

Sunderland City Council 'Belly Bugs' Primary School Pilot 2023 Summary



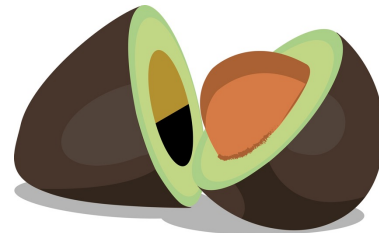
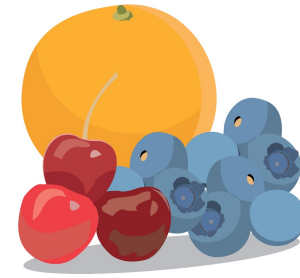
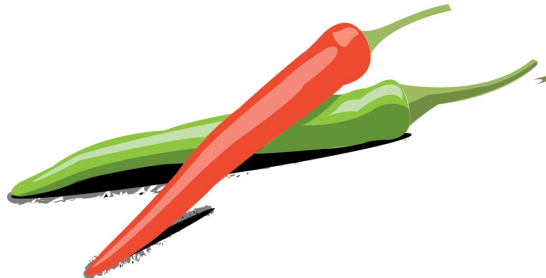
Background and Purpose

In autumn 2023 Sunderland City Council ran a primary-school pilot in conjunction with the Belly Bugs team in which they introduced children to their Belly Bugs (gut microbes) and tracked behaviour change in respect of pupils' attitude to, and consumption of, fruit and vegetables and their understanding of the disadvantages of eating too many sugary and ultra-processed foods.

They also monitored the children's awareness and understanding of their Belly Bugs and the vital role they play in our health and happiness.

The study was part of Sunderland City Council's vision that everyone in Sunderland will have healthy happy lives with no one left behind.

Leading research consultancy, CAJA, evaluated the pilot using behavioural science and data analytics.



Belly Bugs Concept



BASHY BUG



CHEWY BUG



CHOMPY BUG



HAPPY BUG



COOLY BUG



GOODY BUG



FLICKY BUG



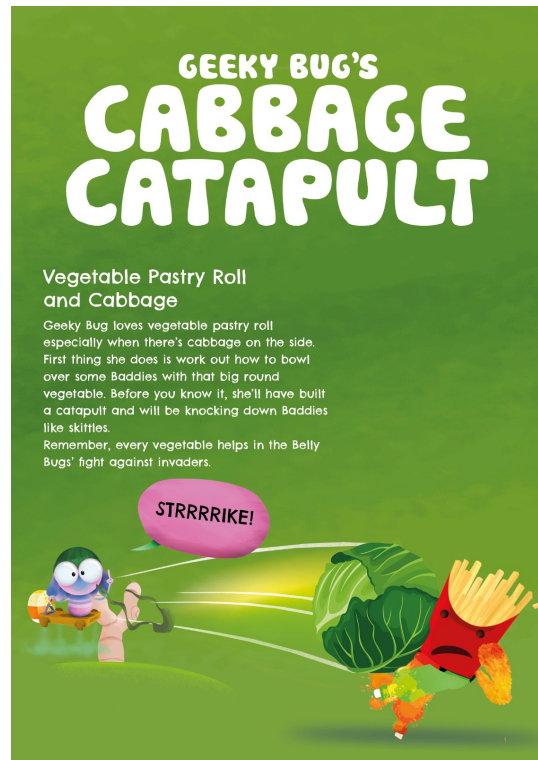
GEEKY BUG

There are 8 Belly Bugs in the gang and they loosely mimic the role of our gut microbes. They live in a magical world called Rumbledom (our gut).

The Belly Bugs use the fruit and vegetables we eat to do their jobs by creating tools, buildings and vehicles. Children observe their Belly Bugs' daily life in Rumbledom as they go on adventures and tackle challenges, keeping us healthy and happy.

Not everything is rosy, however. Rumbledom is increasingly coming under attack from Baddies such as Sugar Monsters and Junk Punks, a result of children eating too much ultra-processed food and drinking too many sugary drinks.

