



## Young Marketeers 2023 - 2024

### Introduction

In 2012 School Food Matters devised the Young Marketeers (YM) programme in partnership with Borough Market in London. Thanks to Ocado, we have now taken this much-loved programme successfully to schools in Birmingham, Leeds and Leicester. We have been able to leverage this support to engage other funders so that schools in lots of other cities have taken part. Over four thousand children had the chance to grow their own fruit and vegetables from seed. This report covers the schools funded by Ocado, but also draws on data and case studies from other schools that took part in Young Marketeers.



2024 was the fourth year of Young Marketeers Gloucestershire, the third in Liverpool, and the second year for Birmingham and Leeds. Across the seven regions, 43 primary schools completed the Young Marketeers programme, which culminated in Market Days in July. (See Appendix 1 for full list of participating schools).

### Demographics

Schools with high numbers of children on free school meals are invited to join Young Marketeers. Teachers often channel the programme towards children who are struggling in one way or another, whether it is poor attendance, lack of engagement with school or special educational needs. Across the regions we have run the project with six special schools: Victoria Special School in Birmingham, St Rose's and The Shrubberies Special Schools in Gloucestershire, Broomfield Special Inclusion School in Leeds, Rodney House in Manchester and Ash Field Academy in Leicester.

In 2024, 855 children took part in the food education sessions. In addition:

- Over 4,300 children had indirect involvement in the programme (in other words, learned about the school food growing initiative through an assembly)
- 255 teachers attended those assemblies
- 54 teachers or teaching assistants attended gardening sessions, which developed their skills and confidence to lead their own sessions

### Equity and diversity

95% of teachers reported that Young Marketeers was inclusive for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. 5% were 'unsure.'

95% teachers reported that Young Marketeers was inclusive for students with Special Educational Needs. 5% were 'unsure.'

87% of teachers reported that Young Marketeers was inclusive for students on pupil premium. 13% were unsure.

### What does the programme entail?

The programme provides a hands-on opportunity for children from primary schools to grow fruit and vegetables from seed to sell at their local market. Young Marketeers is also a platform for School Food Matters to promote food education to schools and communities to support children to live happy and healthy lives.



In the spring term, the programme was launched in schools with an assembly from our local Project Officers. Next, each school hosted a Spring Gardening session where children learned the art of growing veg from seed from local horticulturalists. For many children, this is the first time that they have connected seeds and growing with the food that they eat every day.

*"I like gardening more now. It's very interesting and calming to do gardening."* Child, Gloucestershire

From April to June, our horticulturalists revisited each school at least once to share further tips on how to ensure a bumper crop. This ongoing support helps both teachers and children to learn many new gardening skills. As most of these children do not have their own garden at home, Young Marketeers gives all of them a chance to watch their plants grow and develop. Lack of rain, or attacks from pests are all part of the real-life learning experience, replicating the challenges facing farmers in the countryside. Our gardeners are there to support every step of the way.





*"It's been amazing, it exceeded all expectations. I was a bit nervous on growing food as I'm learning myself. We have learned so much through the project. The children have gained confidence, they've got a thirst for growing their own produce and by creating the menus they have realised what they can do with what they've grown. They've learned so many skills."* Teacher in Leicester



In June, the children trained to be a market traders for the day, learning how to display their produce, make signage and talk to customers. Market traders shared their secrets on how to create a winning market stall. In July the children returned to their local markets laden with their fresh produce to sell alongside traders. Their stalls created a lot of interest from local people doing their shopping, and the response was very positive. Doug, a regular customer to the Birmingham outdoor market in the Bullring said, *"I want to know whose idea this is! It's inspired. The kids are obviously having a great time and it is really enlivening the market and everyone is smiling. Thanks so much."*

The children raised £2,800 for local food charities. The opportunity to help others is quite profound for children who have often never had that sense of agency before.

