

MAYOR OF LONDON

Date: 25 May 2023

London Head Teachers

Subject: Mayor of London Universal Free School Meal funding

Dear Headteacher,

I wanted to start by thanking you for the important work that you do supporting our children and young people on a daily basis, often in very challenging circumstances. I know that you approach it with dedication, passion, resilience, and compassion.

I am writing to you today to update you on the Mayor's Universal Free School Meals Programme, for children (in school years 3-6) in the capital who currently do not receive free school meals – to be rolled out from September 2023. You may have seen the announcement in the press in February, and since then we hope your borough has been able to share some further details of how we are anticipating that the scheme will be delivered.

You will recognise more than most, that during the current cost of living crisis, many of the families you work with are in urgent need of support. The Mayor wants to do what he can to help. The funding provided by the Mayor to expand free meals in London's primary schools over the next academic year (starting in September) will help ensure that more children are getting what they need to thrive.

We hope this will complement the vital work you already do in your school to support vulnerable children and their families. Some of the key principles of the scheme guidance are outlined below and you can find further updates on our website [\[www.london.gov.uk/free-school-meal\]](http://www.london.gov.uk/free-school-meal). We have been working with officers in your borough on the mechanics of the scheme, and they should be in touch with more detailed information about how it will work.

We anticipate that payment will be made to boroughs to pass onto schools. We will be funding the price per meal at £2.65. This will be a single standardised offer across all boroughs. This is above the Government's recommended rate of £2.41.

If your borough already funds universal free school meals (UFSM) to their primary pupils, they will get the same allocation of funding as those boroughs who do not currently provide the function and those boroughs will be required to use the GLA's funding for the purpose of continuing to provide UFSM. Your borough will be in touch if there are any changes to how the scheme will work for you.

We recognise that there are concerns about exactly how implementation will work and the effect this scheme will have on matters such as pupil premium funding. To help mitigate against this and to support boroughs and schools in the delivery of the programme, we have developed the following resources:

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Schools Hub

This provides an overview of the scheme and will be updated with resources for schools. This includes templates, communications packs for communicating with families and carers, FAQ sheets for staff families and carers, copy for websites, social media assets, best practice around free school meal registrations and pupil premium, and more. Please find the link here: www.london.gov.uk/free-school-meals
We would love to hear from you if you are a school that has any useful tools or resources which you think may be useful to other schools delivering this scheme, for example you are already delivering USFM, please contact freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk to add your resources to our hub.

Good Practice Webinars

We will be facilitating shared learning webinars from schools and boroughs who have already overcome a range of challenges that you may be thinking through. If you are interested in attending the webinars, please email freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk to register. Recordings of these sessions will also be uploaded to our Schools Hub after they take place.

To ensure we can offer as much help as possible to you and your school we will be sending out a survey to schools following this letter to help us to understand what resources or materials would help you in the roll out of this scheme.

I would like to thank you again for your passion and dedication to serving London's children. I know that teachers, school leaders, trust leaders and school staff have tremendously important, and often highly challenging roles to fulfil. We appreciate that in preparing for September and the expansion, you will be working through a number of local challenges, but I hope you join us in recognising the impact this could have on struggling families across London. I hope the resources we have outlined above will help you in your preparations.

If you have any queries in the meantime, please do send them to freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk and we will get back to you.

Yours faithfully,



Joanne McCartney AM
Deputy Mayor for Children and Families