

# The Food Dudes

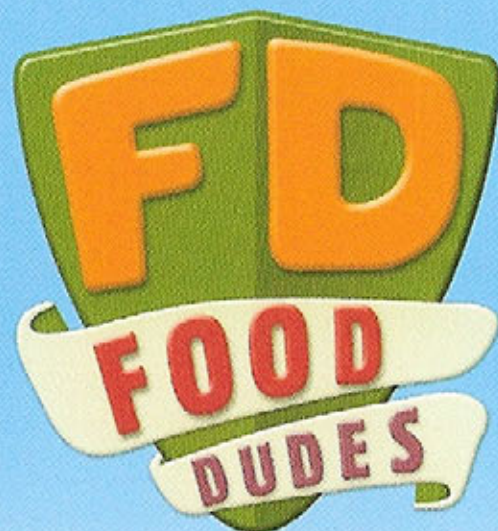
## Healthy Eating Programme:

### Increasing children's consumption of fruit and vegetables

The **Food Dudes** programme changes children's eating habits for life. Clearly, if you want to change children's diets, it is not enough just to give them good food. You also have to find a way of motivating them to eat and enjoy it. This is where the Food Dudes Programme comes into its own.

It is designed by psychologists to appeal to young children from 4-11 years old, and involves a simple set of steps revolving around a reward system and exciting DVD adventures (starring the Food Dudes).

Not only is the process easy and enjoyable for parents, children and teachers to follow, it also brings about major and long-lasting increases in children's consumption of fruit and vegetables, and improvements in the eating habits of parents themselves.



“...this is one of the most exciting things going on in the food world, which could completely transform the way Britons eat.”

Prue Leith, Chair of the School Food Trust



## Why has the Food Dudes programme been developed?

### Eating a diet rich in fruit and vegetables has many health benefits. It can:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Protect against many cancers
- Help prevent obesity
- Help to prevent diabetes
- Provide a great source of energy and nutrition
- Protect against asthma
- Keep skin, teeth and hair healthy

Eating habits are established early in life and a poor diet in childhood is related to ill health in adulthood.

Any attempts to produce long-term improvements in people's diets should start with children and the Food Dudes Programme does just that by encouraging and maintaining healthy eating habits in children.

