



## SCHOOLS' FORUM

### Implementation of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

16 June 2014

Content Applicable to;		School Phase;	
Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools		Pre School	
Academies	X	Foundation Stage	X
PVI Settings		Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies	X	Secondary	
Local Authority	X	Post 16	
		High Needs	

#### Purpose of Report

Content Requires;		By;	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	
Decision		Maintained Secondary School Members	
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	
		All Schools Forum	X

1. This report presents the comments and experiences of schools on implementation of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

#### Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum notes the contents of this report

#### Introduction

3. Schools Forum raised a number of concerns regarding the implementation of UIFSM at its meeting in February 2014 and subsequently wrote to the Secretary of State with those concerns, namely the cost of implementation and the expected disruption of the school day.

4. Following further concerns raised at Schools Forum in September the local authority has invited all schools and academies to submit their experiences of implementation, 6 schools submitted information which is shown in Appendix 1.
5. At a regional finance officer meeting in October the Education Funding Agency (EFA) suggested that there would not be a national post implementation review but also were not able to provide any assurance about the future funding for the initiative. They also stated that they would be interested in any information collated by the local authority.

### **Background**

6. The information submitted by schools identifies some disruption of the school day that is being supported by additional staffing. The case studies submitted show a varied approach to implementation but they have not been able to quantify the additional costs falling to the school where the grant is insufficient.
7. Where responses raised concerns regarding implementation issues relating to the School Food Support Service, the issues were passed to that service for investigation and rectification.
8. It should be noted that the feedback collected was completed early in the autumn term, it is not possible therefore to identify whether the reported issues were one off implementation issues and now rectified. Nor is it possible to identify whether the issues have arisen as a result of choices made by schools regarding implementation.
9. It can be seen by the responses that there is relatively few references to the impact on children.

### **Resource Implications**

10. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that the introduction of UIFSM is having an adverse impact on school resources, nor that the additional staffing referred to with the studies is being funded from the school budget because the grant is insufficient.

### **Equal Opportunity Issues**

11. Non arising directly from this report

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Officers to Contact**

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**SCHOOL 1**

- No money, help, support for one on my schools – just additional pressure on the one dining assistant in place
- Children are now complaining about the quality of food and that it's cold – more dinners, more wait = food getting cold by the end of the queue
- Children are being hurried
- More mess to clean up;
  - Costs to get the floor deep cleaned every half term
  - Plus extra time needed each day to clear it up
- Lots of time to manage the operational aspects at each school. Teaching staff are having to help – extra pressure on my teachers to help them – which is a breach of teachers T & C
- Lots of time listening to stresses, anxiety, moans, complaints from dining / midday staff, children, parents and teachers. I'm fed up with it!
- Children are also complaining that the crockery & cutlery are getting greasy or dirty – clearly the kitchen staff are so stretched for time they don't have time to clean them properly
- I've had to pay staff to attend meetings re operational management; stickers to offset the unhappy children; additional costs to clean the floor

**SCHOOL 2**

We do not currently have the facility to prepare and cook our own meals on site, therefore they are prepared and cooked at XXXXXXXXXX.

**Impact on the school day**

SFS have employed an additional member of staff to cope with the additional meals. The meals are meant to arrive at 11.45 which allows a 15 minute window to unpack, probe and be ready to serve to our reception children at 12.00pm. Unfortunately the impact of the additional meals required at both xxxxxx and xxxxxx the meals do not arrive until 12.00pm on a good day. I understand that xxxx were promised a new oven to help with the extra meals but this has yet to materialise.

**The impact of numbers of infants registered for free school meals**

We wrote to all of our parents advising them of the difference between FSM and UIFSM and to the best of our knowledge we have ensured that all our reception parents who are eligible have registered for FSM. Our concern is if parents with children in KS1 only, would think to register if their circumstances were to change.

**Capital Works**

We would dearly love to have our own cooking facility. We are currently working with Wendy Philp at SFS as we have now identified that we have enough space. Unfortunately the main issue is whether we have enough power coming into the school to cope with the additional equipment required. We have equipment installed at the moment to monitor this.

### **Funding**

We have not been advised yet if the school will have to contribute towards the work and we have not been advised of any grants. Could you please send me some information of where we could apply for additional funding as I fear that there may be further cost implications if power does turn out to be an issue.

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### **SCHOOL 3**

#### **Impact on the school day.**

We have had to reorganise the school day in respect of Infant children only and the younger children do have to start their meals at 11:45 rather than 12:00 as was previously.

Also the hall is out of action for necessary PE provision as we only have one hall we cannot use other areas. We can sometimes use outside but if the weather is wet we obviously can't.

#### **Impact of USFM on registrations of FSM for Pupil Premium**

We have had to be very proactive in advertising that FSM still need to be registered for and have actually had 3 new FSM children out of the 30 intake. This has worked this year due to our knowledge of family connections and by amending our admissions forms with more probing questions.

