

Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP  
Secretary of State for Education

Via e-mail: [kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk)

6 October 2022

Dear Mr Malthouse:

We are writing to urge the Department for Education to reform school meals so that children may have a greener, healthier future. The National Food Strategy recommended updating the School Food Standards for England to remove the mandatory servings of meat, but the government has failed to address this in its Food Strategy white paper.

The nutritional needs of children can be met by eating plant-based foods. Guidelines based on nutritional requirements rather than the source of the nutrition would better reflect modern diets, which are increasingly meat-free, and enable school caterers to offer healthier, environmentally friendly meals.

The current requirement regularly to serve meat, fish, and dairy impedes efforts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption – a real problem given that up to three-quarters of primary and secondary school children fall short of the recommended five daily portions of fruit and vegetables, adding to the obesity crisis.

Requiring schools to serve meat and dairy also exacerbates the climate catastrophe. A study in *PLOS Climate* said that phasing out animal agriculture represents “our best and most immediate chance to reverse the trajectory of climate change” and will result in a 68% fall in carbon dioxide emissions globally. The UK’s Climate Change Committee has urged public sector caterers to take action. Local procurement policies fail to address the issue, as the majority of the carbon footprint of food relates to the type of food, not its transportation. Schools would like to offer more meat-free days, but the meat mandate is standing in the way of progress.

Excellent alternatives to animal-derived foods are plentiful – The Eatwell Guide states that protein sources such as beans, peas, lentils, and mycoprotein are good replacements for meat because they’re lower in fat and higher in fibre and protein. Not everyone agrees on whether meat and dairy should be part of a healthy diet, but individual schools must be given the choice *not* to serve meat, dairy, and fish – foods that have been found to harm planetary and personal health. The School Food Standards are outdated, and it’s time for this government to take action. Let’s seize this opportunity to give children a brighter future.

We urge you **immediately to revise the School Food Standards to remove the mandatory servings of meat, dairy, and fish.**

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lucas MP  
Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP  
Henry Smith MP  
Rachael Maskell MP  
Cllr Alex Phillips  
Cllr Amanda Onwuemene  
Cllr Amy Heley  
Cllr Andree Frieze  
Cllr Barbara Bentham  
Cllr Chas Warlow  
Cllr Chris Barnham  
Cllr Clare Rainey  
Cllr Daniel Sutherland  
Cllr David Francis  
Cllr David Gipson  
Cllr David Herbert  
Cllr Elaine Hills  
Cllr Hannah Allbrooke  
Cllr Ian Middleton  
Cllr Jamie Lloyd  
Cllr Jayne Francis  
Cllr Jo Bird  
Cllr John Reynolds  
Cllr Judith Grier  
Cllr Leo Littman  
Cllr Linda Johnson  
Cllr Lizzie Deane  
Cllr Lucy Bywater  
Cllr Marianna Ebel  
Cllr Marisa Heath  
Cllr Martin Osborne  
Cllr Mike McCusker  
Cllr Nick Bennett  
Cllr Niki Crookdake  
Cllr Pat Cleary  
Cllr Pete West  
Cllr Phélim Mac Cafferty  
Cllr Sarah McKeown  
Cllr Sarah Nield  
Cllr Shaid Mushtaq  
Cllr Siriol Hugh-Jones  
Cllr Steph Powell  
Cllr Steve Davis

Cllr Sue Shanks  
Cllr Sue Stonehouse  
Cllr Suzy Horton  
Cllr Tom Druitt  
Cllr Zoë John  
Animal Aid  
Compassion in World Farming  
Dale Vince OBE, Founder of school meals brand Little Green Devils  
Future Farm  
Greenpeace UK  
Humane Society International UK  
Linda McCartney Foods  
Meat Free Monday  
Ministry of Eco Education  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals  
Plant-Based Food Alliance UK  
Plant-Based Health Professionals UK  
ProVeg UK  
Quorn  
The Vegan Society  
Upfield  
Viva!