

Even feed me better

(Part II – the campaign continues!)

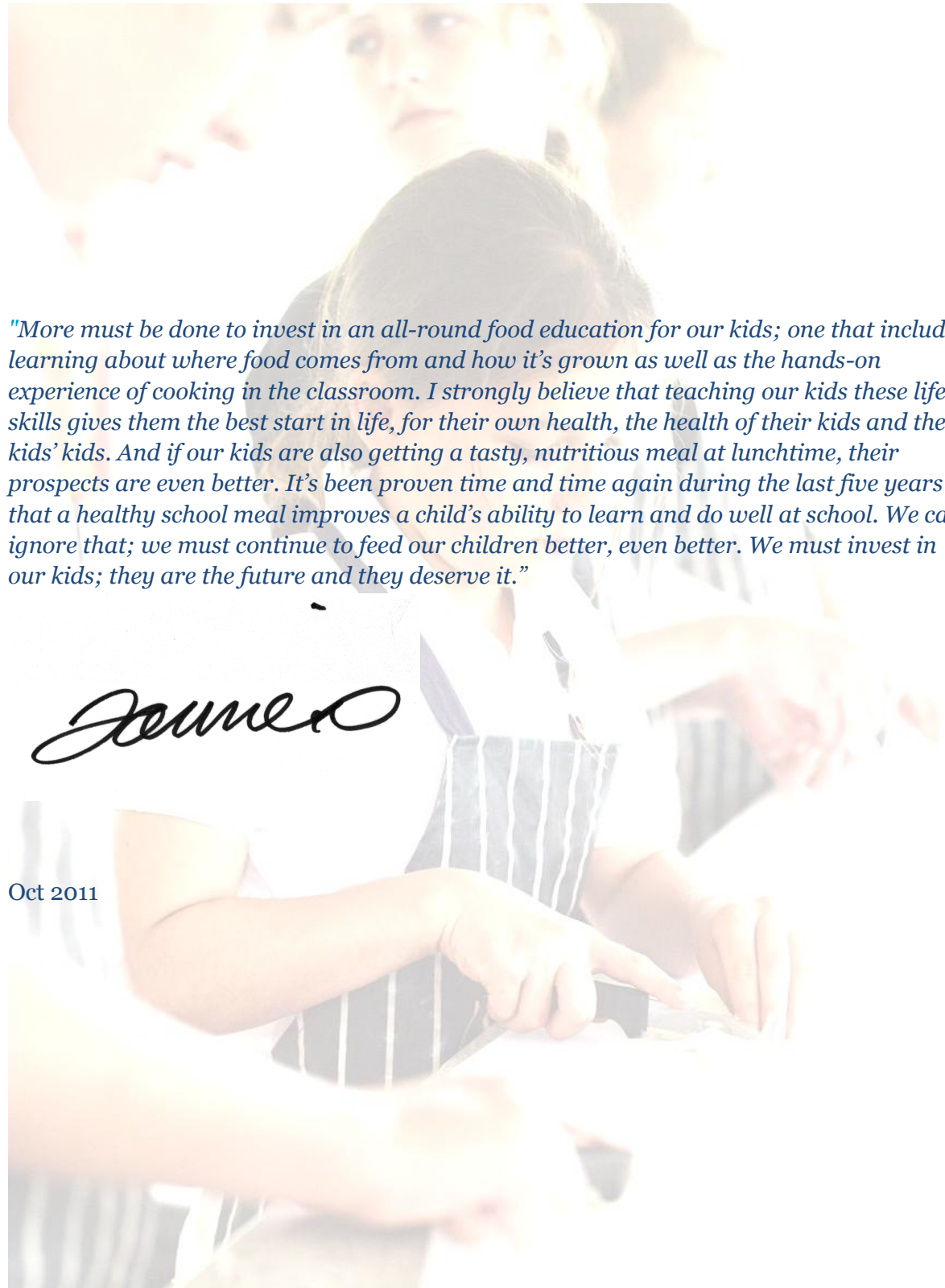


Jamie's Manifesto (Part II)

Recommendations to the Government

School Food Policy Review

October 2011



"More must be done to invest in an all-round food education for our kids; one that includes learning about where food comes from and how it's grown as well as the hands-on experience of cooking in the classroom. I strongly believe that teaching our kids these life skills gives them the best start in life, for their own health, the health of their kids and their kids' kids. And if our kids are also getting a tasty, nutritious meal at lunchtime, their prospects are even better. It's been proven time and time again during the last five years that a healthy school meal improves a child's ability to learn and do well at school. We can't ignore that; we must continue to feed our children better, even better. We must invest in our kids; they are the future and they deserve it."