#### **Additional Costs**

We have employed 3 members of our lunchtime staff for an extra 15 minutes per day so that we can start serving earlier. This means it has cost us 45 mins x £7.35 (hourly rate) per day therefore £1047 per annum plus on costs from main school budget.

#### **Problems with SFS**

We have had numerous problems with SFS provision, too numerous to mention here. Some of those were teething problems with staffing and with quantity of food but some are still on going. If anyone in Ed finance knows how long we are tied into SFS Contract I would be grateful for this information as we will be looking at different provision at some point in the future. I cannot find a copy of our contract anywhere.

## Numbers

Our uptake of UFSM out of a potential of 92 pupils is between 62 and 84 pupils so between ranging from 67% and 91%.

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### SCHOOL 4

In terms of impact on our school day, introduction of the UFSM has had a temporary impact, in that we brought forward the start of our lunch break by 15 minutes specifically for the new reception children to go into dinners early. This was put in place for the first 6 weeks of term only, so it gave them time to get used to having to queue, take a tray, eat their food etc. Gradually we have been cutting down this time so that after half term all children will queue for lunch from the normal time of 12 o'clock. Hopefully the reception children will be well practised by then!

The other impact is on the midday supervisory staff - they seem to have felt the impact more because they have more children to get through the hall in the same amount of time, which results in more staff needed for scraping plates, supervising etc. We are in the process of recruiting at least one more midday supervisor to ease the load and to make sure that we have enough staff in other areas of the school to supervise children while others are having lunch. So this is a financial impact on our revenue budget that we had not anticipated.

In terms of pupil premium, we have really emphasised in our new parents meetings, the importance of registering for FSM, even if their child is in infants and getting a free meal anyway. Its difficult to explain to people the difference between a free meal and a free meal! We have also encouraged our office staff to proactively push registration to parents when they have an idea that they may be eligible. This is my main area of concern, however, because it will be an ongoing thing for future years intake at reception. But we are doing the best we can to ensure our FSM numbers don't drop too much as a result of the introduction of UFSM.

We received ACMF funding for improvements to the kitchen for the implementation of UFSM. This involved installing a new servery to cope with the additional meals required, and we have also had to have building work undertaken as a result to remove the old servery, had new equipment such as oven, and electrical work. The work is not going to cost as much as was originally bid for, and so we are going to have to return some of this capital funding to the EFA once the work is complete. All the work, bar the new oven, was completed on time in readiness for the new term.

We are not sure at this stage, whether the amount of UFSM grant received will be enough to cover the actual costs. On the census day in October, we had 79% take up, and so we will be pushing for at least this number in the January census too. Typically on a normal day we have approximately 68% take up. Unless we have a big increase in the daily numbers of children taking up a free meal, this should be enough to cover our costs. An issue here though is that schools are unlikely to encourage children to take up the free meal after January census day because they don't want to be faced with additional costs that they will not receive funding for in that particular academic year. This goes against the principal of providing a free meal to all infant children, but schools will want to protect their budgets.

I think the way the allocation is decided (based on the average of 2 censuses) is an issue, because I've heard that some schools are basically ordering a meal for every infant child on census days whether they eat it or not, so they effectively get 100% take up on the days that matter i.e. census days, whereas others have adopted the approach that they will push parents to get their child to have a free meal on those days, so they get as many children having a meal as possible, but you're then not guaranteed 100% take up. Some might say this is playing the game, however, other people I've spoken to have said there are some moral implications about ordering more food than you actually need and then wasting it because its not really required. I'm not sure how this issue could be addressed, unless we could claim funding for actual numbers somehow, or submit numbers termly for meals taken or something, but its definitely an area that needs some more thought I think.

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## **SCHOOL 5**

### **Background Information:**

Xxxxxxx School has a large school kitchen that has been well maintained and meals have always been cooked on the premises. Prior to the introduction of UIFSM pupils in year 1 and year 2 who had packed lunches ate them in the classrooms.

N.O.R. 284 (Autumn Term Census 2014)

For many years School Food Support were contracted to provide the meals. We successfully operated a cash cafeteria system which offered a fixed choice menu. Since August 2013 xxxxxxxx Academy have had the contract to provide the meals. xxxxxxxxxx (Business Manager at xxxxxxxx) negotiated and organised the funding for the new equipment so she will be able to provide further details if required.

Prior to UIFSM the staff catered for between 80 and 120 meals a day. Friday was always the most popular day as it is the only day chips are served and is also Year 2 swimming day.

Over the last 5 years the number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals has varied between 10 % and 18 %.

Autumn Term Census 2014 recorded 12% entitlement for FSM.

### **Preparation for the introduction of UIFSM:**

New equipment in the kitchen that was installed by xxxxxxxx Academy during the summer term and summer closure 2014 included:

- New fridge and freezers
- New Combi oven and the adaptations to the kitchen for this to be fitted
- New working areas (stainless steel working surfaces)
- New heated trolley
- Additional flight trays
- Additional serving dishes and small bowls

From school funds we have purchased:

- Extra tables so more children can be seated
- New tray storage and waste bin trolley
- Larger storage containers for cutlery and beakers after use
- Additional small dishes so puddings can be served in bowls

Both Xxxxxxxx Academy and Xxxxxxxx Infant School have had additional staffing costs. WIS have employed 2 additional members of the Lunchtime Team for 1.5 hours each a day. We have also increased the working hours of 3 members of lunchtime staff to 1.5 hours rather than 1 hour each day that they worked previously.