Methodology & Evaluation



The Belly Bug pilot centred around an 8-week course in 7 primary schools in Sunderland. The Belly Bug team provided EYFS, KS1 and KS2 cross-curricular lesson plans covering a range of topics from healthy fibre to sustainability.

They also created daily 'storytelling menu posters' describing why the Belly Bugs liked what was on offer in the canteen and how they would use the fruit and vegetables that the children fed them as raw materials to do their work.

CAJA's evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach consisting of a combination of primary research, including pupil and teacher questionnaires and discussion groups, as well as obtaining food records from Sunderland City Council's school meals service.

Outcomes

A green speech bubble with a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

When I have a snack, I think of my Belly Bugs and if it's healthy for them.

Pupil

A red speech bubble with a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

The kids fully engaged with it...
...it's excellent.

Teacher

A purple speech bubble with a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

They all came in and ordered salad straightaway.

Cook

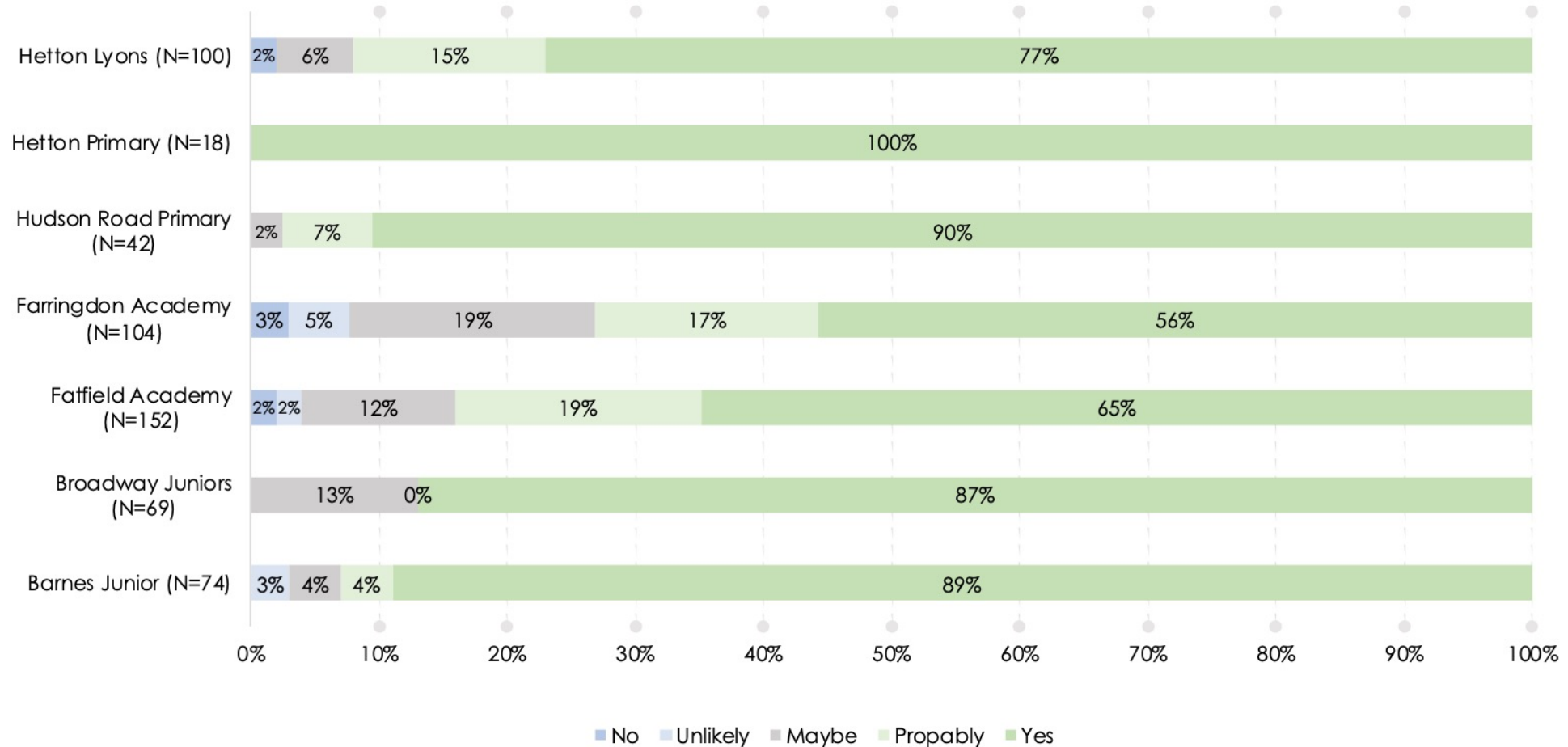
A blue speech bubble with a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

What have you done with my child?
He asked for an apple when he got home!