James

Oct 2011


The facts

Health

- 25% of our kids are overweight or obese.¹
- Figures from the 2009/10 Child Measurement Programme for England show that one in four children were overweight or obese at the age of four. By the age of 11, this had risen to one in three.
- The UK has the highest childhood obesity rates in Europe.¹
- The recent Lancet Report states that the number of obese adults in the UK will rise to 73%, with 11 million more obese adults by 2030, if current trends continue.
- Poor diet is one of the main causes of obesity.¹
- Obesity increases our kids' chances of poor health in adulthood, as they are more likely to suffer from medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.^{2,3}
- Meanwhile, children under 12 are already showing signs of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, Type 2 diabetes and liver disease.²
- Until 10 years ago, Type 2 diabetes accounted for less than 3% of all cases of onset diabetes in adolescents. Now it is 45%.^{4,5}
- Poor health and obesity is more likely to affect kids from disadvantaged backgrounds.^{6,7,8}

Education

- 3 million children now eat a school lunch every day and these figures have continued to rise for the past three years.⁹
- 18.5 % of primary school children and 15.4 % of secondary school children were eligible for free school meals in January 2010.⁹
- A school meal accounts for at least one-third of a child's daily nutritional intake. For some children, it is the only nutritious meal that they will eat all day.¹⁰
- A nutritious school lunch increases children's concentration, improves their behaviour in class, and their chances of doing well and achieving their best at school.¹¹

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- Obesity affects children’s motivation and self-esteem, which again affects their behaviour in class and their ability and willingness to learn and achieve at school.¹²
 - The number of 11-year-olds failing to reach expected academic levels at the end of Year Six is higher among children who are eligible for free school meals.¹³
 - Children eligible for free school meals across England are less likely to leave school with five or more GCSEs.¹⁴
 - If children don’t reach their full potential at school, this can affect their life chances in adulthood, long-term earnings and financial contribution to society.¹¹

The costs

£ It is estimated that the treatment of obesity, and its health-related problems, costs the NHS nearly £4 billion a year.^{15,16}

£ According to the recent Lancet report this cost will increase by another £1.9 billion a year by 2030.

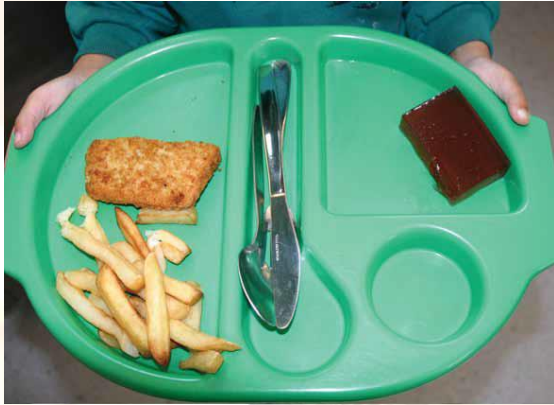
£ The wider cost to society and businesses is estimated to reach 49.9 billion a year by 2050.¹⁷

£ 10% of the NHS’s budget – a whopping £10 billion a year or £192 million a week – is spent on treating diabetes and its complications.¹⁸ Diabetes, especially Type 2 diabetes, has a clear link with poor diet and obesity.⁴

£ Coronary heart disease is also closely linked to poor diet and obesity and costs the NHS £2 billion a year.^{19,20}

To me, these costs are ridiculous especially because they are preventable. It is plain to see that if we reduce obesity, the potential savings to our economy would be immense.

Feeding our kids better



School Meal 2005



School Meal 2010

The story so far...

When my TV show *Jamie's School Dinners* highlighted the sorry state of school food and my Feed Me Better campaign kicked off in 2005, the poor quality of school food was a major contributor to the high level of childhood obesity in the UK. Kids were eating far too much pre-prepared processed foods that were high in saturated fats, salt and sugar; meals were lacking in the vital vitamins and minerals that kids needed to help them concentrate and achieve; and many schools were failing to meet nutritional guidelines set out by the Caroline Walker Trust.

Schools did not receive financial support from the Government, other than a subsidy for those offering free school meals to children from low-income families. You could say that school meals really were in crisis.

