



**Schools Forum
10 December 2014**

**Report from the Strategic Director of
Children and Young People**

For decision

De-delegation – Free School Meals Eligibility 2015/16

1.0 Background

1.1 The budget for assessing eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) is currently managed centrally and under the new National Funding Formula is required to be delegated to schools.

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. Determining FSM eligibility 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 –for the previous financial year)
- 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 Parents are not asked 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.

- 2.4 Eligibility checks are made through the Department for Work and Pensions portal and are done singly or in batches by the Admissions Team in Pupil and Parent Services. The update of system parameters such as the income figure that impacts on eligibility criteria are managed by Pupil and Parent Services.
- 2.5 Eligibility for Free School Meals through the receipt of benefits set out in 2.2 determines entitlement for the pupil premium.
- 2.6 The introduction of universal free meals for KS1 pupils from September 2014 raised concerns that parents who would be eligible for pupil premium, which is identified through eligibility for free school meals, may not make an application for a free meal. This would mean that schools would not receive the pupil premium that children were entitled to.
- 2.7 In Summer 2014 targeted publicity with redesigned application forms and posters were produced to encourage parents of KS1 pupils in particular, and other parents whose children may be eligible for a meal but who do not apply, to apply for free meals, to ensure the maximum pupil premium was available for schools.
- 2.8 At the time of the May 2014 census the total number of children attending Brent schools in receipt of Free School Meals was 8,890 or 19 per cent of the total school cohort of 46,628.
- 2.9 The budget is £27,750, which if de-delegated based on pupil numbers would equate to approximately £3.12 per eligible pupil.

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 2015/16.

Contact Officers

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