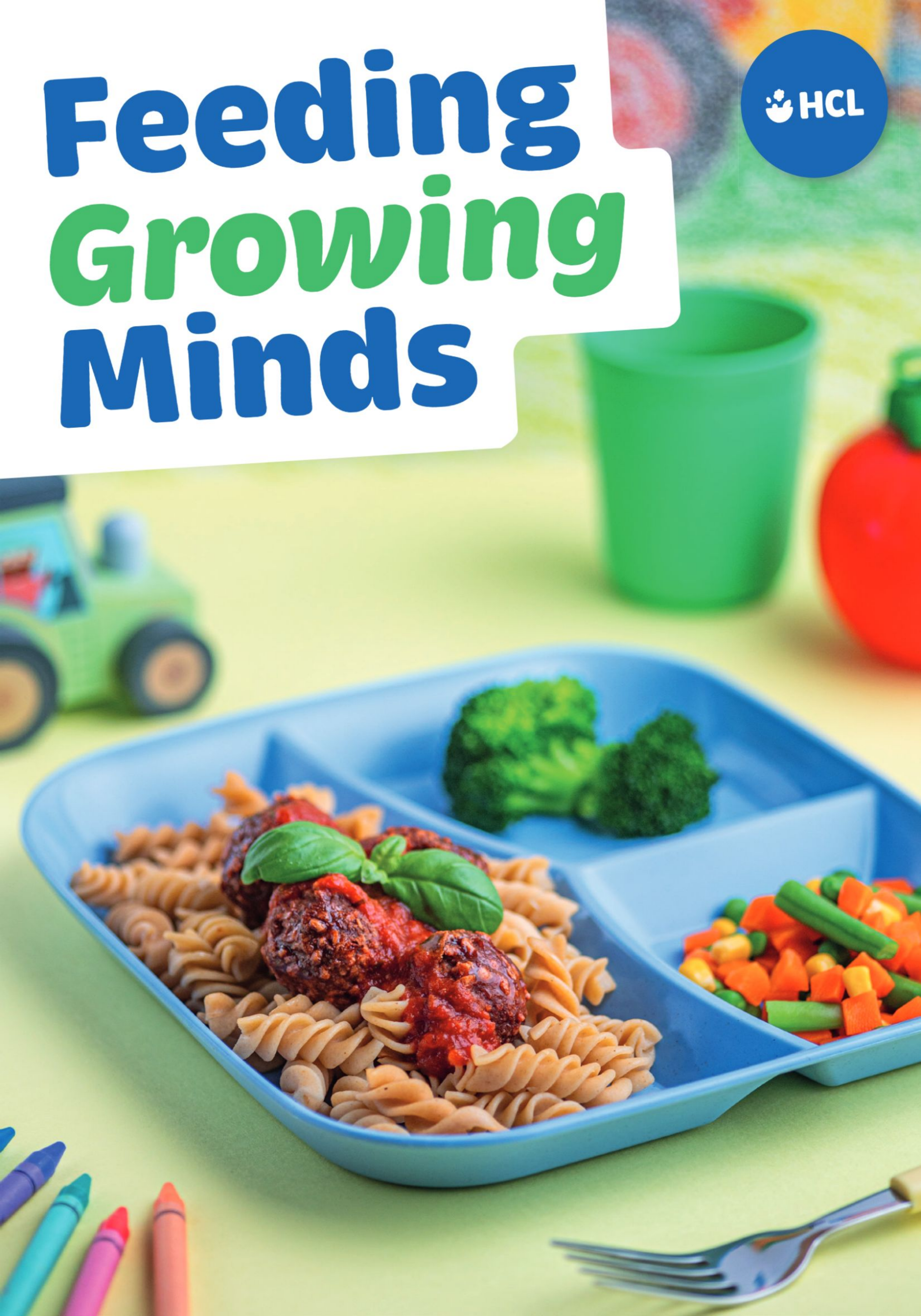


# Feeding Growing Minds

 HCL



# Introducing HCL

HCL works with more than 450 schools, serving over 16 million meals each year through our team of 1,600 skilled colleagues.

We believe that nutritious, enjoyable food helps children learn, thrive and feel confident with food. Every meal we create is thoughtfully designed to support wellbeing, nurture healthy habits and inspire a positive relationship with eating.