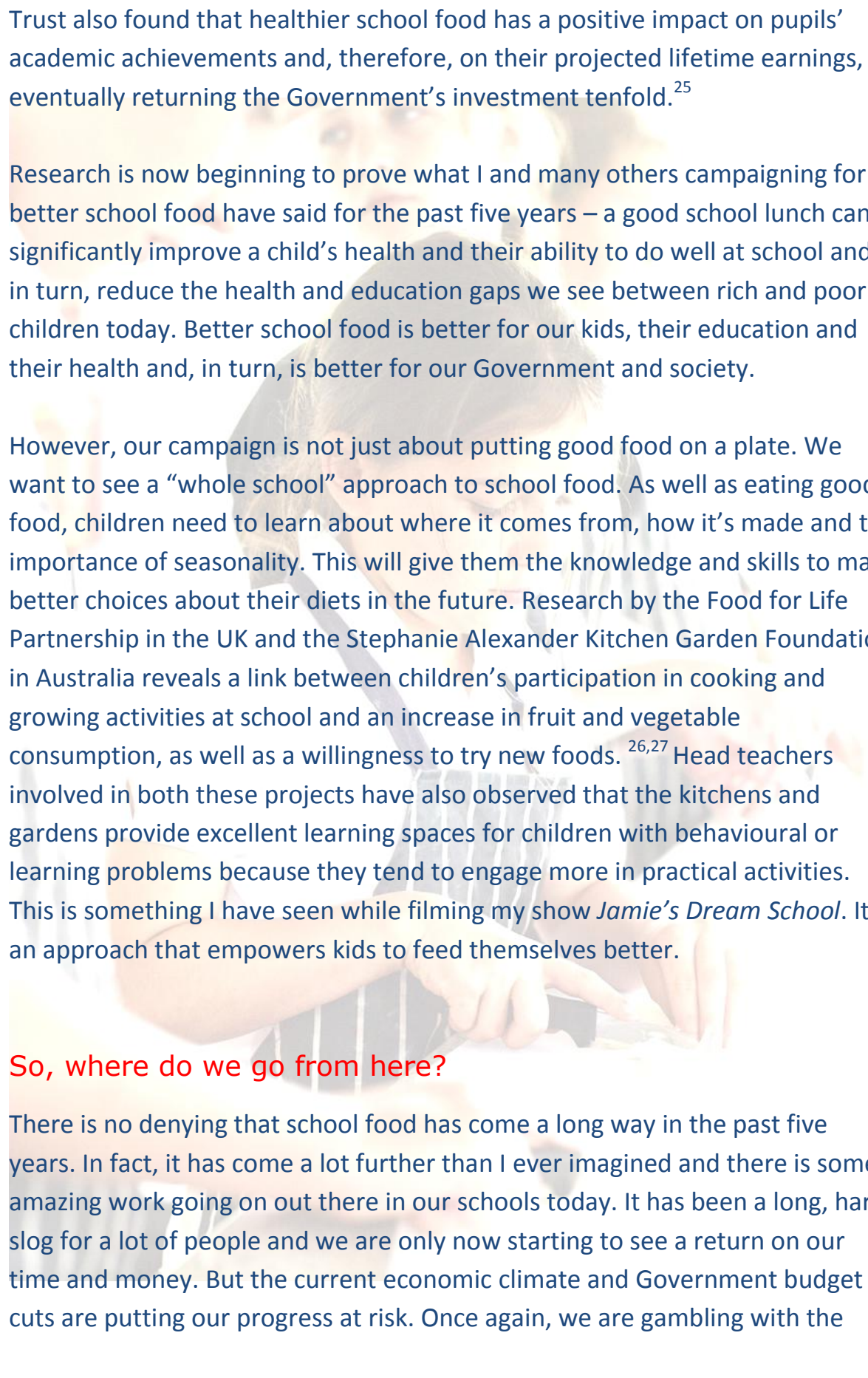
But we turned things around. With the national rollout of my Feed Me Better campaign, we put school food on top of people's agendas and gained the support of 300 community groups, the majority of the British media and thousands of parents. We can now say the school food revolution is well underway and we are feeding our children better!