Between the 43 schools, a very broad range of produce was sold:

- Vegetables including chillis, beans, golden chard, beetroot, radishes, lettuce, cucumber, courgettes, potatoes and fennel
- Herbs including marjoram, thyme, Moroccan mint and rosemary
- Fruit such as tomatoes, raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb and gooseberries
- A range of other items including seed bombs, raspberry jam and spider plants



### **Additional opportunities**

As with many of the best projects, additional opportunities presented themselves as the programme got going, providing more chances for children to learn useful skills.

- We were also delighted to include two additional schools with well-established food growing who were keen to connect with other schools. The Coop Academy Brownhill in Leeds and Hillstone Primary School in Birmingham both attended our Market Days. We delivered Market Trader Training sessions at each school but none of the other sessions. Their experiences and presence enriched the Market Day, and showed other schools how food growing can become part of a school's culture.
- In Gloucestershire, proceeds from the Market Day go to the Long Table, an organisation that provides community meals for vulnerable people. The children visited the Long Table operation, and saw their cooking and gardening, learning valuable lessons about community support and helping others.
- In Liverpool, our Project Officer is also the Programme Lead for Nutrition and Health at Edge Hill University. Five of her students volunteered for Young Marketeers this year and lots of the schools benefitted from their assistance in gardening sessions, and from nutritional talks that they delivered. Two students who took part in Young Marketeers in previous years now have employment in school catering companies, so we are delighted that they have taken their knowledge of food education enterprise programmes to their next role.
- In Leicester, Braunstone Community Primary School were keen to enrol on the programme, but felt that they needed additional support with their gardening. Lisa, our Project Officer, put them in touch with an organisation called Good Gym. The school was partnered with a wonderful volunteer, who came regularly to help with the school garden. De Montfort University had previously donated a polytunnel to this school, which lay unused until the Young Marketeers gardener came along to show the school how to use it. De Montfort University also delivered assemblies and parent cooking sessions at the school.



- Faiths4Change is a community gardening organisation in Liverpool which is commissioned by St Michael's Catholic Primary School to teach gardening to the children. Our Young Marketeers gardener is now collaborating with them to get the most out of their school garden. In addition, School Food Matters is sharing resources and expertise on delivering simple cooking and food preparation sessions with Faiths4Change.



#### **Promoting social cohesion through building a network of local partners**

At School Food Matters, we strengthen and amplify our work by partnering with local organisations. In Gloucestershire, we were grateful for ongoing support from Bisley Community Composting, Melcourt Industries, Close Farm Organics and Down to Earth Stroud who have all donated useful gardening or market equipment. In Bedford, Food etc delivered a series of after school cooking sessions to vulnerable families in each Young Marketeers school. In Liverpool, we partnered with Liverpool ONE, and in Leeds our collaboration with Meanwood Valley Urban Farm continues. By connecting similar initiatives, we increase the power of the learning for both adults and children.



#### **What difference has the programme made to children?**

We gather evaluation data from both teachers and children during our project, so that we can track the impact of Young Marketeers.

### **(1) New skills and a greater interest in where food comes from**

Feedback from the children taking part tells us that 82% learnt a new gardening skill and 65% learnt something new about where food comes from. On Market Day, we asked the children what they had learned earlier in the programme:

*"You need it (food) to live, grow, be healthy."*

*"I learned how to identify vegetables and the different names of vegetables."*

*"You shouldn't waste vegetables because people work hard to make it."*

*"The seeds make the roots, roots take in the nutrients, the plant grows out and gets higher."*

In addition to learning practical gardening skills, children develop a love for horticulture. 78% of children said they were more interested in gardening at the end of the programme, with 77% saying they were more interested in growing their own fruit and veg.

