directly involved in decisions about health-related issues in schools, which had been the result of schools using SNAGs and pupils' involvement on them. In schools operating a SNAG, and where pupils who were involved with it were interviewed, pupils said that they had been involved in decision making regarding changes to school food culture and related events and activity. A FFLP coordinator commented:

*... the way that we set the [SNAG] meetings up as well is that we kept them quite adult. We had refreshments on the side and they could get up and get themselves refreshments and we would work in little groups and there would be a couple of adults helping the children and we would be talking about budgets and things like that and they've been party to all that so they've actually got used to quite an adult set-up. We've kept them sometimes quite formal so they've been sort of in that more adult set-up and they've picked up some really good communication skills. They were so eloquent that they were able to talk all through everything. Their explanations were really good. When they were all coming to meetings they've obviously had to talk and talk to members of the public who they don't know so they've kind of got used to that as well which has been really good.*

Further, some interviewees said that involvement with the SNAG had helped develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. As a member of a school's support staff noted: 'I really like the way it has raised the self-esteem of the children on the SNAG, they have absolutely flourished, they have loved it'. A FFLP coordinator explained that, as a direct result of involvement on the SNAG:

*I think their self-confidence, their ability to provide explanations and to talk and to share and to get used to other children is good. They're quite happy to stand up in class and say 'right we're doing this and doing that, what do you think?', and they'll organise it, they'll get it all ready, and bring it all back to me when it's got to be back. One of the little girls was helping as a dinner lady in here at lunchtimes. They're really responsible and they'll go home and do things and sort of take that little bit of extra responsibility, so I think this has given them that opportunity to do that.*

Using the SNAGs, schools had been able to involve all pupils and the wider school community in decisions related to health and food culture at their schools. A teacher noted that:

*We have done a lot of questionnaires with FFLP. The SNAG side of it have sent some questionnaires out about lunchtimes, some of them are verbal ones.*

*I remember one asking them [pupils] why they didn't have school dinners and some people don't choose to have packed lunch all the time and they were really honest. Some said they didn't like the cook, others said they didn't like the food.*

### 3.3.2 Food production, sourcing and safety

Generally, interview responses showed that the FFLP had been very successful in contributing to raising awareness of and knowledge about food production, sourcing, quality and safety. For instance, a FFLP coordinator said that:

*Being aware of where things come from is really important—sourcing, buying food. Even from the point of view of costs. There was an exercise done a year ago where they looked at the cost of cooking a meal compared to buying it and the perception was it was cheaper to buy readymade food. It cost half the price for the family to buy the food and make it rather than buy it. That is important in this day and age where people don't cook and eat.*

Popular with all of the interviewees who had experienced them, responses showed that cooking, growing and farm visits had worked individually and in a collective way to provide engaging and active opportunities for experiential learning. In this way FFLP activities had encouraged and motivated pupils to really engage with the arena of food, from production to consumption, enabling pupils to make informed decisions and choices. For instance, in relation to:

- **cooking:** the FFLP had led to opportunities for pupils to develop their cooking skills and attempt more complex dishes (than would have been the case otherwise). For instance, in one case pupils noted that they had moved from cooking beans on toast to pizzas or full meals. A coordinator commented that as a result of the FFLP pupils were 'more confident in cooking, definitely more confident, sort of handling knives and things like that?', and a teacher said:

*... We all went up to [place name] and cooked up there, and they really enjoyed that. It's the actual experience you know, we used to cook in the past, they'd do a little bit and that was it, now they're actually cutting and they're doing all the bits and pieces you know towards their own level.*

- **gardening and farm visits:** the FFLP had enabled pupils to learn experientially about food production as it related to fruit and vegetables and the care of livestock. As a result pupils were more likely to show an interest in what they were considering consuming. One coordinator explained that 'with the gardening they use some of the produce from the allotment in food technology and we serve it in school. We wouldn't have done that before FFLP'.
- **lessons:** the FFLP better enabled schools to integrate experiential learning into the curriculum, which enhanced teachers' confidence in and ability to engage pupils in the learning on food production and safety. A coordinator explained that:

*Food awareness, sourcing, nutrition, that whole healthy living start; you have to bear in mind it is integrated in things like PE, fitness and other things as well, not just in isolation but the whole growing together curriculum. It's the whole awareness commitment thing to trying to be healthy. I would be very surprised if the average student was not aware by the time they get to year 8 and 9 about that whole nutrition, sourcing, value-for-money thing.*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, pupils generally identified the experiential elements of the programme as the most enjoyable aspects of the programme for them and in many instances staff supported these views. One coordinator explained:

*The children absolutely love it [the FFLP]. Last year we did something called 'local journeys', where we took the year 7s out locally to an orchard to pick the apples. They came back and made apple sponge puddings. They went to a fish farm, an organic meat farm and they just love the food festival week where people come in - Indian restaurants cooking food, chocolates, 'Ready steady cook', anything like that. The kids are very lucky from that point of view- they are always well received.*

