

 Brent	<p style="text-align: center;">Schools Forum – 23RD October 2013</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Children & Families</p>
<p>For Action</p>	
<p>De-delegation – Free School Meals Eligibility</p>	

1.0 Background

1.1 The Free School Meals Eligibility budget and facilities is currently managed centrally and under the new National Funding Formula is required to be delegated to schools. This was omitted in error from the previous meeting.

2.0 Budgets and methods for allocation.

2.1 The funding is used for the administration of determining eligibility for FSM centrally rather than schools doing the checks themselves. This covers staffing costs, application forms, web pages, on line applications, liaising with DFE and DWP, updating information, advising schools of eligible pupils/families. FSM is based on those attending school in Brent – not borough of residence.

2.2 To be eligible for FSM parents must be in receipt of certain benefits which are;

- Income Support (IS) or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (IBJSA)
- An income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190.00 (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) (TC 602 Final Award Notice - 2012/2013)
- For those who receive Working Tax Credit (other than a four week run on period) their child is not eligible for a free school meal.
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit Children who receive IS or IBJSA in their own right

- 2.3 Total number of eligible families whose children attend Brent schools in receipt of Free School Meals is 5,675 for 2013 academic year. Total number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals in Brent schools is 10,511.
- 2.4 The eligibility checks are currently done through the Department for Work and Pensions portal and are done singly or in batches by the children's team in customer Services. The update of system parameters such as the income figure that impacts on eligibility criteria are managed by the pupil and parents team.
- 2.5 Improvements have been made to the service during 2013 with the introduction of an online application for free school meals. This increases the speed of application processing by allowing applications to be downloaded and matched using the DWP portal the next day. This also enables schools to view and download reports via SAM detailing which of their pupils are entitled to free school meals at that point in time. Parents can also apply with a paper application which will take longer to process.
- 2.6 We have streamlined the process whereby we do not ask parents to reapply every year, but we do carry out at least annual checks on continued eligibility. In some cases the DWP portal may indicate that a parent is not entitled to free school meals but they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. In those cases we will require the parent to provide us with proof of the benefit they are receiving which can then be used to establish entitlement.
- 2.7 The budget is £27,750, which if de-delegated based on pupil numbers would equate to approximately £1.06 per pupil. This maintains the same pupil unit value as in 2013/14.

3.0 Recommendations and Consultation points

- 3.1 The Schools Forum is requested to:
- (a) Agree to de-delegate the FSM Eligibility budget of £27,750 for 2014/15.

Contact Officers

Paula Buckley
Head of Service (Revenues and Customer Service)

Sara Williams
Interim Director of Children and Families