Beyond the plate, we bring food learning to life through tasting sessions, themed days and hands-on experiences that help pupils understand where food comes from, how it's made and why it matters.

**At the heart of HCL is a simple purpose: to Feed Growing Minds.**

## A Message from the HCL Food Team

We are the chefs, nutritionists and menu creators behind your school meals, and our purpose is simple: we feed growing minds.

Fresh, nutritious food plays an important role in helping children learn, grow and thrive. That belief shapes every menu we design and every recipe we develop.

Our meals are created with care, curiosity and a commitment to supporting wellbeing across the school day. They are designed to be inclusive for every child, reflecting a wide range of tastes, cultures and dietary needs. Preparing food that helps pupils feel energised, confident and ready to learn is a responsibility we value deeply.

We are proud to play a meaningful role in each child's day.

### The HCL Food Team



## Who We Are - The HCL Food Team

We're a high performing team of chefs, menu developers, nutritionists and school catering professionals.

### Together, we:

- Design, test and improve every menu
- Deliver safe catering in every school
- Manage 3,000+ special diets with precision
- Lead food education and community engagement
- Track trends, research insights and global food shifts
- Work closely with pupils to shape dishes they genuinely enjoy

## Food Is More Than What's on the Plate

To us, food is much more than ingredients - it's an experience that helps children grow.

- **Education:** understanding where food comes from
- **Confidence:** trying new flavours in a safe, positive way
- **Curiosity:** discovering global dishes and seasonal produce
- **Joy:** making lunchtime moment children genuinely look forward to

Through theme days, taster events, engaging visuals and hands on learning, we help schools build a food culture that feels exciting, inclusive and child centred.

We prioritise taste, balance, familiarity and variety - because children deserve food that's both nutritious and genuinely enjoyable.

## What's in Our Food - Fresh, Nutritious & Made for Children

We're proud of the quality and care that go into every dish.

### Our meals are:

- Scratch cooked by trained school chefs
- Made using responsibly sourced ingredients, including Red Tractor assured meat and poultry.
- Built on seasonal, varied menus designed for different dietary, religious and cultural needs
- Fully compliant with UK School Food Standards (fruit and vegetables daily, varied protein, wholegrains weekly, limits on sugar, fat & salt)
- Supported by strong partnerships with trusted suppliers
- Backed by long-held national accreditations:
  - Food for Life Served Here – Bronze (retained since 2014)
  - Sugarwise Gold accreditation, including a weekly No Free Sugar Day

# Standards, Safety & Inclusion

Our Food Team and Nutrition Team work together to ensure our menus are safe, inclusive and nutritionally sound.

## Our Commitment Includes:

- Fruit and vegetables daily
- Wholegrain options at least twice a week
- A variety of protein sources, including plant-based options and beans
- Healthier desserts, with:
  - Fresh fruit daily
  - At least two 50% fruit desserts per week
  - Cocoa only "chocolate" desserts (no confectionery except for occasional themed days)



Safety and inclusion aren't optional for us - they are foundational.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

- Free sugar limits met, averaging  $\leq 7g$  free sugar per day across a 3 week cycle
- Nut free policy across all schools
- Strict allergen controls, including safe processes, specialist menus and training
- Full compliance with UK School Food Standards



We want children to enjoy food that's good for them and for the planet.

