

Universal Free School Meals

Head Teachers' Termly
15th June 2023



Funding for Universal Free School Meals

- In February 2023 the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan announced that he would provide £130 million emergency, one-off funding to ensure all primary school children can receive free school meals for the academic year beginning in September 2023.
- Communication from the GLA to the Local Authority on updates and next steps received at the end of April 2023.
- GLA will be making a case for funding.



Price Per Meal

- The funding provided will be at £2.65 per meal.
- This will be a single standardised offer across all boroughs.
- This funding is for food and the administration of the food (e.g. staffing costs).
- This is above the current rate of £2.41.
- Eligible pupils are those in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 not currently recorded as entitled to a free school meal in the school census.



Grant Funding Calculation

- The Greater London Authority (GLA) has replicated the established Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) approach to calculate grant amounts for delivery of Free School Meals for state primary school pupils. So, for academic year 2023-24, the GLA will fund on an average of the primary pupils taken on census days in **October 2022, January 2023 and May 2023**. Please note that this is based on the number of meals taken and that each school has reported on their census.
- The calculation then takes into account the number of children who are **eligible for the government's free school meals** and therefore funded outside the Mayor's scheme. This means the indicative allocation is based on the number of children who are not eligible for the Government's free school meals offer.
- An **assumption of 90% uptake** has then been applied to calculate the final indicative allocation. However, boroughs will be **paid for the number of meals taken up** using the grant payment process set out in the grant conditions. Payment would be made termly in advance. To **allow for upfront costs** it is proposed that half of the funding would be paid in July 2023, with a further 20% in December 2023 and a further 20% in April 2024. A balance of 10% would be held back for the final payment.



Grant Process

- Boroughs will be **paid for the number of meals taken up** using the grant payment process set out in the grant conditions and **if a borough return shows that they have had above 90% take up, the final grant allocation will ensure this is covered through a top-up allocation.**
- Based on the **census day returns** in October 2023 and January 2024 a **balancing payment or claw back would be made** before the end of the summer term 2024. Any additional process for clawback or top up will **be based on actual differences in uptake of free school meals**, except where a Local Education Authority (LEA) chooses not to implement the scheme after having received the advances.
- The GLA will be **asking boroughs to report on the number of free school meals taken up** (at a borough level) (this will require information from schools).
- The **allocations remain indicative until the latest census data is available** – aim to send all boroughs their final allocation by early July and this will remain subject to final Mayoral confirmation.



Grant Conditions

- The grant must be spent on provision of school lunch
- Schools and their catering providers must participate in evaluations or reviews of the Mayor's Emergency Free School Meals provision, as needed.
- The Mayor's investment in providing the emergency, one-off funding to ensure all primary school children can receive free school meals for the academic year beginning in September 2023 must be promoted in any communications sent out by schools.



Impact on pupils that qualify for pupil premium

- The GLA will be running a good practice session on this topic for schools to attend as well as sharing resources for organisations to use on their resource hub. This aims to share best practice examples from boroughs already delivering USFM and practical solutions to pupil premium. Registration will open soon for this session, and we will share with schools when it does.
- For any additional guidance and support please contact your education advisor or school finance link.



Considerations – Advice from GLA

- Reorganise kitchen to create more preparation space
- Convert office space into storage space
- Consider transporting hot food from larger schools to meet increased demand
- Review dining space, reorganise/clear to allow for more seating
- Extend lunch period (11.45 – 13:15)
- Review staff levels based on plate rate per hour
- Recruit new staff on a 1 year fixed term contracts only
- Ask existing catering staff if they wish to temporarily extend their hours
- School to write to parents informing them of the UFSM offer & encouraging pupils to take it up (highlight the savings / benefits it represents)
- Encourage parents to continue to register for Eligible FSM

For recommendations please also refer to the Good Practice Webinar slides available on LEAP [Universal Free School Meals - Leap \(hillington.gov.uk\)](http://hillington.gov.uk)



Questions / Concerns

- Will there be any capital investment to support schools rolling out the programme?

No capital investment will be available

- Can LA's use any of the funding for equipment and or staffing?

This funding is for food and the administration of the food (e.g. staffing costs)

- If infrastructure barriers cannot be overcome, can schools use vouchers as opposed to hot meals?

Some boroughs have overcome challenges by offering cold food. No vouchers will be offered as an alternative. If cold meals are offered the GLA should be notified.



Support

- To support Hillingdon Schools, the Council will be running some information sessions for schools on this scheme to assist with any additional queries/ concerns:
 - Friday 16th June 14:00 – 15:00 [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Friday 23rd June 10:00 – 11:00 [Click here to join the meeting](#)
 - Wednesday 28th June 10:00 – 11:00 [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Each school in the Borough will be contacted before the end of term to check and ensure that arrangements are in place for the universal free school meals offer from 1 September. This will include finding solutions, working with schools, where a practical operational issues presents.
- If a school has any concerns they can contact education@hillington.gov.uk. The team will be happy to support schools in trying to resolve any queries.
- The GLA online hubs for boroughs and schools are being launched on their website. These can be found via the UFSM homepage [here](#). These hubs provide an overview of the scheme and will be updated with resources for schools. These include templates, communications packs for communicating with families, FAQ sheets for staff and families, copy for websites, social media assets, and best practice around free school meal registrations and pupil premium.
- Webinars hosted by the GLA, on topics such as **free school meal registration and pupil premium** are being recorded and will be uploaded on their website.