Parent

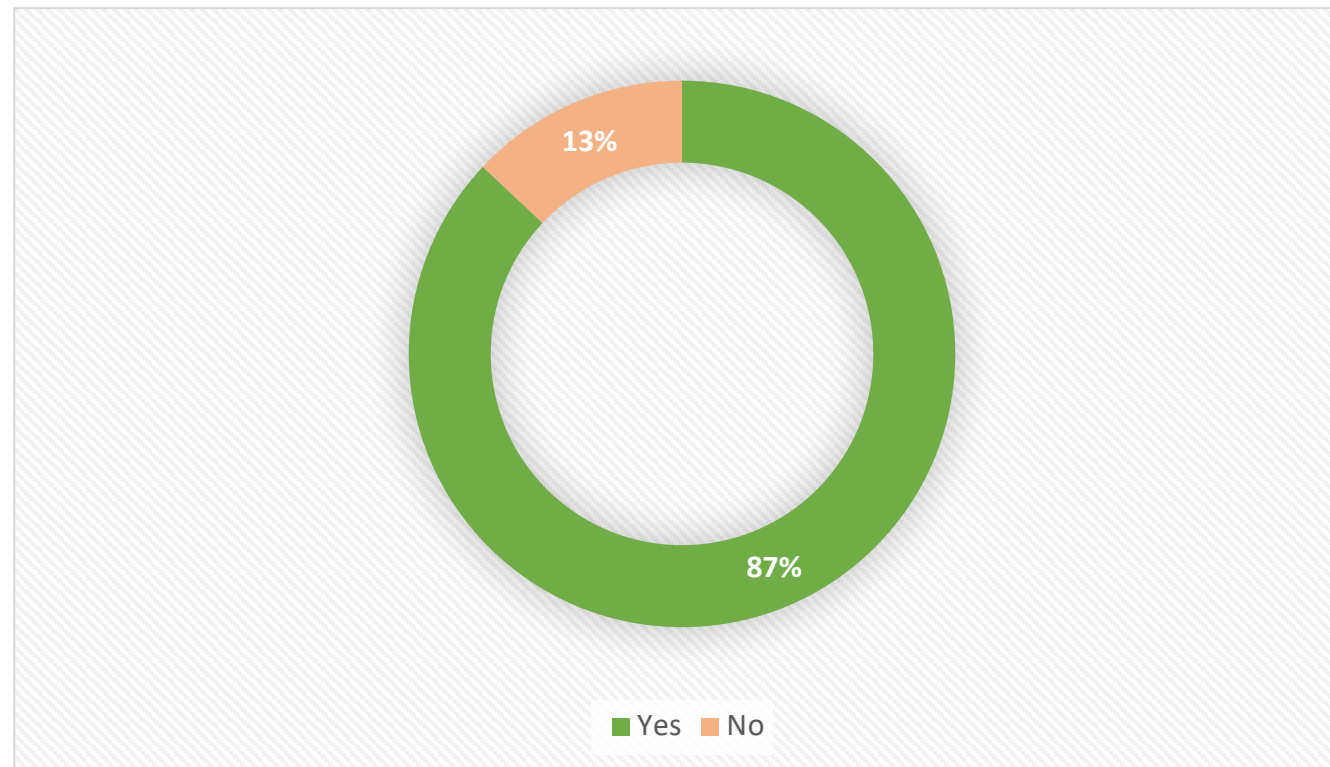
Feeding your Belly Bugs fruit and vegetables

Figure 15: Will you try and eat more fruit and veg to help your Belly Bugs?



