

MAYOR OF LONDON

Date: 10 July 2023

Dear Headteacher,

Thank you for all your feedback following my previous letter about the Mayor's expansion of Universal Free School Meals in May. Many of you have been in touch to share how excited your school community is about being able to offer free lunches to all your pupils, and how your staff and kitchens are preparing for the September roll out. I'll be visiting some schools before the end of this term to see first-hand the incredible efforts you are all going to.

A number of schools have also been in contact to share some of the challenges they are facing in getting ready for next term and the increase in the number of meals they will need to provide. Your local authority should be in contact with details about how the Mayor's Universal Free School Meals Programme will work in your area. We recognise the hard work that goes into working out solutions to some very real practical challenges and we will continue to share learning from boroughs who have already been through this process. We've held a series of webinars, and as detailed below, the recordings of these will be hosted on our website.

To further support you, and as mentioned in my last letter, our schools hub is live and now updated with a wide range of resources and tools for you to use. I hope these will help support your school to expand the delivery of free school meals to all your pupils. The schools hub can be found here: [<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-mayor-does/priorities-london/emergency-universal-free-school-meal-provision/guidance-and-support-schools>].

The resources include:

- Templates for communicating with families about the Mayor's expansion of Universal Free School Meals, such as newsletters, emails, text messages, presentations, FAQ sheets and website text.
- Advertising tools such as posters, postcards and sample social media content.
- Guidance to support you to encourage parents to continue to register for the Government's Free School Meals scheme.
- Slides and recordings of our good practice webinars which showcase best practice examples and practical solutions for how to deliver the additional meals.

For ease of access, we have also uploaded all of these resources into an online drive which has been shared directly with you in the accompanying email.

I want to make sure we are supporting schools as much as possible and we will continue to add to our bank of resources and guidance on the hub. If there are any specific resources that would be helpful for your school please get in contact with us at freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk.

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Letter to families

In order to help ensure that families know about this offer and have all the information they may need, the Mayor has written a letter to go to all families with children in key stage 2 in your school. Please find that letter attached. I would be very grateful if you would support the distribution of this letter to your families.

Programme Update

We have been working closely with London boroughs and funding will be issued at the borough level, and it is the responsibility of each borough to administer the funding to Local Education Authority maintained schools (including state funded Special education and alternative provision) and non-Local Education Authorities maintained schools (i.e. payment to Academy Trusts would be made by each Local Education Authority for Multi Academy Trusts in their area).

Grant payments for the delivery of scheme will be made to boroughs, for their maintained schools and non-maintained schools. I will be in contact with you next week with some more details on the grant once final grant conditions and allocations have been shared with boroughs. Your borough should also be in contact with you about how the payments to schools will work in your area.

I would also like to highlight that there will be no clawback conditions applied against low uptake of the scheme attached to the grant which boroughs will receive under the Universal Free School Meals programme. Boroughs will be funded to deliver the scheme with a grant based on a 90% take up rate, in line with current take up rates of universal infant free school meals in London. However, if a borough can evidence higher take up rates, they will receive further funding. Please contact your borough to understand how this will work for your school.

Once again, I would like to thank you for commitment to the extremely important work you do supporting your pupils and school community on a daily basis. I hope the resources we have created help in your preparations for the roll out of the programme in September.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please do contact the team at freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully,



Joanne McCartney AM
Deputy Mayor for Children and Families