
Schools Forum 25 February 2014

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Universal Free School Meals for Infants

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Schools Forum with information in respect of the universal free school meals grants for infants, both revenue and capital, for 2014/15.

Discussed at HTCF – BWG

2. Yes – 14 February 2014.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

3. From 1 April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct Department for Education (DfE) grant: the Dedicated School Grant (DSG).
4. The Schools Forum Regulations state that with regard to:
 - Financial issues relating to: arrangements for pupils with special educational needs;
 - Arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school;
 - Arrangements for early years provision;
 - Administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants;

then the Local Authority must consult annually with Schools Forum in order that Forum can give a view and inform the governing bodies of all consultations.

Actions for Schools Forum

5. For Schools Forum to note the DfE notification to Headteachers and Directors of Children's Services of the universal free school meals for infants from September 2014 and the actions proposed by the Local Authority.

Attachments to Report

6. Letter to Director of Children's Services – Appendix A
7. Letter to Headteachers – Appendix B

Karen Cocker
Children's Services Finance Manager
7 February 2014

Schools Forum 25 February 2014

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Universal Free School Meals for Infants

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Schools Forum with information in respect of the universal free school meals grants for infants, both revenue and capital, for 2014/15.

Background

2. The Government has announced that, from September 2014, they will provide funding to enable schools to offer a free lunch to every primary school child in reception classes, year 1 and year 2. They intend to amend the Children and Families Bill which is currently before Parliament to place a legal duty on primary schools to deliver this important commitment.
3. In addition to making over £1billion in revenue funding available over the next two years, the Chancellor announced in his Autumn Statement that the Government will be making capital funding of £150million available in 2014-15 to support schools in providing free school meals to all children in reception, year 1 and year 2 from September 2014. The details of the capital allocations for universal infant free school meals by local authority were announced on 18 December.

Revenue Funding

4. On 23 January 2014 the DfE issued two letters in respect of the universal free school meals grant from September 2014; the letter to the Directors of Children's Services is attached as Appendix A and Appendix B is the letter addressed to Headteachers.
5. After discussion with local authorities, schools and caterers, the DfE have decided that the fairest approach is to allocate schools a flat rate of £2.30 per meal taken, based on actual take-up by newly eligible infant pupils which will be measured in the Schools Census from October 2014. In addition, they recognise that some smaller schools will face particular challenges and will therefore be providing transitional funding totalling £22.5million in 2014-15 for small schools, which will be provided before the start of the new academic year; no further details were given by the DfE in respect of eligibility of a small school.
6. Dudley's recommended charge for a paid pupil meal is £2.00 for 2014/15.

7. Funding currently provided through Dudley's deprivation formula strand of the schools' delegated budget in relation to those pupils in receipt of free school meals in reception classes, year 1 and year 2, will continue and the universal free school meals grant from the DfE will relate only to those pupils who are not currently eligible for a free school meal.
8. Catering services currently trade with 92 of 106 Dudley schools. Therefore they have convened a group of Headteachers with relevant officers to discuss matters arising from the introduction of the universal free school meal to include the kitchen requirements for Dudley schools and the practical considerations of serving and supervising the take up of more meals in school each day.
9. Headteachers recognise that whilst there is a direct additional catering cost in respect of providing the universal free school meal, there will also be costs in school for additional lunchtime supervision which will need to be afforded from the £2.30.

Pupil Premium

10. The DfE acknowledge the concerns from schools regarding the impact of this change on the pupil premium and are reassuring schools that pupil premium funding will not be affected. Schools will still receive the pupil premium for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with funding allocations for 2014-15 informed by School Census data collected in January 2014. All schools' are encouraged to make sure that their School Census return is accurate so that the full allocation is received.
11. The DfE is also considering how the pupil premium is allocated in the longer term. A number of local authorities, such as Southwark, Newham, Durham and Islington, have provided free school meals to their primary pupils while still submitting the data used in the allocation of the pupil premium. Therefore the DfE is considering their experience and intend to set out their proposals in due course.

Capital Funding

12. The Secretary of State announced capital funding grants on 18 December 2013. In respect of the universal infant free school meals capital for financial year 2014 to 2015, Dudley's allocation is £855,308 which includes £81,388 for the voluntary aided schools. A separate grant is payable to Academy schools.
13. The DfE set out that it is for the Local Authority to prioritise capital expenditure according to local circumstances and expect that all local authorities will identify ways to use this funding to help schools secure the benefits of universal infant free school meals for their pupils by using the funding to improve school kitchen and dining facilities, and to support creative approaches to meeting the increase in demand for school food, such as through the expansion of hub kitchens.
14. An initial review of Dudley school's current catering arrangements indicates that the capital funding will not be sufficient to address all areas of need and the group of Headteacher's meeting to discuss the revenue funding will also consider

the priorities for allocating the capital funding to those schools with most need.

Finance

15. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013 which are effective from 1 January 2014 and relate to the 2014/15 financial year.
16. Schools Forums are regulated by the regulated by the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.
17. From 1st April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct grant; Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

Law


18. Councils' LMS Schemes are made under Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Education Acts 1996 and 2002 also have provisions relating to school funding.

Equality Impact

19. The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is taken into account when considering the allocation of resources.

Recommendation

20. Schools Forum to note that the:
 - Revenue funding for the universal free school meal for infants from September 2014, available over the next two years, has been announced at £2.30 per meal based on actual take-up by newly eligible infant pupils;
 - Capital funding in respect of the universal infant free school meals for Dudley maintained schools has been confirmed at £855,308 for 2014/15;
 - The DfE is also considering how the pupil premium is allocated in the longer term and intend to set out their proposals in due course;
 - Further information will be presented to Schools Forum once final decisions have been made in respect of the impact of this DfE initiative upon schools.



Pauline Sharratt
Interim Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Karen Cocker, Children's Services Finance Manager
Karen.cocker@dudley.gov.uk Tel: 01384 815382