*"Growing food is so much fun. I love planting, growing and pulling up the vegetables for market day."*

*"I think this has been a great experience as we have been taken out of our comfort zone. We did planting and it was exciting because we were learning different things,"* Teacher

### **(2) Building confidence and learning new life skills**

The act of selling what they'd made was beneficial to children in terms of their confidence and in developing life skills:

- 82% said they'd learnt something about working as a team
- 85% said they'd learnt more about speaking to the public
- 88% of teachers thought the programme had increased children's confidence
- 86% thought the children had increased pride and enterprise skills

*"It went brilliantly. The children's behaviour and confidence were really highlighted, and with their marketing skills and great manners, the students did a really good job."* Teacher in Liverpool

*"We loved the market stall experience. The children used a range of skills using maths to calculate change etc. Teamwork, customer service skills, and more."* Teacher

*"I loved everything that we did and I loved selling our vegetables in town."*

Children gained other useful enterprise skills. More than half learned about looking after money, and almost three quarters (70%) learned how to be a better salesperson. Interaction with other traders and being part of their profession for the day is so valuable for these children. One child from Ladypool Primary School in Birmingham watched the Lord Mayor, Ken Wood, who was chatting to each of the schools. Then she swiftly stepped forward, holding a pretty vase of wild flowers and said to him, "Would you like to buy these flowers for your wife?" He couldn't say no!





### **(3) Improved well-being and engagement with school**

Children told us that taking part improved their wellbeing and experience of school. 97% of students said that taking part in gardening and cooking made them feel calm and relaxed, and 57% said taking part made them happier at school.

Our Development Manager, Dela Foster, joined a spring gardening session at Cauldwell Primary School in Bedford. “The lead teacher chose her Young Carers group to take part in Young Marketeers (all the children had caring duties at home). We sat down next to the flower beds and started weeding, and before I could ask a question, the girl next to me started talking about all the health challenges facing her mother, father and siblings. She then sighed and said ‘I love gardening. It makes me calm and happy.’ The gardening group gave her a chance to share the challenges she faced and relax for a few minutes. Another girl was delighted that we harvested some lettuces, and she said ‘This is great! I can use it in the supper tonight.’ I was humbled by the complexity and challenges they were dealing with whilst still at primary school.” Gardening in groups is particularly beneficial for well-being.

YM is an excellent way for schools to reconnect with hard-to-reach parents. Persistent absence is now a widespread problem in schools, contributing to some families becoming more isolated. Through the medium of food, YM brings a joyful opportunity for schools and parents to meet, driving a more positive attitude to school. It’s a chance for children who don’t thrive in the classroom to be praised and congratulated by both parents and teachers.



*"It's been great to give the children opportunities to grow vegetables. Most of them don't have gardens at home and so don't have the opportunity to come to the market. This gives them a purpose. Some children don't go to any other club other than Gardening Club and parents tell me that it's the only club they'll go to. A lot of them will not have been to the market before. They've enjoyed talking to different people and 'shouting'." Teacher, Leicester*

*"You've got everything here. It's food, it's dealing with cash, learning where food comes from, selling. It's something I'm trying to push with my colleagues in Children's Services. This is what we need."*  
Speaker Councillor John Wheeler in Bedford on Market Day

### **What difference has the project made to schools?**

Young Marketeers builds skills, capacity and confidence within the schools taking part so that many cohorts of children can benefit. 90% of teachers said that the project had given them a better understanding of how to make the most out of their growing spaces. 70% of teachers said they felt more confident to teach growing. 74% reported that there is greater staff involvement in growing at their school because of Young Marketeers. New Bewerley Primary School in Leeds had not grown any food at their school before, so they created a garden. The programme was so popular that they have now set up a regular gardening club in the school. Similarly, Richmond Hill Primary school were new to gardening, so they dug up some of the turf in their field to create beds. They made over £100 on Market Day and are now busy preparing a new area for winter vegetables.

The buzz of the Market Day and the excitement of seeing vegetables growing in the playground all help to engage both staff and children and get more people involved. This is reinforced by the media coverage of the Market Days. Young Marketeers was featured in a number of websites and publications across the country (see Appendix 2).

Market Day is a lovely moment when schools meet each other and can share tips, compare notes and inspire each other.