Here's a timeline of our achievements since 2005:

- Tony Blair commits £280 million to improving school food.
- The School Food Trust is established to advise the Government on school meals. (Despite all the recent cuts, this charity is still going strong and doing some amazing work with schools and local councils to highlight the importance of good school food.)
- The Trust recommends new legally binding nutritional standards, including a ban on the sale of junk food in schools. (These standards are now in place across the majority of schools in England and continue to be a legal requirement for all schools except new academies.) The standards ensure school lunches give children a great balance of energy and nutrients while ensuring they are exposed to less saturated fat, salt and sugar while at school.
- The Food For Life Partnership is established and now works with 3800 schools and their caterers to promote a holistic approach to good food, including the provision of cooking lessons, food-growing spaces and attractive dining rooms in schools.
- School meal take-up rises for the first time since the 1970s. About 300 more kids eat a school meal in 2009 than they did in 2008.²¹
- Obesity levels in children start to level out but figures are still too high.²²

The children we are feeding better are now doing better. Recent research by Oxford and Essex Universities has shown that children who eat a nutritious school meal at lunchtime behave better, concentrate better and achieve more in class. The exam results of 11-year-old students from the Greenwich schools that took part in the *School Dinners* series five years ago showed dramatic improvements in English, maths and science. The rate of absences due to sickness also fell by 14%. The study found that the benefits of improved school food were “comparable” to the positive effects of the literacy hour, first introduced in the 1990s.^{23,24} In research terms, this is a very big deal!

Other research conducted by the School Food Trust in Sheffield found that kids were three times more likely to be “on-task” and alert in the classroom after being served a better school lunch in an improved dining environment¹¹. The



Trust also found that healthier school food has a positive impact on pupils' academic achievements and, therefore, on their projected lifetime earnings, eventually returning the Government's investment tenfold.²⁵

Research is now beginning to prove what I and many others campaigning for better school food have said for the past five years – a good school lunch can significantly improve a child's health and their ability to do well at school and, in turn, reduce the health and education gaps we see between rich and poor children today. Better school food is better for our kids, their education and their health and, in turn, is better for our Government and society.

However, our campaign is not just about putting good food on a plate. We want to see a “whole school” approach to school food. As well as eating good food, children need to learn about where it comes from, how it's made and the importance of seasonality. This will give them the knowledge and skills to make better choices about their diets in the future. Research by the Food for Life Partnership in the UK and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation in Australia reveals a link between children's participation in cooking and growing activities at school and an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as a willingness to try new foods.^{26,27} Head teachers involved in both these projects have also observed that the kitchens and gardens provide excellent learning spaces for children with behavioural or learning problems because they tend to engage more in practical activities. This is something I have seen while filming my show *Jamie's Dream School*. It's an approach that empowers kids to feed themselves better.

So, where do we go from here?

There is no denying that school food has come a long way in the past five years. In fact, it has come a lot further than I ever imagined and there is some amazing work going on out there in our schools today. It has been a long, hard slog for a lot of people and we are only now starting to see a return on our time and money. But the current economic climate and Government budget cuts are putting our progress at risk. Once again, we are gambling with the

health and well-being of our kids. The last thing we want to see is the return of the dreaded Turkey Twizzler to school dining halls across the country.

As part of its spending review, the Government has announced that the School Lunch Grant of £80 million a year will no longer exist so there will no longer be money set aside for school food at a Government level. I said at the start of the Feed Me Better campaign that it would take 10 years to completely turn things around. Now we are at the halfway point and, with the withdrawal of financial support from the Government, we are in danger of losing ground. This cannot be allowed to happen.

We need continued Government funding that is set aside (or ring-fenced, to use the technical term) to support schools in providing good-quality school food and increase their meal take-up, ultimately turning their service into a profitable business. Very few school meal services currently make a profit and, with the rise in food and fuel prices, we'd hate to see caterers resort back to using cheaper and poorer quality ingredients. Seventy-seven per cent of school caterers surveyed by the Food for Life Partnership said that the removal of the School Lunch Grant would severely impact on the quality of their services. We are already seeing some local authorities putting up their prices for a school meal, hindering take-up in the process. Some are even deciding not to run a service at all, leaving schools to fend for themselves.

And now the Government has announced that the nutritional standards, which we have all worked so hard to put into place and kids are now starting to accept, will not be compulsory for new academies. This is incredibly disappointing because the majority of schools are already meeting these standards and have spent lots of time and money on making them a success. With more and more schools becoming academies, the massive improvements in nutrition we have seen across the board could be lost without Government support.



