

# Universal Infant Free School Meals

**Committee: Schools Forum**

**Date: March 2014**

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| Author:            | Head of Commissioning – Economy and Attainment  |
| Wards Affected:    | All   |
| Locality Affected: | All   |
| Parishes Affected: | All   |
| Settings Affected: | All Maintained Community and Voluntary Controlled primary and special schools and Voluntary Aided primary schools are specifically affected by this as are Academy primary schools and any secondary school or academy which provides meals to a primary setting. |

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## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 To update the Schools Forum on the allocation of capital and revenue funding to increase capacity for schools to meet the new requirement to offer every reception, year 1 and year 2 child with a free hot school meal from September 2014.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the capital and revenue funding allocations for the new requirement for the provision of a free hot lunch to every reception, year 1 and year 2 child.
- 2.2 To note the proposed methodology to allocate Capital funding to Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools.
- 2.3 To agree to receive a further report at the July 2014 Schools Forum with an update on progress.

## **3. Detail**

- 3.1 On 17th September 2013 the Deputy Prime Minister announced that from September 2014 every child in reception, year 1 and year 2 in a state funded school would receive a free hot lunch.
- 3.2 As reported to Schools Forum in January funding of £600m is being made available nationally of which £450m will be to cover the cost of meals with £150m earmarked for capital set up costs. Swindon has been notified that its capital allocations are £360,965 for community and voluntary controlled schools and £28,226 for voluntary aided schools and it is assumed that Academies will have access to EFA capital for their needs.
- 3.3 In addition to the capital allocations DfE have also announced that the revenue funding has been set at £2.30 per meal. It is expected that this allocation will
- 3.4 need to cover the cost of ingredients, staffing, transportation, utilities and all associated costs needed to provide the free hot lunch. Although the method by

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which DfE will distribute or reimburse LAs remains unclear it is likely that the LA will pay schools on a termly basis for the number of meals served less the cost of meals taken by pupils which were already entitled to FSM on low income grounds for which deprivation funding is already allocated in the local formula.

- 3.5 Take up of the free hot lunch is expected by the DfE to be up to 85% and the starting point for individual schools and therefore their expansion plans will vary considerably. As a result there will be significant logistical challenges for schools in accommodating children into the lunch space and time available. It is acknowledged that not all schools provide their own in house / on site catering and that this could have implications for their contractors/providers.
- 3.6 In response the LA has established a project team to assess the scale of the requirements for capital expenditure and to promote collaborative working (e.g. joint purchasing and maximising use of larger kitchens) between schools. An initial survey has been conducted across all Community and Voluntary Aided schools which highlighted the wide range of schools identifying some that are able to manage the new requirement within their current infrastructure to others with no existing facilities.
- 3.7 One of the perceived benefits of this initiative was to combat child obesity, which doubles between the ages of 4 and 11. Therefore, the project team has made contact with public health colleagues to investigate the possibility of additional project support to contribute to the wider Council priorities through joint working and resource. (Is there additional funding available as a result?)
- 3.8 The LA will create an opportunity for schools to bid for capital funding in order to meet the new requirement. It is expected that bids for funding will require an element of joint funding with priority given to schools that can work collaboratively.
- 3.9 It should be noted that there is an expectation that the free entitlement could be widened to include Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) pupils in future years. Therefore, schools considering expansion and new equipment should also consider the potential longer term requirements. Whether any additional capital funding will be provided by DfE in future is unclear
- 3.10 The process and criteria for applications for capital funding will be created in consultation with school catering staff and bursars through the Swindon Schools Catering Managers Network. Consideration to procurement of equipment and timescales for delivery should form part of these discussions. The LA will request details of proposed capital spending in April 2014 in the following areas:
  - Dining room extensions
  - Kitchen extensions
  - Kitchen and dining room furniture and equipment.

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(The LA is not anticipating providing for small items such as cutlery and small equipment).

- 3.11 The pilot LAs also had to develop registration systems to ensure pupils from low income families and therefore already eligible for Free School Meals (and the Pupil premium) continued to be identified. It is essential that this message is communicated by Swindon schools to those participating in the scheme in order to preserve the pupil premium funding.
- 3.12 It is proposed to submit a progress report to the Schools Forum at its meeting in July 2014 on:
- Capital allocation bids
  - The method for reimbursement of revenue funding
  - Capture of Free School Meal eligibility data.
- 3.13 Academies were required to submit bids to the EFA by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 for any kitchen and dining room requirements.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options as schools are required to offer a free hot lunch to every reception, year 1 and year 2 child.

## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 As this is essentially a financial report the implications are explained throughout the document.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There are no legal and human rights implications arising from this report.

### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 Other implications relate to an increase impact on school catering staff, admin staff and teacher to assist with the delivery of the new entitlement. Also benefits relating to healthy outcomes (child obesity) for children by receiving a free hot lunch.

### Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 5.4 Utilisation of the DSG has a direct link to two of the Council's five priorities – "Right skills, right jobs in the right place", "Make the best use of Swindon's resources inside and outside the Council" and "Reduce vulnerability and improve health".

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## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 There are no specific proposals in this report, but the hot lunch is a universal offer restricted by age, but regardless of gender, race or sexuality in order to improve health outcomes.

## Risk Management

- 5.6 The key risks arising from this report are:
- Capital funding may not be sufficient
  - Schools could increase premises and staffing capacity to meet immediate needs and there is a further increase in a few years' time
  - take up of the entitlement is less than expected and public funding to expand catering capacity is wasted
  - Under-registration of FSM, which will result in a loss of Pupil Premium.

## **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director Finance, Revenues, Benefits and Property (Chief Financial and Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 The School Food Plan.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None