Pupils interviewed provided sophisticated responses when asked about their views on and knowledge about food sourcing and safety. Additionally, a caterer said:

*It's [the FFLP] been really interesting for the kids, they have been more interested. Before they queued, they bought, they ate, they went, they now have a lot more questions, they are more interested in food. I think when it is down to choice, they are interested in where it comes from and they fall into four camps, you know, the greenies, the committees, the dieters and the don't carers.*

However, according to staff, it was the *unique* experiential elements of the FFLP that made the area of health and food sourcing more relevant and very real for pupils and it was this that enabled FFLP to make an effective contribution to raising awareness and knowledge regarding food sourcing and safety. For instance, one headteacher said:

*Well, they have enjoyed the food, the activities that wouldn't normally have been there, like the health and fitness club, the gardening club and the farm visits. Those things are a practical manifestation that we are promoting healthy lifestyles.*

And a FFLP coordinator said:

*Before they [the pupils] never asked anything, now they ask, they want to know where the food has come from, or why there is a sticker on their baguette; are the eggs in the cakes free range and organic? And most of my staff can answer that, and it gives clarification that the food is quality.*

### 3.3.3 Awareness about health and diet

The overwhelming majority of pupils from all year groups were able to provide relatively sophisticated reasons for eating a lot of or a little of the food groups they were asked about. For instance, pupils explained that:

- they should eat a lot of fruit because fruits were rich in vitamins and the body needed these for growth and/or energy
- they should eat little amounts of sugar-rich food because of the dangers to teeth and of obesity
- they should eat smaller amounts of salt due to the effects on their blood/heart
- eating foods rich in fat and salt was acceptable, so long as it was in moderation and part of a balanced diet
- their bodies needed some fat and salt for 'energy' and to help them grow and do activities/sports
- eating healthily helped them with their school work.

Pupil responses indicated that their knowledge and awareness was the result of a multitude of sources within and outside of school. Within school, responses showed that what they knew came from across a range subjects, such as science, RE and PSHE and from activities such as gardening, cooking and farm visits. Hence, the evidence shows that FFLP-related activity had contributed to a body of consistent information on health and diet which, over recent years, has been a feature of school-related provision. In relation to the FFLP, a caterer explained that:

*It [the FFLP] opened their minds to all the different things on offer and what impact it has on you, a poor diet, you have bad teeth, spots, hair...it's tied in all nicely with diet. I think they do know a lot about nutrition and I think it links in with all the things that are happening.*

Interviews with staff and parents/carers also indicated that increased FFLP-related levels of knowledge and awareness had led to a developing environment of health-orientated dialogue, where pupils discussed the issue of healthy eating with informed confidence at school and at home. For instance: a parent commented that, 'Since this [the FFLP] has started I think in my household, my children are more aware of growing food, you know, like tomatoes.'

### 3.3.4 Changes in eating behaviour

Interviews with school staff, parents and pupils explored whether and how FFLP may have influenced pupils' behaviour in relation to what they were eating. There were many responses that suggested FFLP had contributed or led to pupils:

- being more ready try new foods
- selecting to eat healthier options.

### Trying new foods

Interviewees suggested that there existed in many schools a greater willingness amongst pupils to try new foods and that this was, in part, a result of FFLP. For instance, a parent said:

*I often tried to get them to try things, but they wouldn't. But, because of the way it was tried [at school], like fruit kebabs and putting it on to skewers, they tried it. Now if we have barbeques they will bring them [kebabs] out, and they wouldn't have tried that before [the FFLP]. Getting them to eat the fruit and veg, it's [the FFLP] really helped them.*

And a caterer commented:

*I think it's children's attitude towards food that has changed. I have no children saying they don't eat vegetables, whereas a few years ago it was the case that children didn't want to try things, but since FFLP they know why they need to eat vegetables.*

And a caterer added:

*... we have grown a lot of things, that has increased their [pupils'] confidence in what they are eating at lunchtime because they grew those turnips, or they grew those beetroots. When it is offered at lunch you can say to them 'remember you grew the', so they are more willing to try them.*

### Selecting healthier options

There was consistent evidence from many schools suggesting that the FFLP had contributed to encouraging pupils to eat more healthily. For example, a caterer said:

*It [the FFLP] has got to have had an impact on diet, not doing all those chips and doughnuts, there must be a nutritional value. I think it's [the FFLP] heightened the expectations of what's on offer to children themselves. They are asking for fruit salad, and things like 'why hasn't it got blueberries?', 'are they antioxidant?', 'why aren't they included?' etc, etc. You know, they are learning in the classroom and bringing it to the canteen.*

And a headteacher said:

*I think in terms of converting the children into healthy eating, we were a bit worried about that. Initially, we did notice in the first month the [school] meal uptake dropped initially. Before FFLP, that was a problem for us, converting the children to healthy eating. Since that has happened the children are more discerning about what they eat and I think FFLP encourages us to go with the healthy food, rather than resort to providing the cheap stuff.*

## 3.4 Wider outcomes

In this section we explore FFLP-related impacts in respect of:

- parents and the home
- FFLP delivery partners
- the wider local community
- school profile and dissemination.