My manifesto for change

We need to keep moving forwards, not backwards. This is what I think the Government needs to do to protect the future of our kids' health and education:

1) More money for school food

More money for school food means a healthier, smarter Britain in decades to come. Now that the School Lunch Grant has gone, the Department for Education (DfE) must replace it with another funding system – but one that still cuts overall spend. I believe that this can be done and I support the idea of a School Food Premium, which would be paid to reward schools and head teachers who increase school meal take-up and are committed to improving their service because they recognise its importance in improving pupil attainment and behaviour. This type of funding model fits in with the Government's ideals of local responsibility and school freedom in decision-making. It also promotes good practice for other schools and reduces the need for schools to get support from Government-funded initiatives in the future.

Funding should be awarded directly to the school and not the caterer because the school should make the decision on how best to increase take-up; for example, by introducing staggered lunch breaks to reduce queuing, closed-site policies at lunchtime or cooking lessons on the curriculum to improve pupils' relationship with food and increase their willingness to try different types of foods. The payments should be part of a tiered system, as suggested by the Food for Life Partnership; small awards should be given for small increases and larger rewards for larger increases. It also makes sense for the DfE to offer larger incentives for secondary schools and schools in deprived areas as take-up is lower in secondary schools and pupil achievement can be lower in deprived areas.

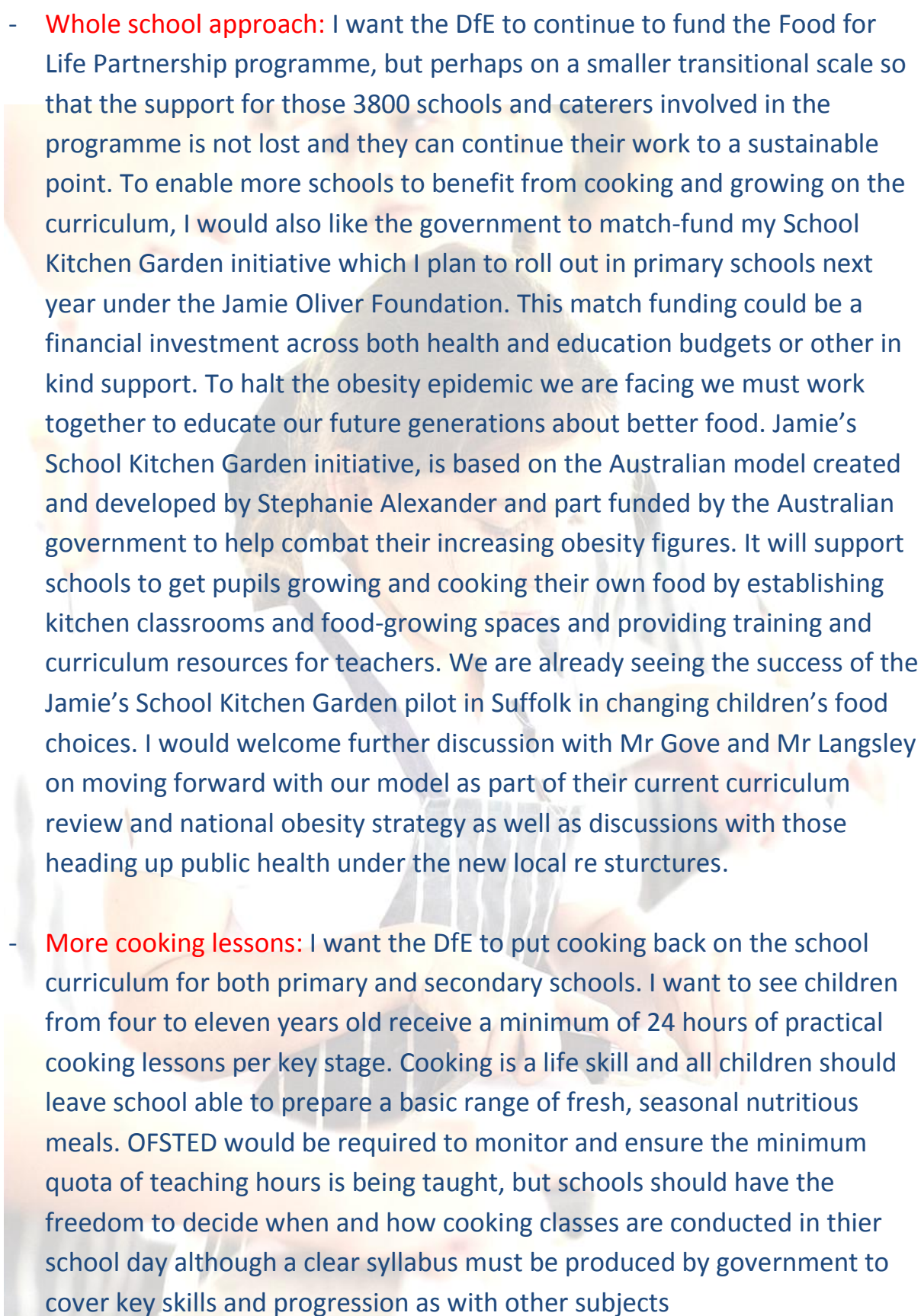
To be a success, this type of funding system would need to be really low on paperwork as schools are already swamped with administrative requirements. The ideal scenario would be to base it on the figures already submitted to measure free school meals take-up and the data collected as part of the School Food Trust's annual survey. This would provide incentive for schools to participate in the Trust's survey, now that the national indicator to measure school meal take-up has been removed from local council targets.