## The Food Dudes Programme:

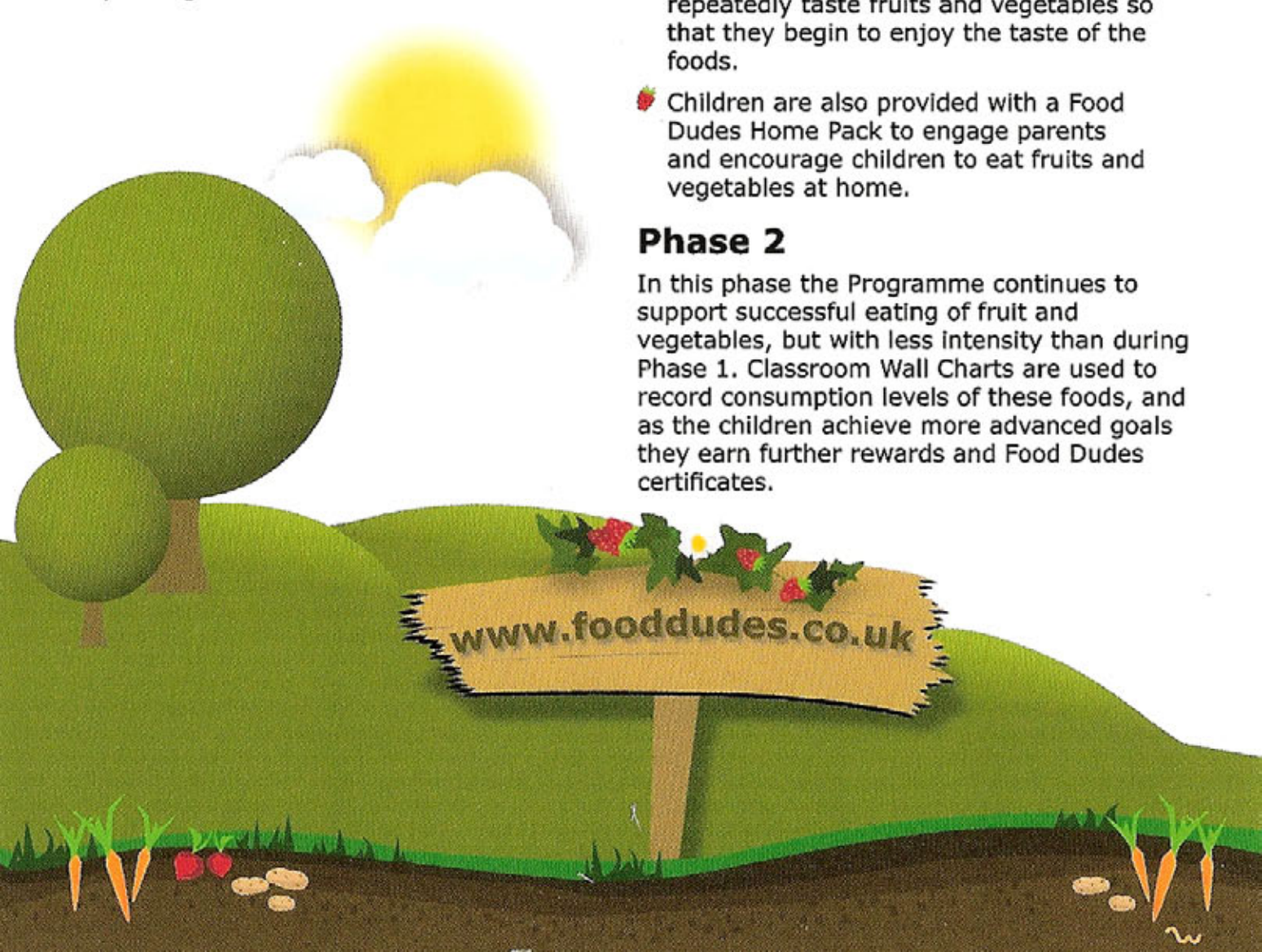
The Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme is a school-based intervention designed for use in primary schools that encourages children to eat fruit and vegetables both at school and at home and helps children develop a liking for these foods. There are two main phases to the Programme:

### Phase 1 (16 days)

- Each day, children are read a letter and/or watch a specially designed DVD episode (lasting 6 minutes) starring the "Food Dudes".
- The purpose of the Food Dudes is to provide influential role-models for children to imitate.
- Children are then given a portion of fruit and a portion of vegetable and those who succeed in eating both the fruit and vegetable are given a small reward (e.g. juggling balls, pencils, pedometers etc).
- The rewards are used at the beginning of the Programme to encourage children to repeatedly taste fruits and vegetables so that they begin to enjoy the taste of the foods.
- Children are also provided with a Food Dudes Home Pack to engage parents and encourage children to eat fruits and vegetables at home.

### Phase 2

In this phase the Programme continues to support successful eating of fruit and vegetables, but with less intensity than during Phase 1. Classroom Wall Charts are used to record consumption levels of these foods, and as the children achieve more advanced goals they earn further rewards and Food Dudes certificates.



# Why Does it Work?

By using **rewards** and positive **role-models**, the Food Dudes Programme encourages children to repeatedly taste different fruits and vegetables.

**Repeated tasting** of these foods allows children to discover the intrinsically rewarding properties of fruits and vegetables - in other words, they discover that fruit and vegetables actually taste really good!

With increased liking of fruit and vegetables comes the greater likelihood that children will eat these foods simply for their taste rather than for any external reward.

The Food Dudes Programme creates a culture that strongly supports the eating of fruit and vegetables and within this environment children come to think of themselves as 'healthy eaters' who eat fruit and vegetables.