### 3.4.1 Parents and the home

Interview responses indicated that the FFLP had resulted in outcomes for parents, and these had been a direct result of parental participation or engagement with FFLP activity or they were the indirect result of FFLP, usually as a result of pupil influence.

#### Direct FFLP parental engagement

As reported in Chapter 2, some schools had used the FFLP as an opportunity to involve and engage parents in a range of school-based activities. These included involvement in cooking and eating at school, gardening activities and special events. Interviews revealed that these activities had resulted in various direct impacts, for instance, regarding:

- cooking and eating at school, a caterer said that:
 

*We do food tasters. We try and do them when the parents come in with the nursery children or on a parents evening, because most parents come in then and we show them. We do special diets, we cater for them all, and that's what we try to let the parents know and they get to try the food we serve.*
- Gardening: a non-school FFLP partner explained that:
 

*With the allotment, we're getting them [parents] to work with the children on the allotment, getting them involved. One of the projects we did, we planted seeds in newspaper pots and they [pupils] took them home over Easter and the parents helped them look after them. We then invited them [parents] to plant the seeds in the garden, and when they harvest it, we tried to send the produce home.*
- one-off special events and information: a parent noted:
 

*I knew nothing about the canteen. When my eldest girl started we came down and had a quick look at the canteen and we didn't know what went on. Now we have parents coming in and having lunch, and as a parent I never knew and now I do. I can't not know. That is more open, when you have a child going to secondary you don't know as much as you do when they are at primary, we are regularly made aware of what is going on in schools. There has been a lot more, I think, involvement in the community/parents. That's a good thing.*

And a FLLP coordinator explained that:

*Well, really, the parents have now seen what we are doing through the information we are sending and the recipes we are sending out, and the newsletters, weekly, so I think it is the whole involvement. They realise now we do a lot more in school with growing and cooking and we are actually telling them in our newsletters what we are doing.*

Some school staff also explained that the reasoning and messages around health and FFLP provided the opportunity to engage parents who would otherwise have been harder to reach. For instance: a FFLP community partner explained:

*I think it's the same as everything. You have parents that are open to suggestions and open to change and parents who aren't; and it's getting the message to them and they have to make a decision about whether they are making the informed decision as to whether they will look at their child's diet. I always come in on the angle of healthy eating for children helps their attainment. Some parents might not think about the connection but once you explain about healthy fuel for the brain, then that makes it very relevant to them.*

There was also some evidence that parental engagement had led to a direct impact on their behaviour. For instance: a parent said that:

*It [the FFLP] makes me think about the produce I buy. I used to go to the supermarket and just buy it, now I think – 'Kenya, have we got nothing local?' I will actively not buy it, and go somewhere else. I go to the local vegetable shops more than I ever did and buy more seasonal fruit and vegetables.*

Another parent, in relation to the FFLP, said that:

*It [the FFLP] also encourages you to do the things that as a parent you want to be doing anyway. It is just too easy for things like games consoles, like TV and football just to become all encompassing; and actually it makes you think as a parent what you really want to be doing with your child. Like take them to the park or to go play in the woods, or to grow vegetables; I have done those things, it's just it [the FFLP] helps you to do all the things that you should be doing.*

A coordinator explained that:

*Parents have been telling us as well about what they have been doing at home, from actually taking things from school home, from cooking things and sharing our recipes. We are giving out our recipes as well so, again, they are doing more cookery at home this way.*

### Indirect FFLP influence on parents

Interview data also suggests that FFLP activity enjoyed an indirect influence on parents and within the home, for instance, when a child is encouraged to take home a FFLP-related assignment or communications about the programme. Furthermore, interview evidence revealed that pupils had asked to take recipes from school to try at home, as noted by a teacher who said:

*Parents have been the difficult ones, but I think the way we have tried to engage them is every year a child has a homework project where they have to cook or grow something at home and parents have got engaged with that. When we do cookery club we send recipes home so that parents are encouraged to re-cook that at home, and we send newsletters home on a termly basis, so...we're trying to educate and engage parents indirectly, but I find the best way is through the children.*

### 3.4.2 FFLP delivery partners

Interview responses showed that the FFLP had provided schools with both the opportunity and impetus to develop partnerships related to programme delivery, such partnerships divided into two categories, those with:

- **other schools and/or school staff:** for instance: Flagship schools helped and supported other schools to work towards the various awards and staff like caterers had worked together to develop skills and share experience. A caterer said:

*As Flagship schools we have had other schools that have come to visit our school, and I have as a cook been to all the cooks meetings and gone to talk to the cooks about FFLP and said, 'go back to your heads and try and get enrolled in the programme'.*

- **community partners** (such as food producers/farms, retailers and other experts): for instance, schools had developed links with food suppliers and producers, and these partners have developed their knowledge along with their relationships with the schools. For instance, a teacher told us:

*We have had the local gardening society in, and we had two or three of those guys come in. They came in and helped with the design because most of the teachers weren't gardeners.*

Overall, the FFLP enabled the schools to develop links that would otherwise not have happened. For instance, referring to a FFLP partner school, a FFLP coordinator explained that:

*One school is not a feeder school and we would not have probably spoken to them. We can go to a school and give advice to them, like sourcing cheap plates to get rid of flight trays. At the moment I'm trying to source plates through my suppliers for them.*

Such links enabled all FFLP schools to share good practice and hard-won lessons and experience in relation to programme aspects like:

- menus, cooking and gardening
- sourcing food (especially organic produce)
- improving the eating/dining environment.

