

3.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning regarding the pilot scheme to provide free fruit to children in some primary schools (OQ.89/2026).

In relation to the pilot scheme to provide free fruit to children in some primary schools, started in 2024, will the Minister detail the outcomes of the scheme and advise whether it will be continued and expanded to other schools?

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning):

The free fruit provision was a pilot delivered in 4 primary schools between 2023 and 2025 to assess whether providing free fruit at break times would increase consumption and encourage healthier eating habits. While well received by pupils, parents and staff, and successful in raising awareness of healthy eating, it resulted in only modest increases in fruit consumption. The evaluation found strong support from parents, pupils and staff for increasing the availability, visibility and variety of fruit in schools. Rather than expanding the pilot, fruit was incorporated into primary school meals programme, providing all children in government primary schools with equitable access to fruit. Fruit has not been removed from the programme and remains part of the menu cycle, including fruit-based desserts that have replaced hot desserts on 2 days each week.

Additional fruit is also ordered and may be offered on non-delivery days where surplus stock is available. This approach promotes healthy eating, makes effective use of public funds, and ensures access to fruit across all government primary schools. Uptake, consumption and feedback will continue to be monitored as the programme develops.

3.2.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for her response. It is interesting to hear that the fruit has been kind of spread out, as it were, among all the schools. What I would like to know is, in terms of the measures, the Minister mentioned that increased consumption of fruit was the target measure. Were there any other positive measures that were identified? For example, helping families with the cost of living.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The other measures were mainly just gathered from feedback from parents, staff and children themselves. Apart from that, like I say, there was ... the problem was there was a lot of wastage, basically. So it did seem much more sensible to incorporate it into the school meals programme, and this is what parents actually asked for.

3.2.2 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I was wondering if the Deputy could advise us during that pilot what proportion of that fruit was sourced locally from local producers.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The pilot was delivered by a local provider. The proportion of fruit from grown locally is impossible to know because it would be a very low quantity. Jersey imports 90 per cent of its food overall, but it was managed by a local provider, and the fruit that is in the primary schools now is continuing to be managed by a local provider.

3.2.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Deputy made mention to the new contract for school lunches; with regard to that contract, how much of that is local produce? Not the local providers, but local produce actually grown in Jersey?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think I will be answering a question on that shortly, but the food actually grown in Jersey is something that we are pressing the provider to give us more details on and work towards. At the moment there is not really local food sourced for that, but we are pushing for that to happen.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Deputy Morel asked the question that I wanted to ask about local fruit.

3.2.4 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

If I understood correct from the Minister's answer that the fresh fruits were substituted for fruit-based desserts, and if this is correct, would the Minister consider that actually fruit-based desserts have higher sugar and less nutritional benefit than the fresh fruits and how the decision would be made?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, I cannot have described that correctly. There will be fruit-based desserts on 2 days a week and there is fresh fruit on 2 days a week as well.

3.2.5 The Connétable of St. Helier:

If the Minister confirmed that fresh fruits are 2 days a week, would the Minister consider sourcing these fresh fruits from the Jersey growers, as this scheme also can support local farming?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The fruit is sourced from a local provider. I will look into this more to see if the local provider can source more locally-grown fruit. It is not a big thing in Jersey at the moment, I do not think. But the aim will be to see if we can get more locally-grown food in there.

3.2.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

While I wish the Minister good luck in sourcing local bananas, pineapples [Laughter], mangoes and guavas, and not wanting to add to the micromanagement that the States Assembly might be seeking to do today, could I ask whether any scope has been given to considering the possibility of schools growing their own? Not that it would necessarily provide sufficient amounts, but it would be useful if more schools could be growing in-season fruit, which they could then add to their menus potentially.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Many of our primary schools do have an area where they grow some fruit and vegetables. I can remember not long ago seeing the patch at Grouville School, which was lovely with lots of healthy foods growing there. So I think it is something to be encouraged.

3.2.7 Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North:

As much as we could laugh about whether Jersey can provide and grow bananas, I think climate change is one of the things that we can consider. As a matter of fact, I know Jersey can grow bananas. Whether that is locally grown or not, I think one of the points is that this pilot scheme was supposed to help with the children's healthy dieting. As much as I understand the children would enjoy fruit and also dessert, what else are we going to do for the children to help them to actually grasp the whole idea of healthy dieting?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is much work done in schools about healthy eating by one of our locally based organisations already. As for locally grown fruit being provided in schools, we have to bear in mind that 2,360 meals are provided per day. So I do not think we are going to get locally-grown bananas to all those children.

3.2.8 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I would ask the Minister if we could perhaps have a conversation about this, because I believe that there might be more that the department could do. Having listened to parents from Plat Douet School, mainly in my Parish, they are desperately missing this scheme. Would the Minister consider the cost of living as an additional factor? Would she agree to go back and look at the outcomes of that scheme and factor in that the cost of living has gone up considerably in the 2 years since the scheme started, and perhaps take another look at what could be done?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, I would be happy to discuss this with the Deputy. Thinking about the cost-of-living pressures, we have to remember that these meals are provided to many children at no charge at all and those who pay for it only

pay £2.50, which is a lot less than it would cost to buy a packed lunch. There was another question, I think?
No? OK.