

	Schools Forum 20 June 2023
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
Update on London Mayor's Free School Meals pledge for pupils in Key Stage 2 in 2023/24	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To update the Schools Forum on the Mayor's Free School Meals pledge for primary aged children in Key Stage 2 for the academic year 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Schools Forum to note the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2023, the Mayor informed all London authorities that he will provide funding at £440 per child for all children in Key Stage 2 to receive Free School Meals for the academic year 2023/24. The Mayor's ambition was that the funding offers all primary aged children access to a hot meal at least once a day.
- 3.2 In correspondence received from the Mayor's office on 28 April 2023, a total budget of £130 million to provide FSMs to children in KS2 who are not currently eligible was confirmed. In line with government policy and guidance, this

funding is only for state-funded primary schools and with all other funding of free school meals schemes, it will not extend to children in independent schools.

- 3.3 Brent's indicative grant allocation is £5,212,059.00 which is based on an assumed 90% uptake for the number of children who are not eligible for the current Government's FSM grant. The indicative figure is based on October 2022 census and will be finalised once May 2023 school census figures are published in July. Payment will be at a rate of £2.65 per meal. This is above the Government rate of £2.41 because it includes funding for costs associated with delivering FSMs, such as administration and staffing costs in schools.
- 3.4 Payment will be made termly in advance to allow for upfront costs to be covered - 50% of the funding will be paid in July 2023, with a further 20% in December and a further 20% in March 2024. A balance of 10% will be held back for the final payment and will be adjusted based on the census day returns in October 2023 and January 2024. A balancing payment or claw back determined by the difference will be made before the end of the summer term 2024. Also, if take up exceeds 90%, the final grant allocation will be a top-up allocation instead of a clawback.
- 3.5 Payment will be made directly to Local Authorities for their maintained schools and non-maintained schools, with payment to academies and multi-academy trusts made via each Local Authority for MATs in their area. The expectation is that local authorities pass on the exact amount to each MAT based on set allocations.

4. Grant Conditions

- 4.1 As part the scheme, Local Authorities must participate in evaluation and data submission exercises and ongoing reviews of the programme as required by the Mayor's office. Communication to London Chief Executives (5 June 2023) sets out details on the grant and the monitoring process. All participating Local Authorities will be required to register on the GLA OPS system and sign a contract.
- 4.2 As the KS2 UFSM programme progresses, GLA will request regular and comprehensive information from Local Authorities to understand the value of the programme.
- 4.3 Schools and local authorities are expected to promote the Mayor's investment in school meals through branding and communication which will be provided by the GLA. Participating boroughs will be required to support the distribution of communication from the Mayor of London to all affected families, parents or carers on a termly basis. The letter addressed to the Chief Executive (5 June) is the first of these communications and is required to be sent out this term.
- 4.4 The funding should be used for schemes that:

- continue to maximise registration by eligible families for pupil premium, which may otherwise be impacted by the move to a universal approach through the Mayor's Emergency Free School Meals funding
- pay London Living Wage (LLW) to catering staff and include LLW in any future tenders
- meet school food standards and ensure school food is culturally appropriate. Brent recognises, however, that the available funding may not meet the full cost of providing culturally appropriate food, such as Kosher meals.
- take a whole school approach to healthy eating, participation in Healthy Schools London and adoption of water only policies.
- meet sustainable catering guidelines and support environmental aims.

5. Grant Implementation

- 5.1 The Mayor's office established a Partnership Advisory Group consisting of senior London borough officers to provide guidance and expert input into the development and implementation of the programme. The Partnership Advisory Group were supported by four task and finish groups that focus on the approach to delivery, including grant management, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability, and policy implementation.
- 5.2 Initial discussions with Brent school leaders raised several practical concerns about providing hot meals to all Key Stage 2 children, with views gathered via a meeting with headteachers and a survey issued to headteachers of all primary schools (community schools, voluntary aided and academies). While some schools responded that it would be relatively easy for them to provide additional school meals, others raised concerns about the implications for staffing and kitchen infrastructure, the impact on Pupil Premium Grant applications in Key Stage 2 and impact on the school timetable, as previously reported to PCG. These were discussed at the Partnership Advisory Groups' most recent briefing on 24 April 2023.
- 5.3 A key shift in the GLA strategy in response to implementation concerns is that schools can choose to provide a cold lunch service where it is not feasible to provide a hot meal. Furthermore, where LA and/or school leaders identify that the only way that they can implement the programme is by providing school meal vouchers, they will be able to seek the agreement of the Mayor's office. This will be agreed on a case-by-case basis where there are exceptional circumstances.
- 5.4 The Mayor's office is rolling out a series of workshops to support school leaders and address practical concerns by sharing good practice models. At the first two sessions, officers from London Boroughs that already provide KS2 UFSM shared case studies of best practice. These workshops have been well attended by school leaders across London and headteachers can also now access resources from the GLA website to help their planning.

- 5.5 The Brent FSM Project Group chaired by the Director of Education, Partnerships and Strategy, is meeting regularly to plan and implement Brent's approach in line with GLA guidance as it is issued. Key completed activity includes the development of timeline to ensure the dissemination of funds and a communication strategy. Brent schools were notified of the details of the programme in May. Schools will be provided with indicative allocations this month, which will be confirmed when the Mayor of London's office confirm details of the autumn grant funding in July (based on June census) and once confirmed, the local authority will allocate the funds accordingly.
- 5.6 The local authority will work with schools on a campaign to encourage Key Stage 2 parents during 2023/24 to formally sign-up to FSMs to ensure that they can access pupil premium funding. The first wave of communication on this will be rolled out in June 2023. The local authority has also placed an advertisement in the local resident's magazine Your Brent and will continue to provide further information about the programme for local residents on a termly basis.

Table 1: Indicative timeline for Mayor of London's Universal Free School Meals Programme

Period	Action
April 2023	Indicative funding allocation shared with individual boroughs w/c 24 April.
May 2023	Inform schools of grant conditions and principles and Good Practice webinars. Schools to contact parents.
June 2023	Inform schools of indicative grant allocations Provide publicity for all schools to promote PPG applications Continue to collate further FAQs and provide response
July 2023	LA receives first tranche of funding to pass to schools. Schools agree contracts / plans to extend UFSM (KS2) 2023-24
1 September 2023	Brent schools roll out KS2 UFSM programme
September onwards	Monitoring and feedback to Mayor's office.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Funding received by the local authority will be passed on to schools once the amounts are confirmed in July. The decision to fund the Mayor of London's UFSM programme will require additional administrative tasks to be undertaken by the local authority of which no additional funding has been provided. It is currently estimated that the cost of undertaking the task could be in the region of £30,000. The Local Authority is seeking clarity from the Mayor's office on whether this can be funded from the grant allocation.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this.

8. Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

8.1 The Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools and other Members of Cabinet, have been kept abreast of the programme. Headteachers have also been updated and consulted on the programme and encouraged to let officers know of any concerns they may have.

9 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

9.1 Not applicable.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People