#### **3.4.4 Schools as a community resource**

The FFLP has also resulted in schools initiating and building links with other community organisations and individuals and, as a result, they have been able to develop their role as a community hub and resource, as one community partner noted:

*We have started inviting old age pensioners and they come in and have lunch and talk to kids. It's different to when I was a kid. There are a lot of kids in single parent families, they haven't got grandparents, and they understand more about the older generation.*

And a member of support staff said:

*We have one of the care centres in [name of town] like the elderly, age concern, they come in occasionally. I think it's usually about once a month and sometimes the older ones make cakes or things for them and they come in. They have lunch here and a cup of tea afterwards and a cake and sit around and have a chat. That's really nice because it is involving the community. They are not related to anybody in school, but they come in and they love it, they love coming in.*

As a direct result of FFLP, one school was in the process of exploring new business opportunities. Their FFLP coordinator explained that:

*We are very much looking at what we can do for our own local community – we are planning on opening a restaurant and we are putting together the commercial plan for the restaurant. We have a business plan looking at events—weddings, conference facilities and training facilities, so that we can provide basic practical food training courses for the adult education world.*

#### **3.4.4 Dissemination and raising schools' profiles**

Through activities such as FFLP conferences, training events and the FFLP website, schools have had the opportunity to share their experiences and achievements and thereby disseminate best practice, while at the same time raising their profile and that of the FFLP. For example, a FFLP coordinator said:

*We need to take it [the FFLP] to other schools as well. There is the partnership meeting, they want to listen to what we're doing and what has been successful. They [partner schools] have been involved with two meetings, and we have had x doing a session with them. I went out to do a*

*talk as part of it, well that was because we ran the Bronze award, they wanted us to talk about it. Because of that people have been writing to me asking what we have done and how they can get involved. It's always constantly spreading the word.*

And a headteacher commented that:

*It's [the FFLP] certainly raised our profile in town, we have had a lot of publicity in town-wide publications. All that was lovely evidence for Ofsted, and someone came from another school the other day, a transfer, I said, 'do you have school dinners or packed lunches?', and she said, 'oh, she had lunch'. I said, 'good because our lunches here are lovely', and the mother said she had seen our awards and things. I thought it's obviously getting through, the good publicity.*

There was also some evidence to suggest that the FFLP-related raising of a school profile could contribute to making a school more attractive to parents. One headteacher commented that: 'Parents don't come here because we are a FFLP school, but it adds to the draw package and image of the school. Internally it has a big impact.'

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

Interviewee responses consistently illustrated how they perceived the FFLP had contributed to a range of school and community related outcomes. In line with the evidence about contexts and implementation, evidence suggests that the FFLP had worked to contribute across a range of school settings, in each case meeting and exceeding individual schools' expectations and ambitions.

At the strategic level, evidence shows that the FFLP provides focus, structure, momentum, helping develop, embed and sustain health-related action and activity within the schools visited.

The FFLP had informed schools' policy and strategy and had been successful in helping develop and embed whole-school involvement in health-related planning and activity.

At the school level, interviewees consistently reported that FFLP had contributed to their school improvement agendas, helping improve attainment, behaviour and school environments. According to interviewees, this had been a result of FFLP's contribution to transforming food cultures in schools, which had resulted in increased uptakes of school meal.

At the classroom level, underpinned by the employment of experiential learning, the FFLP had helped support and facilitate the integration of health-related learning across the curriculum. As a consequence, the knowledge, awareness and confidence of those involved had been enhanced to the extent that interviewees indicated that the FFLP had contributed to transformational change regarding health-related learning.

At the community level, the FFLP had provided extensive opportunities for schools to develop new parental and local community links; in some cases the FFLP had directly led to schools developing their role as a community resource.

## 4. Conclusions and implications

This chapter presents the key messages from the FFLP evaluation and discusses the implications of these.

### 4.1 Conclusions

The overall aim of the study was to better understand the impact the FFLP had on the whole culture of schools (and by extension children, families and communities), with special emphasis on the school food culture. The FFLP evaluation provides a qualitative insight into the implementation and outcomes of the FFLP; it does not, however, measure the long-term ultimate outcome of the FFLP.

#### 4.1.1 What worked and why?

What this evaluation strongly suggests is that the FFLP has been, to an extent, effective in terms of meeting its overarching aim of helping to transform school food culture and provide positive outcomes for children, families and communities. Importantly, rather than operating in isolation, evidence illustrates how the FFLP plays an important role in contributing to health-related development within schools, hence the FFLP provides added value to the schools involved.