*"Wonderful seeing different small groups selling together. Great opportunity to build stronger community relationships."* Teacher, Gloucestershire

*"This is amazing. I am loving talking to people and getting them to buy what we have grown. It is the best day ever!"* Child, Liverpool



## Conclusion

As Young Marketeers expands to new cities around England, we see again and again the joy and inspiration that it brings. While we gather feedback from participants every year, we feel that the formula is a winning one. The Place in Bedford is an unusual school. Funded by the Local Authority, it supports children who are home-schooled. They signed up to Young Marketeers and found it inspiring. The General Manager said on Market Day, *"If you offered it again next year, I wouldn't change a thing."* They grew an enormous quantity of produce and are already planning their crops for 2025.

On Leicester Market Day, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress handed out their business cards to every school in order that they could be invited to the Spring Gardening session in 2025. Unfamiliar with gardening themselves, they felt that if primary school children could grow vegetables, then they should learn too!

This project brings the countryside and a slice of the farmer's life to children who mostly study in a classroom. By growing vegetables in primary schools, hundreds of children can watch as their seeds develop into beans, lettuces and tomatoes. They can be involved every step of the way, planting and harvesting for themselves. We ignite children's natural curiosity about where food comes from. In addition, many children are unfamiliar with wildlife and common creatures such as worms and bees, which creates fear. But after observing them and learning how we interact with each animal, fear is replaced with delight.



*“We can make an area for slugs and snails and other slow-moving animals!”* Child in Gloucestershire during a gardening session.

Young Marketeers really is an opportunity for the whole local community to congratulate the children on their diligence, perseverance and teamwork.





## Appendix 1 : Participating Schools

Bedford	Cauldwell School
	King's Oak Primary School
	The Place Programme
	The Priory Primary School
	Bellfield Junior School
Birmingham	Hillstone Primary School
	Ladypool Primary School
	Regents Park Community Primary School
	St Anne's Catholic Primary School
	St Georges CE Primary School
Gloucestershire	St Michaels CE Primary Academy
	Victoria Special School
	Wheelers Lane Primary School
	Archway School - Gloucestershire
	Cashes Green
Leeds	St Rose's Special School
	The Shrubberies School
	Alder Tree Primary
	All Saints Richmond Hill CE Primary School - West Yorkshire
	Broomfield Special Inclusion School
Leicester	Brudenell Primary School
	Coop Academy Brownhill
	Lane End Primary School
	New Bewerley Community School
	St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Liverpool	St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School
	Ash Field Academy
	Braunstone Community Primary School
	Fosse Mead Primary Academy
	Stokes Wood Primary School
Manchester	Lipa Primary School
	New Park Primary School
	Phoenix Primary School
	Roscoe Primary School - Merseyside
	St Anne's Catholic Primary School
	St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
	St Finbar's Catholic Primary School
	St Hugh's Catholic Primary School
	St Michael's Catholic Primary School
	St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School
	The Beacon CE Primary School
	Whitefield Primary School
	Abbott Community Primary School
	Primrose Hill Primary School
	Rodney House Specialist Support School
	St Anne's RC Primary School

## Appendix 2 : Media Coverage for Young Marketeers 2024

### Bedford

[Bedford Independent](#)

[Bedford Today](#)

[BBC Beds, Bucks and Herts](#)

[BBC Three Counties Radio](#)

[Heart Radio, East Region](#)

[ITV Anglia](#)

### Barking

[This is Local London](#)

[Barking and Dagenham Post](#)

[Romford Recorder](#)

[Barking Council](#)

### Liverpool

[The Guide Liverpool](#)

[Explore Liverpool](#)

[BBC Radio Merseyside](#)

[Edge Hill University](#)

### Leicester

[In your Area](#)

[BBC Radio Leicester](#)

### Manchester

[Manchester Evening News](#)

### Stroud

[BBC Radio Gloucestershire](#)