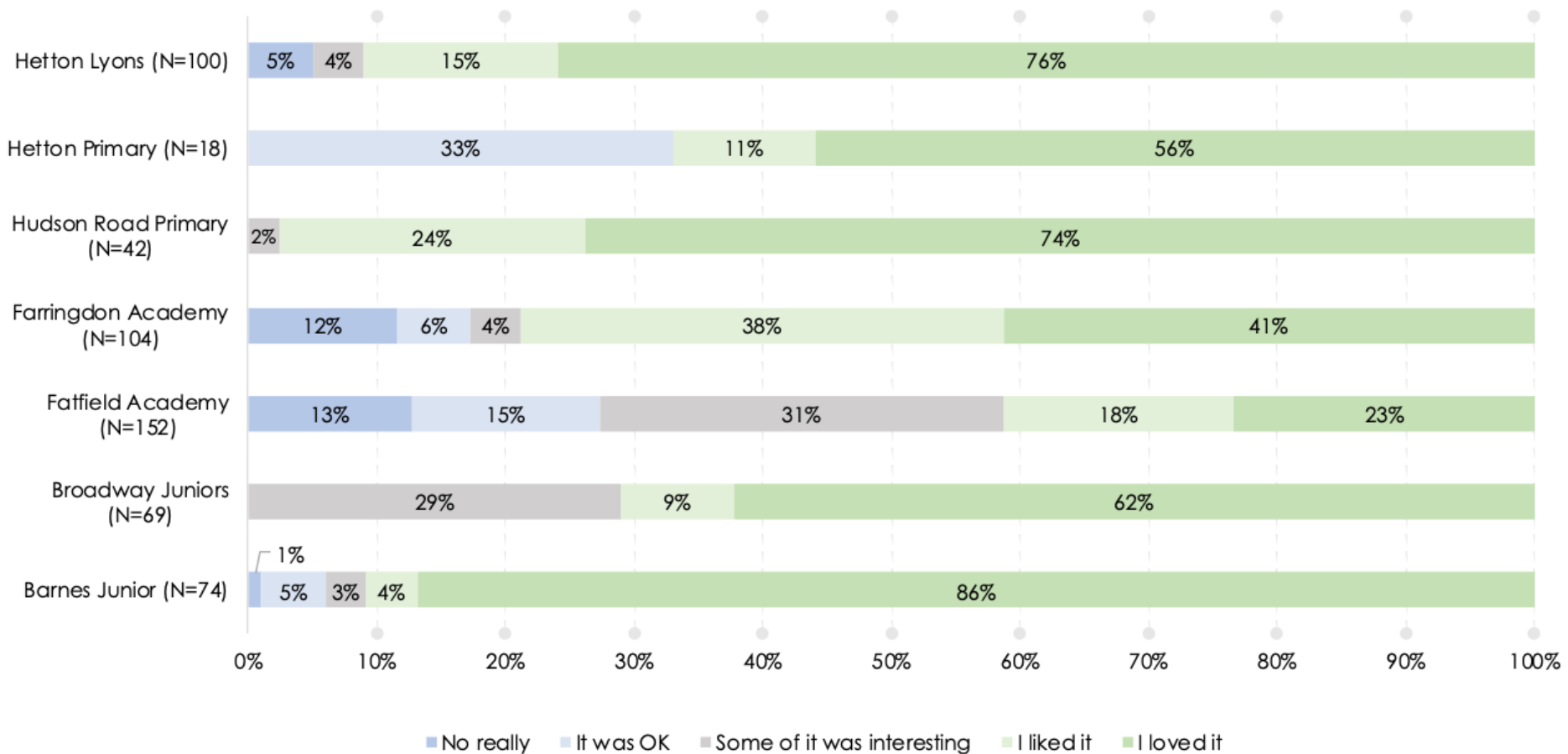
Choosing healthy food

Figure 23: Question 8 - Do you think the children are now more interested in making healthy food choices?
(N=15)