##### **Focus, momentum and sustainability**

The FFLP had been flexibly adopted by all of the schools visited, in each case building on and complementing pre-existing activity and school ethos. Through SNAGs, experiential learning and curriculum integration, the FFLP had provided focus and momentum and had helped build and embed a sustainable whole-school approach to health-related activity within all of the schools visited. Further, the FFLP had, in most cases, demonstrated its potential to flexibly contribute to and facilitate the development of whole-school approaches. Schools had also been successful in using FFLP activity and development to secure funds from a wide range of sources and in some cases had begun to return profits from school meal provision. The school coordinators had a key role in building expertise and championing the programme.

##### **School culture and environment**

The FFLP had helped schools in different ways to transform their food culture and more generally their social environments. Interviewees reported that making mealtimes more attractive to the school community, through improvements to the food available and the dining environment, had led to increased meal uptakes and improved social cohesion within schools. As a result of FFLP activity, there was raised awareness of and

knowledge about food sourcing, production and healthy eating and this had resulted in positive changes in the level and sophistication of school-based, health-related dialogue. There was also evidence that the changes in food provision had resulted in pupils trying new foods and in some cases selecting more healthy options.

### **Improving pupil outcomes and ‘closing the gap’**

As a result of FFLP, interviewees reported that the improved quality of meals, increased school meal uptake and improvements to the social cohesion at school had contributed to improvements in pupils’ attainment and behaviour. The experiential learning resulting from FFLP activity also appears to have been particularly effective at helping engage or re-engage pupils with learning issues and challenges.

### **Experiential learning and curriculum enrichment**

According to school staff, the FFLP provided a useful structure to schools, which they had employed to build on what was already in place and to include new opportunities for experiential learning activity in their curricula. Popular with pupils and parents, school staff welcomed the opportunity provided by the FFLP to have the flexibility to develop innovative and diverse provision reflective of local contexts and needs, and tailored to meet the specific requirements of their children. Hence, reflective of individual context, schools had seized the opportunity to enrich their curriculum in ways that best suited their pupils, and linked into existing priorities, such as healthy eating.

### **Partnership**

Interview evidence showed how the FFLP had helped to bring together schools, the local community and local businesses and so helped schools tap into the social capital of local communities. The partnership working that FFLP facilitated and motivated enhanced schools’ roles as a community resource. Contact with local farms, food suppliers and community groups had also helped build and enhance school profiles.

### **Engaging parents**

Engaging parents was viewed by schools as challenging, but the FFLP had provided some schools with a range of opportunities to engage and involve parents. Interview evidence showed that the FFLP had both direct and indirect impacts on parents, helping raise awareness of and knowledge about health, food sourcing and production, and in some cases change behaviour.

## **4.1.2 What are the key challenges?**

The implementation of the FFLP was not without its challenges. According to staff in a minority of schools visited, there had been (or could be) some key challenges when implementing the FFLP:

- Although the majority of the schools viewed the FFLP as sufficiently flexible to allow them to implement it in a variety of ways, some had found the prospect of what they considered to be very prescriptive award-related criteria daunting and unrealistic. The award requirements were seen by some to be too prescriptive and more flexibility was suggested.
- Even though the role of the FFLP coordinators was greatly valued, some FFLP coordinators pointed out that there was a danger of the programme becoming too dependent on their personal input, commitment and championing.
- Some interviewees were concerned that they did not have enough time to do all that they would have wished in implementing the FFLP programme.
- The cost, availability and sourcing of organic produce was mentioned by many catering staff and FFLP coordinators.

## 4.2 Implications

### 4.2.1 School meal uptake and school improvement

The FFLP's reported positive impact on school meal uptake, especially amongst free school meal children, is very encouraging because:

- such increases contrast starkly with those reported nationally
- the introduction of nutritional standards throughout the school meal system means that pupils consuming school lunches should be eating a nutritionally balanced meal
- previous research suggests that school lunch consumption is associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption combined (Teeman, D. *et al.* 2010).

With the potential that school meals have, to better ensure pupils enjoy a nutritionally balanced diet, it is important for schools to adopt strategies that increase school meal uptake. When this is seen in the context of a developing body of evidence that links nutritional intake to positive outcomes in attainment and behaviour (for example see, Belot and James, 2009), it is clear that the FFLP has the potential to make a significant contribution in terms of school meal uptake and school improvement.

### 4.2.2 Structure and sustainability

In many schools a particular member of staff tends to be the 'champion' of health-related activity, including the FFLP. However, the model of implementation provided by the FFLP, based on experiential learning, cross-curricular integration and whole-school involvement, through structures such as the SNAG and the use of external partners, helped to:

- coordinate planning and activity
- share responsibility and workloads

- better ensure continuity and consistency
- build in sustainability.

Overall, the case-study school interviewees from both Partnership and Flagship schools considered that the FFLP had successfully delivered on their school-level expectations and its stated aims and objectives, and all the case-study schools intended to sustain their engagement with the programme.