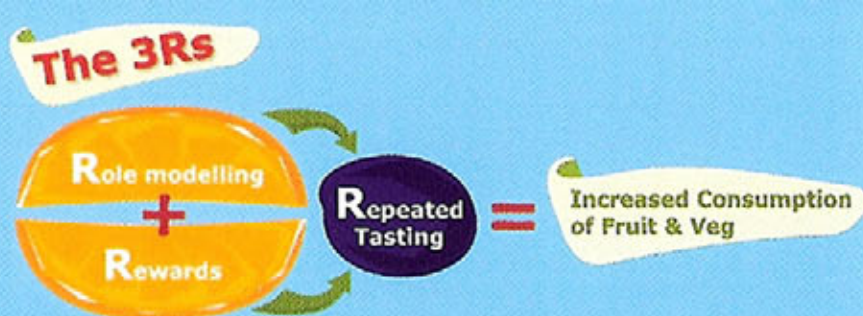
It is the combination of these biological (repeated tasting) and psychological (role-models, rewards) factors that maintains the behaviour change over time.

## Evidence

Food Dudes has been extensively tested with thousands of children in schools in England (London, Manchester and Oxford), Wales and Ireland. The results of the studies to date indicate that the Programme works very well in schools and brings about substantial increases in pupils' consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Some of the key findings from this research are listed below:

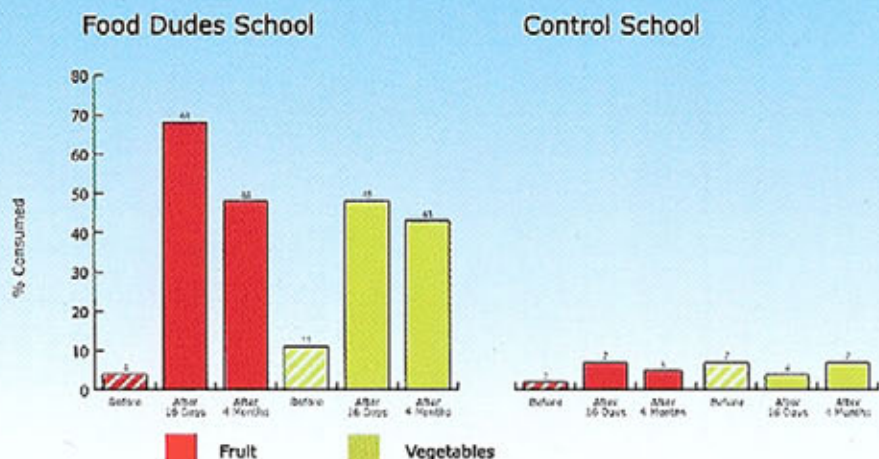
- Large increases in consumption.
- Greatest increases in consumption are shown by those children who ate the least at the start (the poorest eaters).
- Increases in consumption are long-lasting.
- Increases extend across a wide range of fruit and vegetable varieties.
- The Programme works for all children aged 2-11 years old.
- The Programme is equally effective for boys and girls.
- Effects are highly reliable, regardless of school location and social deprivation.



## LONDON

Poorest Eaters

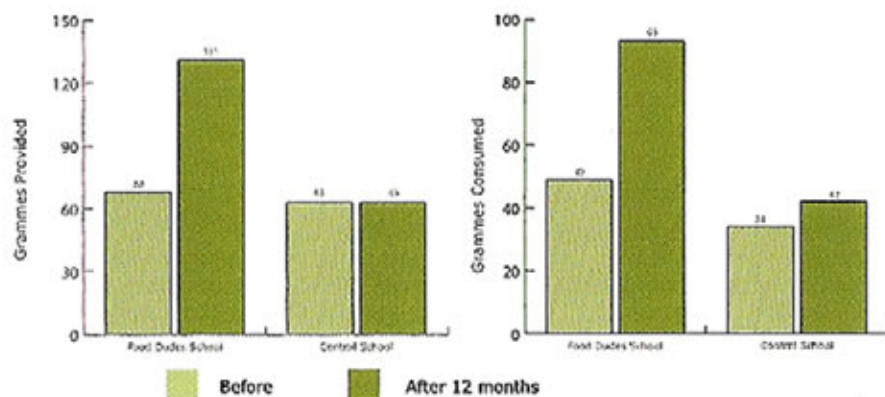
N.B. Average daily portion weight presented = 83g of fruit or 60g of vegetables