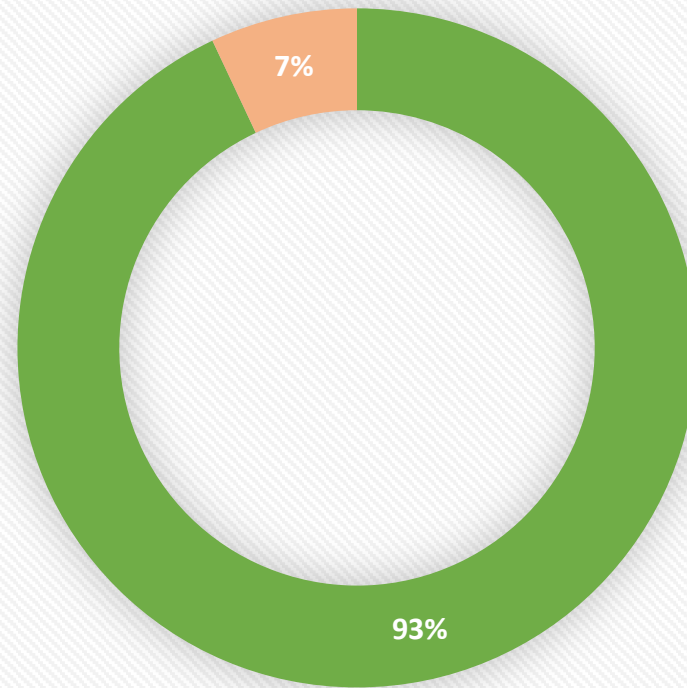
Enjoying learning about your Belly Bugs

Figure 14: Did you enjoy learning about the Belly Bugs?



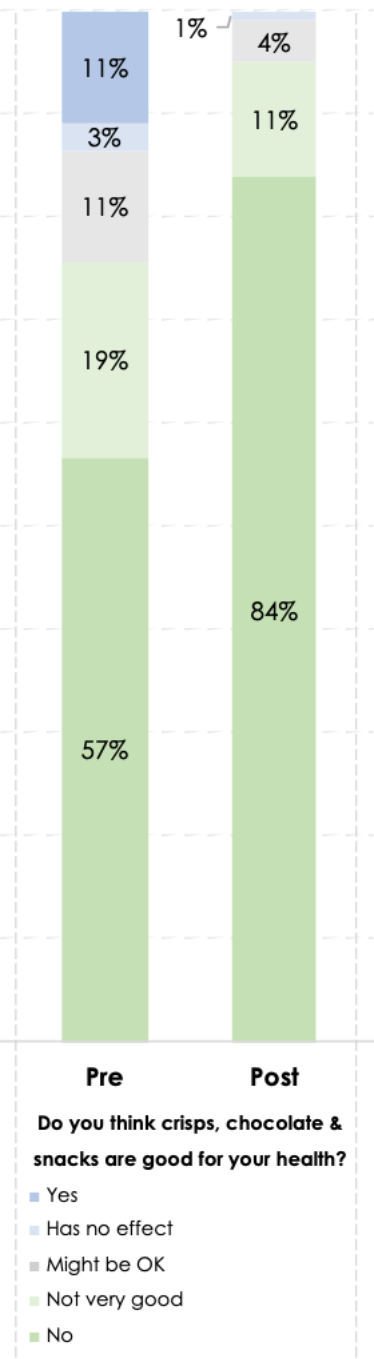
Enjoying the lessons

Figure 20: Question 5 - Did the children enjoy the lessons? (N=12)



■ Yes ■ No

Attitude to snacks like crisps and chocolate.



We've seen its impact definitely outside the classroom.

Lots of enjoyment...
A very positive experience.

It's important to take care of our Belly Bugs because they take care of us.

Now I do a mixed salad in a big pot and they're loving it.

Before I'd put 80 portions of salad out and have 40 left. Now just 5-10 left.

We are making healthy pizzas linked to Belly Bugs... and they've gone home and made healthy pizzas.

The Belly Bugs are so positive ... not judgmental about us and what we eat.

Now they're asking for veg. Before they wouldn't.

The children are eating a much wider range of foods.

We need to give them lots of colourful foods to keep the Rainbowtron working.

I tried broccoli for the first time with my chicken curry.

It's not one-off excitement. They are sustaining it and carrying it on.

Teachers

Pupils

Cooks