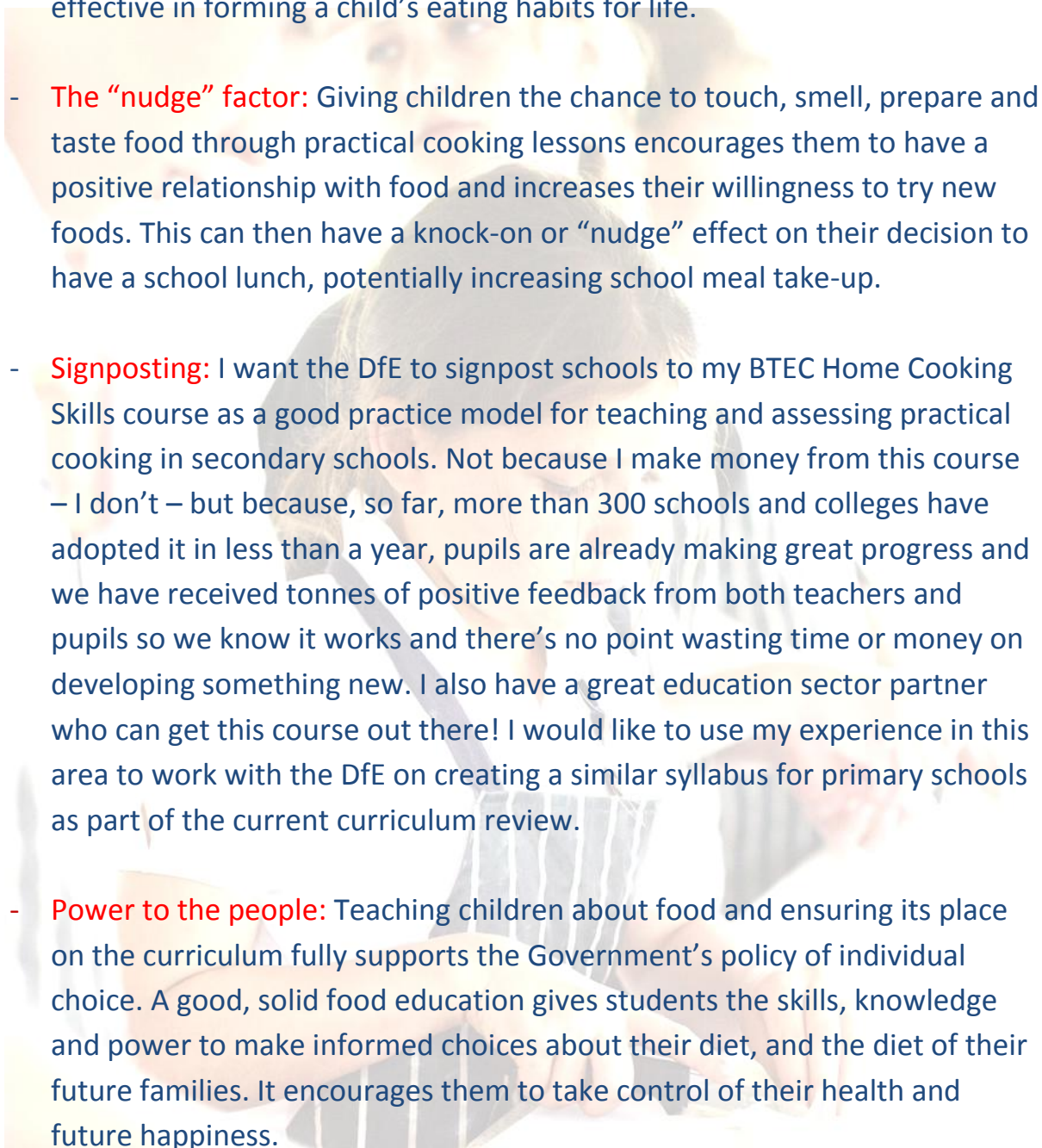
2) Nutritional standards for all schools