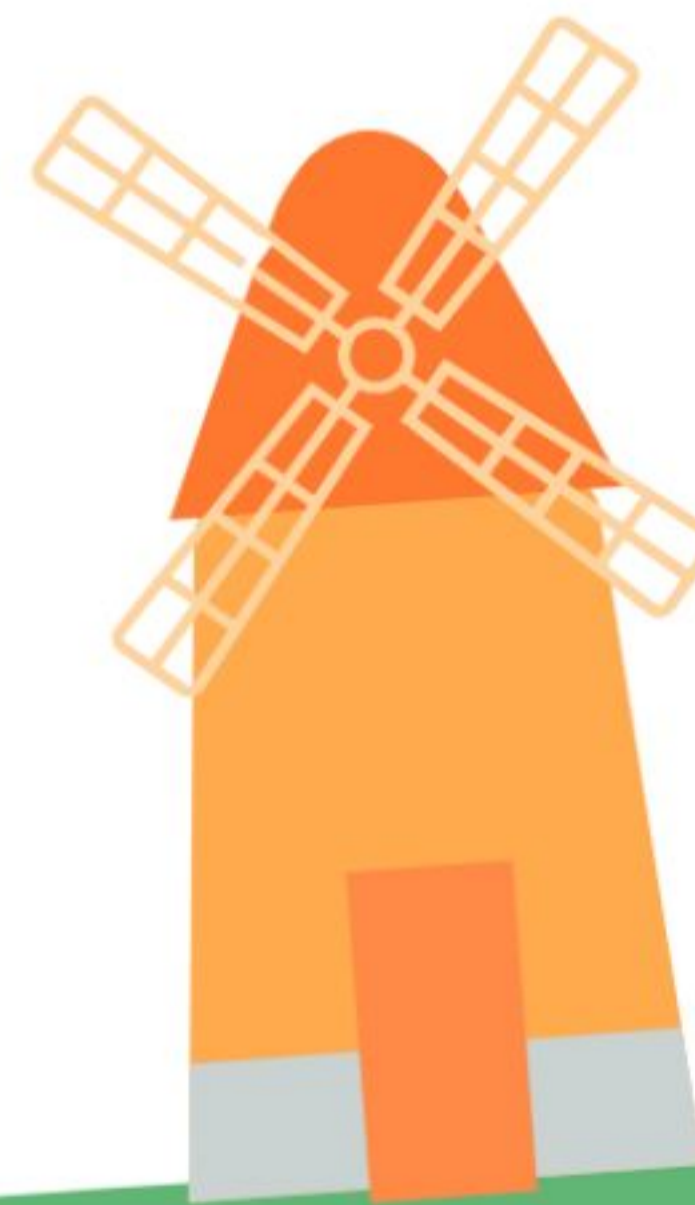


## OUR PROMISE

# Responsible Sourcing & Sustainability

From farm to fork, we choose suppliers who share our standards:

- Red Tractor assured meat & British poultry
- MSC-certified sustainable fish
- Lion Quality Free Range Eggs
- 100% British milk
- Free from GM ingredients and specified additives
- Partnerships with local butchers, greengrocers and regional suppliers
- Seasonal menu planning
- Increased use of plant-powered dishes, including beans and pulses
- Support for healthy eating campaigns like Veg Power and Bang in Some Beans



# Menu Development - Research, Trends & Pupil Voice

We use industry insight, trend tracking and real feedback from pupils to keep our menus exciting and relevant.

#### This includes:

- Collaboration with The School Food People (previously LACA)
- Supplier food safaris and development days
- Trend reviews and high street comparatives
- Chef innovation workshops
- Regular exhibitions & tasting events
- Seasonal dish trials
- And most importantly...

#### The Big Taste Test!

Our menu testing process. Children become the judges and only dishes with 75% or more positive feedback make the cut.

**Taste testing keeps our menus grounded in what children actually enjoy.**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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**WEEK 1**

13 APR, 5 MAY, 1 JUN, 22 JUN, 13 JUL, 1 SEP, 21 SEP, 12 OCT

- MAIN MEAL 1**
- MAIN MEAL 2**
- SIDE DISH**
- DESSERT**

Pork Sausages & Gravy	Beef Lasagne	Roast Chicken with Stuffing & Gravy	Quorn Burger (v)	Fish Fillet Fingers
Lentil Bolognese Pasta Shells (Ve)	Plant-Based Grill (Ve)	Cheese & Tomato Puff Pastry Tart (v)	Butternut & Chickpea Biryani (Ve) (New)	Margherita Pizza (v)
Mashed Potatoes	Herby Garlic Bread or Potato Wedges	Roast Potatoes or Wholemeal Pasta	Potato Wedges or Herby Garlic Bread	Chips or Tricolour Pasta
Peach & Apple Crumble & Ice Cream (v)	Fresh Fruit Wedges (Ve)	Fresh Fruit Jelly (Ve)	Raspberry & Lemon Square (v) (New)	Marble Cookie (v)