#### **4.2.3 Wider use of the FFLP and targeting**

Evidence suggests that the FFLP programme provides schools with a programme of work that can be adapted and implemented to meet a school's individual context and need, and so could be effectively replicated and implemented in a wider range of schools and perhaps other family-orientated settings. A key challenge going forward though is narrowing or closing health inequalities. With this in mind, FFLP may wish to consider targeting the FFLP towards groups where health improvement is most needed, for instance:

- schools with higher than average FSM pupils
- targeting efforts towards harder-to-reach parents, perhaps by working with Sure Start and local family centres.

#### **4.2.4 Recommendations for FFLP development**

The recommendations presented below are based on all of the evidence collected and are set in the context of what we understand to be current FFLP developments, both intended and ongoing.

##### **FFLP as a contributor to school improvement**

We would suggest that FFLP focuses on describing and detailing how the programme contributes to school improvement by highlighting key elements of the FFLP, such as how it:

- works to improve school meal uptake and why this is important
- contributes to improving school food culture
- can be used to develop experiential learning and cross-curricula integration
- can be used to develop local partnerships
- can be implemented flexibly to fit with particular school needs and context
- could potentially help fill the gap left by changes to the Healthy Schools Award.

### **FFLP award criteria**

With the wider policy context in mind, we would suggest that FFLP give consideration to reviewing and amending the role award criteria play in motivating, engaging and rewarding member schools.

Of critical importance is FFLP's apparent potential to contribute to driving forward the health agenda within member schools, but it may be that the FFLP would enjoy increased relevance and opportunity if it was founded more on a set of values and principles, rather than fixed issue-based criteria. For instance, FFLP could do this by emphasising the importance of using locally sourced seasonal foodstuffs, rather than focusing on award criteria like the sourcing of organic food. Perhaps FFLP would approach this challenge by adopting a charter-based approach, which sets down common values and principles and leaves schools more flexibility in the routes they take to implement the charter.

### **Supporting planning and implementation**

Evidence shows that Partnership schools were able to develop their capacity and implement the FFLP without the levels of support available to Flagship schools. Given the developing policy context, where schools are expected to implement and adopt strategies reflective of their pupils' needs, we would suggest that:

- In light of the evidence collected and cost implications, FFLP review the role of their coordinators; although schools hugely appreciated the face-to-face support of the advisors as it gave them confidence and momentum (as reported in section 2.3.1), it was clear that coordinators were spending a large amount of time in schools offering guidance on the food provenance and sourcing issues and giving 'hands-on' support to deliver events and consultations (which might be considered as operational rather than strategic support). However, there was some evidence that schools also benefited from local community contacts, which they had either developed themselves (particularly true of Partnership schools) or had been provided by the FFLP. This created an informal network of local 'voluntary' advisors and partners which, if given more focus and investment of time, could become an accessible form of practical and operational support. The approach may also free up the time of coordinators to focus on matters of more strategic support and provide a greater level of expert support to non-Flagship schools.
- Develop online materials that perhaps increase the potential for schools to use the FFLP flexibly; for instance, FFLP might want to identify core programme elements and separate these from more optional elements. For instance, core elements would include those that:
  - encourage school meal uptake
  - facilitate and sustain whole-school development
  - support the development of cross-curricula integration
  - support the development of local and inter-school partnership.

- FFLP consider how best to continue the programme during a period of transition and policy development; for instance, we would suggest that FFLP look to develop/integrate their programme efforts with other partners and providers.
- Highlight to schools, using case study exemplars, how funds for FFLP-related development can be accessed from a wide range of sources and how some schools have used FFLP to turn their food provision services into an income generator.
- Highlight to schools facing circumstances such as low levels of attainment, local deprivation and high levels of eligibility for FSM the potential educational benefits of the FFLP.
- FFLP consider how the programme could be tailored to most effectively support schools in challenging circumstances. For instance, by developing a core FFLP implementation plan for such schools.
- Provide further guidance on fuller curriculum integration to reduce the burden of time and financing.

### Sharing good practice

We would suggest that FFLP continues to develop their online resource to support schools and perhaps other organisations who may be implementing the FFLP. Building on available material, we recommend that FFLP:

- Continues to disseminate good practice through the FFLP website and use case studies to promote the diversity of ways the programme can be implemented.
- Promotes the contribution of the programme to facilitate whole-school involvement, planning and good practice in relation to raising the profile of health in school and effective ways of engaging partners and parents/carers.
- Supports schools in sharing good practice, perhaps by developing inter-school online buddying, and by matching schools in challenging circumstances with other similar schools to allow sharing of positive FFLP experiences and suggestions. Ensure that, where relevant, Flagship schools are adequately matched to the Partnership schools they have been assigned to support.
- Creates a greater variety of 'networks of excellence', to include interactive online forums. For instance, such networks could be further developed for:
  - catering staff
  - parents
  - pupils
  - SNAGs
  - teachers
  - headteachers
  - support staff
- Consider ways in which the web-based materials might be designed to be used more flexibly by schools according to the different ways in which they deliver the programme, for example, facilitate searches according to topic or lesson plans for different year groups.

