

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to the Leeds Schools Forum

Date: 14 June 2018

Subject: Free school meal eligibility changes

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1 Background information

- 1.1 Since 2013, as a temporary measure, all families receiving Universal Credit have been entitled to free school meals, the early years pupil premium and free early education entitlement for two-year olds, pending the introduction of new eligibility criteria.
- 1.2 In November 2017, the DfE started a consultation on new eligibility criteria. At the February 2018 Schools Forum meeting a query was raised by a member of Schools Forum in relation to the proposals. The DfE had predicted that their proposals would mean around 50,000 more children would receive free school meals by 2022, however it was not clear whether pupil premium rates would stay the same or whether rates would reduce due to increased demand for funding. The member of Schools Forum had already written to the Minister of State for Children and Families to raise this query, and a request was made for the Schools Forum Chair to also send a letter in relation to this.

2 Main issues

- 2.1.1 Since the query was raised at Schools Forum, the DfE has published a response to the consultation in March 2018 which provides details of changes to eligibility criteria and funding arrangements. Within this there is no indication of any changes to pupil premium rates, and the published rates for 2018/19 are at the same level as they were for 2017/18.
- 2.1.2 From April 2018, free school meal eligibility will be for children from households with an income of up to £7,400 a year, excluding benefits, which is the equivalent to £18,000 to £24,000 a year including benefits.
- 2.1.3 The DfE has confirmed that protection will be in place for those families who would otherwise have lost eligibility for free school meals because of the change, and those who become eligible during the rollout of Universal Credit. The protections will be in place until the end of the Universal Credit rollout (March 2022), and then until the end of each protected pupil's phase of education if they are still in school when the rollout

of Universal Credit is completed. These protections will mean that no family should lose out because of these changes and they are intended to be straightforward for schools to administer.

- 2.1.4 The consultation response states that the DfE will provide additional funding to schools to recognise the increase in the number of free school meals they will be providing. This will be in the form of an additional school-level meal cost grant for 2018/19 and 2019/20. The allocation will be determined by the difference between a school's free school meals numbers in the October censuses as follows:

Financial year	What will be measured	What schools will receive
2018-19	School-level FSM increase between October 2018 and October 2017 census	Measured increase in number of pupils x £440
2019-20	School-level FSM increase between October 2019 and October 2018 census	Measured increase in number of pupils x £440

- 2.1.5 This grant will not affect a school's allocation through the pupil premium, national funding formulae or any other source of existing funding. The DfE will set out further technical details in due course, including how they will adjust for overall changes in pupil numbers in schools facing significant growth. They will assess whether there is any need to continue this grant beyond 2020 as Universal Credit rollout progresses, in the light of the outcome of the next Spending Review.

- 2.1.6 The full response from the government consultation can be found at the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692644/Government_response_FSM_and_EY_entitlements_under_Universal_Credit.pdf

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Schools Forum is asked to note the DfE changes relating to eligibility for free school meals.