**WEEK 2**

20 APR, 11 MAY, 8 JUN, 29 JUN, 20 JUL, 7 SEP, 28 SEP, 19 OCT

- MAIN MEAL 1**
- MAIN MEAL 2**
- SIDE DISH**
- DESSERT**

Chicken Curry	Plant-Based Meatballs with a Tomato	Sauce (Ve) Roast Beef with Yorkshire	Pudding & Gravy Chicken Pie & Gravy	Battered Fish
Plant-Based Sausages & Gravy (Ve)	Mac 'n' Cheese (v)	Quorn Fillet with Stuffing & Gravy (Ve)	Mild Bean Chilli (Ve)	Margherita Pizza (v)
Brown & White Rice or Potato Wedges	Pasta or Herby Garlic Bread	Roast Potatoes or Wholemeal Pasta	New Potatoes or Brown & White Rice	Chips or Tricolour Pasta
Apple Tart & Ice Cream (v)	Fresh Fruit Wedges (Ve)	Fresh Fruit Jelly (Ve)	Strawberry Mousse (v)	Chocolate Muffin (v)

**WEEK 3**

27 APR, 18 MAY, 15 JUN, 6 JUL, 14 SEP, 5 OCT

- MAIN MEAL 1**
- MAIN MEAL 2**
- SIDE DISH**
- DESSERT**

Pulled Paprika Chicken Flatbread (New)	Beef Burger	Roast Chicken with Stuffing & Gravy	Quorn Hotdog (v)	Fish Fillet Fingers
Breaded Bean & Vegetable Grill (Ve)	BBQ Bean Loaded Hash Browns (Ve)	Roasted Summer Veg Quiche (v)	Cauliflower Cheese Pasta Bake (v) (New)	Margherita Pizza (v)
Brown & White Rice or Pasta	Potato Wedges	Roast Potatoes or Wholemeal Pasta	New Potatoes	Potato Wedges or Tricolour Pasta
Pancake with Blueberries (v)	Ice Cream with Chocolate Cookie Crumb (v)	Fresh Fruit Jelly (Ve)	Fresh Fruit Wedges (Ve)	Orange Shortbread (Ve)

## Our Sample Menu - What Lunchtime Looks Like

We offer a three week menu cycle, updated seasonally (Summer from April, Winter from October):

Theme days run each term to add fun, variety and cultural experiences.



# How to Order or Register for School Meals

## Universal Infant Free School Meals

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 receive free school meals in England.

## Eligibility For Older Pupils

Families receiving certain benefits may qualify.

## London Offer

All primary-aged pupils in state-funded London schools receive free school meals.

Choosing school meals can save families up to **£500** per child per year.



## HOW TO ORDER & SPECIAL DIETS

# Special Diets - Allergy Management

Our Allergy Management System, powered by Citrus, ensures safe, appropriate meals for children with:

- Food allergies
- Intolerances
- Religious or cultural requirements

Families can easily register online with:

- School and class details
- Medical evidence
- A passport style photograph

Once registered, families receive updates twice a year, and schools receive automatically refreshed menus.

We operate a strict No Nut Policy to support safety across all schools.



## Kelly's Journey in Our Food Team

Kelly joined HCL in 2015 and has built a successful career within our Food Team, progressing through several roles to become a Chef. Her passion for the work has even inspired others - her son recently joined HCL as a Mobile GA, and a close friend has also become part of the team thanks to her recommendation.

# Join the Team That Feeds Growing Minds

Looking for your next role or know someone who might be a great fit? We're recruiting and it could be the start of something exciting.

At HCL, our people are at the heart of everything we do. We're proud to offer roles that fit around family life, with family-friendly hours, Monday to Friday working, and term-time only positions available across our school kitchens.

Whether you're looking to start a new chapter or step back into work, HCL provides a warm, supportive environment with the chance to make a meaningful difference every day.

At HCL, we're committed to helping our people grow, develop their skills and find the career path that suits them best.

Scan the QR code to find out more.



# Parent Testimonials

“

My son is very happy with the choices provided at school, and he normally eats everything offered to him! He likes choosing from a menu each day.

Primary school parent  
Stevenage

”



“

My child is really enjoying his school lunches, and the HCL menu offers some of his favourite meals. I feel like I have one less thing to worry about, knowing that he is having a healthy and yummy lunch every day!

Primary school parent  
Knebworth

”



## Contact Us

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