## IRELAND

Fruit & Vegetable **Provision** (in packed lunches)

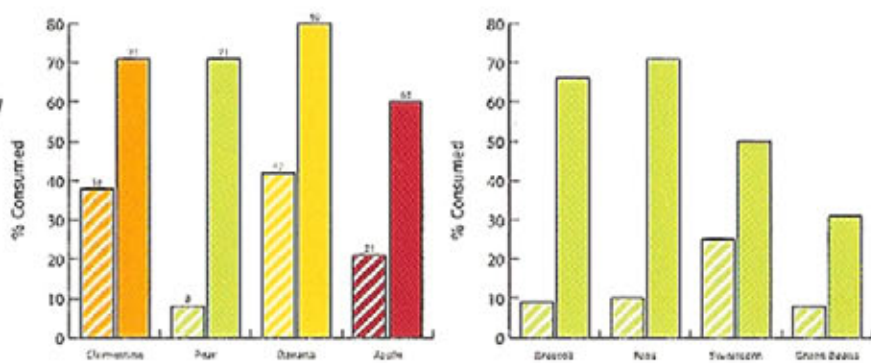
Fruit & Vegetable **Consumption** (from packed lunches)



## MANCHESTER

Consumption of Different Fruit & Vegetables

(hatched bars = pre-intervention data, solid bars = post intervention data)  
N.B. Average daily portion weight presented = 83g of fruit or 60g of vegetables



# Running the Food Dudes Programme

## To run successfully the Programme requires:

Schools to provide one or two teachers to act as co-ordinators who would oversee the implementation of the Programme for the school.

Schools to commit to 20 minutes per class per day for Phase 1 (16 days) and integrate the Programme into the culture of the school thereafter.

Fruit and vegetables daily; rewards and printed materials; in-service training (half-day) for one or two teachers; organisational support.

PP The Food Dudes have achieved something I never thought I would be able to... In our house it turned vegetroubles into vegetables! PP Parent



PP My son, who once did not like any vegetables, now asks for them every day. Five portions a day often doesn't satisfy him! PP Parent

PP Great impact! The Programme has helped every child. PP Head teacher

PP Wonderful experience - shared by the whole school. PP Teacher



## Contacts

For more information about setting up Food Dudes in your area or if you would like to know more about the Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme please visit our website at:

[www.fooddudes.co.uk](http://www.fooddudes.co.uk)



Or you can contact the Bangor Food and Activity Research Unit:  
Email: [fooddudes@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:fooddudes@bangor.ac.uk) Fax: +44 (0)1248 382599

**Write to:** Bangor Food and Activity Research Unit School of Psychology,  
Bangor University, Gwynedd, UK, LL57 2AS.

**Food Dudes Co-ordinator for England (Pauline Milne)**

Email: [p.a.milne@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:p.a.milne@bangor.ac.uk) Tel: +44 (0)1248 388534

**International Food Dudes Co-ordinator (Sally Pears)**

Email: [s.l.pears@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.pears@bangor.ac.uk) Tel: +44 (0)1248 388669

### Publications:

Lowe et al. (2004) Eur. J. Clin. Nutr. 58, pp510-522; Horne et al. (2004) Eur. J. Clin. Nutr. 58, pp1649-1660; Horne et al. (2008) Eur. J. Clin. Nutr. Advance online publication, 21 May 2008; doi:10.1038/sj.ejcn.2008.34.