

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Universal Infant Free School Meals and the School Food Plan</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>13 October 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Children's Services</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Susie Haworth</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3590</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the successful implementation of the universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) policy and the School Food Plan in Brighton & Hove.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report and welcomes the successful implementation of UIFSM and the School Food Plan in Brighton & Hove

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The government announced in September 2013 that all reception and Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils should be offered a universal infant free school lunch from September 2014. This is worth approximately £400 per child and good for our children in terms of ensuring that all these children have access to a healthy nutritious lunch which may help improve educational outcomes as pupils should be better sustained thus improving afternoon learning.
- 3.2 The government has provided additional revenue and capital funding for the implementation of the policy. The revenue allocation is based on an assumed take up by 87% of all eligible children (to be retrospectively adjusted to reflect actual take up on October and January census days) at a value of £2.30 per meal. Brighton & Hove received a capital grant of £641,000 (£517,577 for maintained schools and £124,291 (not directly paid to the LA) for VA Schools) for improvements to kitchens and dining rooms.
- 3.3 Prior to the introduction of this policy, on average approximately 7000 primary age children ate a school meal each day in the city. Data from local authorities which already offered UIFSM to all pupils showed that they have a consistent take up of 85% of roll. So in Brighton & Hove we had to plan for our daily average take up to move from 7000 meals to approximately 11200 meals per day in infant, junior and primary schools (including City Academy Whitehawk) ensuring that all schools met their statutory duty of providing a meal for no charge to all reception and KS1 pupils from September 2014.

- 3.4 Our plan to implement the policy involved close collaboration with the Council's school meals provider, Eden Foodservice, and 49 schools affected by the policy. The aim throughout has been to ensure that all schools are able to fulfil the policy requirements and enable all pupils to have a quality meal and an enjoyable lunchtime experience whilst minimising the potential impact on the school day.
- 3.5 An action plan was developed by the School Meals Team Manager and shared with schools in November 2013. This plan required individual assessments for each school of likely demand, kitchen and dining room capacities, additional staffing requirements and any implications for the length of lunchtime and the impact this could have on the school day, including the availability of halls before and after lunch. As a result of this work by the school meals team, Eden Foodservice and the schools an implementation plan for each school was agreed. An extra 40 part time jobs have been created locally, none of which are zero hour contracts. Some service changes were made prior to the summer break, other new staff received induction training over the summer.
- 3.6 Over the summer holiday, improvements to kitchens and dining rooms were carried out in 20 schools using the capital grant. No school had to contribute from its own budget or other funds available to it to the cost of these works – including the voluntary aided schools, which are normally expected to find 10% of the cost of capital projects from their own funds. Brackenbury Primary School now has a finishing kitchen (previously meals were transported hot from Mile Oak) meaning they can cook some items directly on site ensuring that the quality of their meals has improved considerably. All works were completed in time for the start of the autumn term.
- 3.7 At the time of writing it is too early to give an exact figure on the take up of meals – for example as schools operate staggered starts for their reception classes not all children may be settled in school yet. This will be clearer from the schools census on 2 October and if this is available for analysis before the meeting figures will be provided to the Committee at the meeting. However, initial indications are that approximately 72% of those eligible to receive a UIFSM took up the offer on the first two days of the autumn term, or 84% including pupils already eligible for a free school meal. Of the 16% not taking a meal, this may be due to a number of reasons, non- attendance at school or preferring a packed lunch to the hot meal choices available on the day. The school meals contract supports many pupils requiring a modified menu on the grounds of cultural, religious or medical need. The Halal offer will continue to be rolled out in schools where demand requires this, as an additional menu option, which increases the choices available to pupils.
- 3.8 A particular concern of schools was the potential for under registration for free school meals (based on receipt of a qualifying benefit) for children in reception and KS1 if they were being offered a meal for no charge to the parent or guardian. This would have a direct negative impact on Pupil Premium which is calculated directly from the number of children eligible for free school meals because of low family income. In order to overcome this concern, the School Meals Team in consultation with schools developed a letter to parents (Appendix 1) which emphasises the importance of declaring eligibility in relation to the resources available to schools as well as promoting the quality of the meals

provided within the city. This approach has been praised by the Minister for Schools, David Laws MP, and included as an example of good practice by the School Food Trust in its guidance pack for local authorities and schools.