I want the Government to make a policy amendment and make nutritional standards for school food mandatory for all schools, including new academies. The majority of schools are already meeting these standards and many head teachers and caterers have worked extremely hard to achieve this over the past year so it would be incredibly disappointing and counterproductive not to make them mandatory for new academies too. If the idea behind the formation of new academies is to improve school performances and pupil attainment, then nutritious food needs to be on the menu because there is lots of research linking good food with improvements in pupil behaviour and attainment. However, if the Government wants all schools to become academies in the long-term, the reality is we risk losing the very legislation that has made a difference as well as the benefits gained from raising nutritional standards. We need the backing of legislation on nutritional standards to keep progressing and it's the DfE's responsibility to apply this legislation to all schools.

3) Teach kids about food

Many of the kids I have worked with in schools or the young adults I see coming through the Apprentice Programme at Fifteen can tell you about drugs and alcohol but they can't recognise even the most common vegetables, let alone how or where they are grown or how to cook them. This is because they don't learn enough about food at school and, consequently, if they don't know what it is, then it's really tough to get them to eat it!

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- **Whole school approach:** I want the DfE to continue to fund the Food for Life Partnership programme, but perhaps on a smaller transitional scale so that the support for those 3800 schools and caterers involved in the programme is not lost and they can continue their work to a sustainable point. To enable more schools to benefit from cooking and growing on the curriculum, I would also like the government to match-fund my School Kitchen Garden initiative which I plan to roll out in primary schools next year under the Jamie Oliver Foundation. This match funding could be a financial investment across both health and education budgets or other in kind support. To halt the obesity epidemic we are facing we must work together to educate our future generations about better food. Jamie's School Kitchen Garden initiative, is based on the Australian model created and developed by Stephanie Alexander and part funded by the Australian government to help combat their increasing obesity figures. It will support schools to get pupils growing and cooking their own food by establishing kitchen classrooms and food-growing spaces and providing training and curriculum resources for teachers. We are already seeing the success of the Jamie's School Kitchen Garden pilot in Suffolk in changing children's food choices. I would welcome further discussion with Mr Gove and Mr Langsley on moving forward with our model as part of their current curriculum review and national obesity strategy as well as discussions with those heading up public health under the new local re structures.
 - **More cooking lessons:** I want the DfE to put cooking back on the school curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. I want to see children from four to eleven years old receive a minimum of 24 hours of practical cooking lessons per key stage. Cooking is a life skill and all children should leave school able to prepare a basic range of fresh, seasonal nutritious meals. OFSTED would be required to monitor and ensure the minimum quota of teaching hours is being taught, but schools should have the freedom to decide when and how cooking classes are conducted in thier school day although a clear syllabus must be produced by government to cover key skills and progression as with other subjects

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- **Catch them early:** We need to ensure children learn to cook at primary school age as research clearly shows that early intervention is more effective in forming a child's eating habits for life.
 - **The “nudge” factor:** Giving children the chance to touch, smell, prepare and taste food through practical cooking lessons encourages them to have a positive relationship with food and increases their willingness to try new foods. This can then have a knock-on or “nudge” effect on their decision to have a school lunch, potentially increasing school meal take-up.
 - **Signposting:** I want the DfE to signpost schools to my BTEC Home Cooking Skills course as a good practice model for teaching and assessing practical cooking in secondary schools. Not because I make money from this course – I don't – but because, so far, more than 300 schools and colleges have adopted it in less than a year, pupils are already making great progress and we have received tonnes of positive feedback from both teachers and pupils so we know it works and there's no point wasting time or money on developing something new. I also have a great education sector partner who can get this course out there! I would like to use my experience in this area to work with the DfE on creating a similar syllabus for primary schools as part of the current curriculum review.
 - **Power to the people:** Teaching children about food and ensuring its place on the curriculum fully supports the Government's policy of individual choice. A good, solid food education gives students the skills, knowledge and power to make informed choices about their diet, and the diet of their future families. It encourages them to take control of their health and future happiness.