- Reduce duplication of resources by directing schools to other sources of support where relevant and suitable (for example, Healthy Schools web-based materials).

### Further research

To provide a quantitative perspective on interview evidence suggesting positive FFLP impact on attainment, we would strongly recommend a quantitative assessment of the attainment of pupils in FFLP schools (comparing their data to otherwise similar pupils in the comparison group). In the longer term, additional follow-up on attainment would provide further useful evidence of any longer-term impact of the FFLP.

We would also recommend longer-term or even longitudinal evaluation of any wider use of the FFLP, focusing among other elements on value for money. Such evaluation could:

- provide opportunities for process research to further explore good practice and what works in FFLP provision
- offer a multi-perspective retrospective view on the impact and outcomes of the FFLP
- provide evidence and information about how the FFLP is sustained and whether and for how long benefits may last.

## 4.3 Final thoughts

Set against what we understand are the developing priorities for health and education in England (see current Health and Education White Papers), we feel the weight and constancy of the evidence collected is very encouraging. Although the FFLP was designed and introduced before the change in government, our evidence suggests that the programme has the potential to fit well with the developing priorities for education and health in England. In particular, evidence points towards the FFLP's potential to contribute to:

- enabling schools to adopt the FFLP programme in a way and for reasons that fit with individual school contexts
- encouraging the take-up of school meals, especially by those entitled to FSM
- school improvement in terms of environment, behaviour and attainment
- helping 'close the gap' for disadvantaged children in terms of their health and academic attainment
- improving schools' abilities to address the well-being of pupils
- enriching the curriculum and providing opportunities for cross-curricula learning
- schools' ability to increase pupil, parent, staff and wider community involvement and engagement

- enabling schools to build strong partnerships with other schools and their local community.

Popular with the whole school community, FFLP helps expand, enrich, embed and enhance health-related teaching and learning, through increasing school staff competence and confidence, complementing other initiatives and positively impacting on pupil, staff and parental knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

# Appendix 1: FFLP award criteria

## Bronze for transforming food culture

### Food leadership and school food culture

- Our School Nutrition Action Group has led a review of food culture in our school, and actions have been agreed.
- We monitor school meal take up and we are taking action to maximise the take up of free school meals.
- We consult with our pupils and parents on school meal improvements.
- We keep parents informed of lunch menus and **Food for Life Partnership** activity and invite them to attend our school lunches.
- We encourage our pupils to suggest improvements to the dining experience and we implement the best ideas.
- Our lunchtime supervisors promote a calm and positive dining experience and help our pupils with food choices.
- We have made a commitment to phase out flight trays.
- Free drinking water is provided for our pupils throughout the school day.

### Food quality and provenance (delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- Food on our menu does not contain any undesirable additives or hydrogenated fats.
- We make sure that at least 75% of dishes on our menu are freshly prepared.
- We use meat that is farm assured as a welfare minimum. We use eggs from cage-free hens.
- Our menus are seasonal and we highlight in-season produce.
- Our menus cater well for all dietary needs in the school population.
- Continuous professional development is available to our catering staff, including training in fresh food preparation.
- A member of our catering staff has been encouraged to get involved in food education activities.

### Food education

- We use the topic of healthy and sustainable food as a theme for assemblies.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in cooking activities, and this is linked to wider learning.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to grow and harvest food and make compost, and this is linked to wider learning.
- We organise an annual farm visit, and this is linked to wider learning.

### Community and partnerships

- We hold an annual event on a food theme for our pupils, parents and the wider community.
- We make efforts to actively engage parents and/or the wider community in our growing and cooking activities.
- We share **Food for Life Partnership** learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners.

## Silver for transforming food culture

### Food leadership and school food culture

- Our governors have signed off a school food policy with a timetable for action.
- We give lunchtime a clear priority in our school day, and timetabling clashes are avoided.
- We ensure take up of school meals by pupils registered for free school meals is 90% or higher, and we are taking action to raise general school meal take up.
- We have made sure that key teachers or others have skills needed to lead gardening and cooking activities and ensure basic food hygiene.
- We work with parents to discourage unhealthy snacks or lunch box contents.
- We invite parents and/or community groups into our school to eat with our pupils.
- We don't use flight trays.

### Food quality and provenance (delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- We include a range of locally sourced items on our menu.
- We include a range of certified organic or MSC-certified items on our menu.
- We use poultry, eggs and pork that are produced in line with standards set for the Freedom Food scheme as a welfare minimum **or** we make sure that at least 10% of our ingredients are from a certified organic source, including organic animal products, and we will reduce the amount of poultry and pork we serve.
- We don't serve fish that is on the Marine Conservation Society 'Fish to Avoid' list.
- We display information about the origins of the fresh produce we use.
- We make sure that at least one product on our menu or in vending machines meets Fairtrade standards.