- 3.9 As a result of this action, at least 40 pupils not previously registered for free school meals were found to be eligible prior to the end of the academic year. This means that schools across the city will attract approximately £45,000 per year in additional Pupil Premium funding. As “Ever 6” (funding for pupils who have been eligible for free school meals during the last 6 years) applies for Pupil Premium funding this means these pupils would attract at least £275,000 into the city’s schools over the next six years (assuming current funding levels are maintained) even when their family income improves. To ensure that the city can continue to maximise pupil premium allocation the required details are now requested on the pupil registration form which is completed for all pupils accepting a school place within the city.
- 3.10 A concern of some parents was that the quality of food served as part of the UIFSM policy would reduce when parents were not paying for meals. We are confident that this will not be the case. The quality of food served within the city has improved during the current contract with Eden Foodservice, with the current menu accredited with the Soil Associations Bronze Food for Life Award (FFL). Alongside this the Brighton & Hove school meals contract was the first in the south to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) chain of custody certification ensure that all fish served is MSC certified. As part of our drive to continuously improve the overall quality and sustainability of the contract the menu offered to all schools from November 2014 will achieve the Silver FFL Award at no additional cost. The menu leaflet also displays a number of other important awards including The Good Egg Award for local freedom food free range eggs, LEAF certified vegetables and Red Tractor meats. The school meals contract was used as an example of best practice at the recent Good Food Procurement Group and will feature in the application for the Silver Sustainable Cities Award. A copy of the current 3 choice menu is attached (Appendix 2).
- 3.11 The School Food Plan included a number of other suggestions for improving food and the overall dining experience for pupils. The early adoption of a local Food in Schools Programme which has been delivered in a number of schools over the past four years means we have delivered in most aspects described. Dining rooms have become more of a destination rather than a “corridor to play”. The School Meals Team has worked with schools to ensure that pupils can sit with their friends and packed lunch eaters are no longer segregated from their friends. All schools with the exception of the Cedar Centre now have online cash collection and electronic tills to speed up service and remove all identification of free school meal eligibility. All flight trays have been replaced with plates and bowls and age appropriate cutlery provided to aid knife and fork skills. Investment in the “front of house” dining rooms and service points ensure attractive presentation of food and ease of service for pupils and staff.
- 3.12 A number of schools run regular parents to lunch days and others have offered their new reception parents the opportunity to have lunch with their child. Healthy eating workshops have helped improve parental engagement and educate pupils and parents about healthy eating and “me sized” meals. Celebratory assemblies provide a fantastic opportunity for parents to try school

meals and ask any questions they may have. Moving forward the School Meals Team will be looking at ways to assist schools in the further delivery of the School Food Plan, in particular cooking in the curriculum.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 As the introduction of UIFSM is government policy, no other options have been considered

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The implementation plan and delivery have been carried out in close consultation and collaboration with schools and Eden Foodservice. Feedback will be sought from schools and pupil feedback collected in the dining room using happy faces to give instant feedback on food served. In the longer term we may be able to use the online cash collection system (Parentpay) to canvas views from parents.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The implementation of the UIFSM policy has been challenging for schools, the local authority and Eden Foodservice but it has been successful. All schools have been able to offer meals to eligible children from the beginning of September and it has been possible to carry out some welcome improvements to kitchens and dining spaces. It is too early to say how successful the policy has been in terms of the number of children enjoying school lunches and further information will be provided when this is available.
- 6.2 It is important to take into account possible impacts of this policy on the school day which would be even greater if thought were to be given to extending the policy to older primary school pupils.

#### **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The UIFSM grant allocated by the Department for Education is expected to fully cover the costs incurred in delivering the legal requirement to offer free school meals to all pupils in reception year 1 and year 2 for the 2014/15 academic year. The necessary work on upgrading school kitchens has also been contained within the capital element of the grant.
- 7.2 The government has guaranteed the UIFSM scheme for at least two years and a separate grant announcement for the 2015/16 academic year is expected at a later date.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Williams*

*Date:30/09/14*

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 Section 106 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all state funded schools, including academies and free schools, to offer a free school lunch to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2, from September 2014.

*Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston Date: 26/09/2014*

Equalities Implications:

The contract includes for provision of meals for pupils requiring a modified menu on the grounds of cultural, religious or medical need.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 One of the key criteria for equipment purchased for the kitchens within the city is around resource efficiency – water, power etc.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Letter to parents introducing 'sign up' for free school meals
2. Schools meals menu Spring/ Summer 2014

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

N/A

**Background Documents**

N/A