4) Provide training for teachers

If cooking lessons are to be included on the curriculum for primary schools, the DfE must ensure teachers are adequately trained to teach the subject. At the Jamie Oliver Foundation, through our Ministry of Food centres, we have taught thousands of people from all walks of life how to cook. We also

provide support for education centres running our BTEC Home Cooking Skills course and are currently looking at developing a training programme for primary school teachers as part of Jamie's School Kitchen Garden, so we would be well placed to support the DfE in developing this training.

5) Every school a food-growing school

We would love to see every school have its own food-growing space. Giving children the chance to grow their own food can have a huge impact on their relationship with food. Many schools are already doing great things with food growing but it needs to happen in all schools. Recent research in California shows that kids who grow their own food at school eat one-and-a-half more portions of fruit and veg than those who don't²⁸. So in a country where 96% of kids currently don't eat their recommended five a day when it comes to fruit and veg²⁹, getting them growing their own food at school is crucial to changing their diets and long-term health. Children who learn and understand about where their food comes from, as part of their curriculum, will be more intelligent consumers as adults and make better decisions about the food they buy in respect of seasonality, local sourcing, animal welfare and the environment. They will understand how food and farming are linked and that food comes from the countryside and not a packet or tin, which is unfortunately the perception that many of the kids I have worked with over the years seem to have.

Food-growing must be curriculum based and the DfE must ensure this. I fully support the DEFRA Taskforce that has recently been established to look at what is already happening around food growing in schools, the benefits associated with it and what is stopping other schools doing it. We are delighted to be part of that taskforce and can't wait to make our recommendations to DfE on why every school should be a food-growing school and how that can be achieved! I would, however, like to urge the DfE to ensure that a representative from their department is fully involved in this taskforce, which disappointingly is not the case at the moment. This is about education and they must take an active role.

6) Creative capital funding guidance

Capital funding is a pot of money local councils and schools get from the government to spend on buildings and facilities, either to build new ones or improve and repair existing ones. Capital funding has to be spent on facilities that will provide benefits for several years. What facilities can provide more long-term benefits for children than those that provide them with a fresh nutritious lunch that improves their attainment at school or those that teach them how to cook and grow food helping them to have a healthier lifestyle as adults? I want the DfE to recommend that schools use capital funding to create on-site school kitchens, improved dining areas, kitchen classrooms, or multipurpose spaces that would be suitable to teach practical cooking and food-growing spaces. No new schools should be built without these facilities, although they may vary in size. Schools that choose to spend their capital money in this way should be recognised by the DfE as best practice models.

7) Ofsted

At the moment, Ofsted inspections don't look at the quality of school food in any great detail, nor do they assess whether a school lunch service actually meets current nutritional standards. Ofsted inspections need to assess the nutritional content of school food as well as the benefits of a good school meal and dining environment. The efforts head teachers make to provide a good school lunch service, increase take-up and develop a whole school approach to food education should be praised in Ofsted assessments because they have proven to play a significant part in improving the academic performance of pupils.

Should the DfE bring practical cooking back on the national curriculum, as I have recommended they do as part of this manifesto, then OFSTED will need to monitor the delivery of that subject as they currently do others, ensuring that the minimum number of teaching hours for the subject are

being met and that the delivery and assessment of the subject is up to the standards set by the new syllabus.

Inspectors would need to receive training from the DfE or a relevant organisation so they can assess these areas effectively.

8) Pupil premium to give poorer pupils access to good food

The pupil premium that is paid to schools for each student entitled to a free school meal isn't ring-fenced and it is left up to schools to decide how best to reinvest this money to benefit those from more deprived backgrounds. I believe that schools know what is best for their own pupils but I would still like to see the Government monitor whether the children who register for school meals actually make use of the meal, and prevent head teachers from capitalising on this new premium. I know most head teachers wouldn't dream of doing this, but sadly there have been a few cases where this has happened with parents being told by heads to come forward and claim their free meal so their schools get the extra pupil premium money even though they don't take the free meal up. Free school meals are not a deprivation indicator – they are an essential way of making sure our less well-off kids get the meals they deserve.

Food for thought

All of the recommendations I have submitted in this manifesto support the current Government's overarching commitment to reducing health inequalities and the attainment gap, while increasing people's responsibility for their own health. They also help ensure the Government meets its commitment, outlined in the Healthy Lives, Healthy People White Paper, that **“Good schools will be promoters of health in childhood and adolescence because healthy children with high self-esteem learn and behave better at school”**.

Jamie's Manifesto References

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