### Food education

- We have established a cooking club and our pupils are cooking with seasonal, local and organic ingredients.
- We ensure pupils in our garden group and/or a class are growing fruit, vegetables and herbs organically.
- We have produce from our school garden available at least once a term for pupils to eat or cook with.
- Our pupils explore the ethical and environmental issues around food choices and this is linked to changes in our school meals.
- One or more of our year groups keep in touch with a local farm throughout the year.
- We organise at least one annual visit to or from small local food businesses.

### Community and partnerships

- We hold events to involve parents and/or the wider community in growing and cooking activities.
- We actively encourage our pupils and their parents to grow and cook their own produce at home.
- Our pupils share **Food for Life Partnership** learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners.

## Gold for transforming food culture

### Food leadership and school food culture

- Our pupils all have the opportunity to sit down to lunch every day.
- Our take up of school meals is over 60% OR has increased by more than 20% since we enrolled with the **Food for Life Partnership**.
- We are working with our caterer to reduce and manage food waste.

### Food quality and provenance (delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- We make sure at least 30% of the ingredients we use are from a certified organic or MSC-certified source.
- We source at least 50% of our ingredients locally.
- We make sure that certified organic meat, dairy products or eggs feature on our menu as animal welfare best practice.
- We are taking steps to increase the take up of non-meat dishes and to promote a balanced, sustainable diet.

### Food education

- We are committed to providing a minimum of 12 hours of cooking lessons a year by 2011 for all our pupils up to and including key stage 3.
- All our pupils have the opportunity to participate in organic food growing during their time at our school.
- We actively involve our pupils in planning the food growing calendar and maintaining the growing area using organic practices.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in a programme of farm-based activities throughout the farming year.

### Community and partnerships

- Our parents and/or the wider community are actively involved in growing and cooking activities in our school.
- Our parents can buy or collect organic and/or local produce at our school, or we direct them to alternative local outlets.
- Food and cooking education is available in our school to parents and community members out of school hours.
- We host regular visits about the **Food for Life Partnership** from other schools and stakeholders.

## Appendix 2: Schools taking part in the evaluation

School	FFLP Flagship status	Phase	FFLP award status	FSM eligibility	Achievement	Urban/rural
School 1	Flagship	Secondary	Gold	Medium	High	Rural
School 2	Flagship	Primary	Gold	Low	Medium	Urban
School 3	Flagship	Secondary	Silver	Medium	Low	Urban
School 4	Flagship	Secondary	Silver	Low	High	Urban
School 5	Flagship	Secondary	Bronze	High	Low	Urban
School 6	Flagship	Primary	None	High	Low	Urban
School 7	Flagship	Primary	Silver	High	Low	Urban
School 8	Flagship	Primary	Silver	Medium	Medium	Rural
School 9	Flagship	Primary	Bronze	Medium	High	Urban
School 10	Partnership	Primary	Bronze	High	Low	Urban
School 11	Flagship	Special	Bronze	High	Low	Urban
School 12	Partnership	Secondary	Silver	Medium	Medium	Urban
School 13	Partnership	Secondary	None	High	Low	Urban
School 14	Partnership	Primary	Silver	Not known	Not known	Urban
School 15	Partnership	Special	Bronze	High	Not known	Urban

## References

- Belot, M. and James, J. (2009). *Healthy School Meals and Educational Outcomes*. Essex: Institute for Social & Economic Research.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (2010). *Evidence of Impact of Sustainable Schools*. London: DCSF.
- Department for Education (2010). *The Importance of Teaching: the Schools White Paper 2010* (Cm. 7980). London: The Stationery Office. [online]. Available: <http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/CM-7980.pdf> [10 June, 2011].
- Department for Education and Skills (2007). *Sustainable Schools for Pupils, Communities and the Environment: an Action Plan for the DfES*. London: DfES.
- Department for Education (2011). *Healthy Schools, Tools and Planning Aids*. London: DFE. [online]. Available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/pastoralcare/a0075278/healthy-schools> [16 June, 2011].
- Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2010). *Food 2030: The UK's National Food Policy*. London: DEFRA.
- Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2011). *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature*. London: DEFRA.
- Department of Health and Department for Children Schools and Families (2009). *Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures: the Strategy for Children and Young People's Health*. London: Department of Health. [online]. Available: [http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_127424.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_127424.pdf) [10 June, 2011].
- Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF ICDC.
- House of Commons Health Committee (2004). *Obesity - Third Report of Session 2003–2004. Volume 1: Report, together with formal minutes (HC23-1)*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Teeman, D., Ransley, J., Lynch, S., White, K., Scott, E., Waldman, J., Cade, J., Benton, T., Thomas, J., Shamsan, Y. and Stoddart, S. (2010). *The Third Evaluation of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme: Executive Summary*. London: Department of Health. [online]. Available: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/SFRZ01> [16 June, 2011].

# Providing independent evidence to improve education and learning.

© 2011 National Foundation for Educational Research



**National Foundation for Educational Research**  
The Mere, Upton Park,  
Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ

T: 01753 574123  
F: 01753 691632  
E: [enquiries@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@nfer.ac.uk)

[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