### **Preparation for UIFSM**

As a large school we were very aware that UIFSM would have a huge impact on the organisation of our lunch hours. We only have one hall and the hall was already in great demand for P.E. sessions and all the other activities we need to fit in there.

During the first part of the Summer Term 2014 we held a week of timed trials where all the children came into the hall to eat. Packed Lunch pupils came up to the counter as if choosing a meal so that we could time all aspects of the organisation.

The week of trails confirmed to us that we needed to change the time of our lunch break. We now have:

11.30 – 12.30 Reception Pupils

11.50 – 12.50 Year 1 and Year 2 Pupils

This has resulted in the hall being out of use between 11.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. every day for setting up, lunchtime and packing away. This is an increase of .5 compared to before the introduction of UIFSM.

Three representatives from the school attended a UIFSM Roadshow in Nottingham during the summer term. On advice from schools involved in the Pilot Schemes it was agreed by governors that the reception pupils entering school in the autumn 2014 would not be given a choice of bringing a packed lunch. The choice was a UIFSM or going home for lunch. There was a 100% take up for UIFSM.

There were concerns expressed by some parents/carers of Year 1 and 2 pupils and Governors held individual meetings with some families. Parents/carers who were still unhappy about the situation were invited to apply to Governors for their child to be made an exception and to bring a packed lunch.

At the beginning of the Autumn Term 2014 we had 7 pupils bringing a packed lunch. Families were given a copy of the guidance for providing a healthy packed lunch and we requested that only plain containers were used rather than novelty lunchboxes as these are often the attraction to the child rather than the food inside!  
By half term the number of children bringing a packed lunch had reduced to 4 Year 1 pupils.

One of the issues parents/carers had difficulty understanding was why the children could not continue to have a choice of a UIFSM or packed lunch on a daily basis as they had before when we ran the cash cafeteria system. There are two main reasons for this:

Organisation – we cannot staff for preparing 280 meals one day and only 100 the next. It simply would not work and we would not have routines and systems in place which is crucial when dealing with large numbers of young children

Improvement – we were aware as staff and governors that many of our pupils were not eating a healthy packed lunch and in many cases are eating a very limited diet at home. We saw the introduction of UIFSM as the ideal opportunity to try and make a difference to the health and well-being of all the pupils. The long term aim is that this will impact on standards of educational achievement and also the long term health of the pupils we work with.

However we are also aware that we need to work with families and change attitudes to eating, the importance of sitting at a table, using a knife and fork and eating a meal as a family.

Xxxxxxxx School has a 20 place MLD Unit and a number of these children have ASD and limited communication. We also have a number of mainstream pupils with SEN and we were well aware that prior to the introduction of UIFSM a number of the children were eating a very limited diet. In order to encourage pupils with specific needs and a limited use of cutlery we have extended our lunchtime nurture provision. Experienced and skilled staff run three Luncheon Clubs:

- 1 for Reception Pupils
- 2 for Year 1 and 2 Pupils. These are mixed groups of mainstream pupils and pupils from the MLD Unit.

The children eat in a smaller room and are currently offered 'Family Service' rather than queuing for meals. Staff working with these children have discussed diets with parents/carers and a Food Diary has been introduced that will help parents/carers to know the new foods the children have tried at school.

These groups are proving to be very successful. The children have charts to record new foods they have tried and the feedback from parents/carers has been very positive. By having regular contact with parents/carers we have been able to explain that we all need to try new food more than once in order to acquire a taste for it.

The ultimate aim during the year is to gradually introduce pupils back into the hall and able to eat with their peers. It is already apparent that this individualised approach is working and it obviously requires a high level of additional staff.

#### **Positive Impact of UIFSM at Xxxxxxxx School:**

- Pupils eating a wider range of food at school and some parents/carers have reported that this is now also happening at home
- Many pupils eating a more nutritional, balanced meal than they were when they were bringing a packed lunch
- Staff able to help more pupils with the correct use of cutlery and table manners
- No money to deal with! We were constantly having to change money for parents/carers in the morning and looking for lost money and purses.



- New times of the lunch breaks has had an unexpected bonus in that all the three year groups are never out on the playground at the same time. This has reduced the number of lunch time incidents/accidents as the pupils have more space to play in.

#### **Challenges of UIFSM at XXXXXXXX School:**

- The loss of the use of the hall for an additional .5 each day
- Requirement of additional staffing and the increase of hours of lunchtime staff already employed
- The time it has taken for governors and staff to talk to parents/carers explaining and reassuring them about the system
- Time it has taken to organise the system and the staffing. An example being that during the first half of the Autumn Term 2014 the Headteacher was in the dinner hall for an hour each day. If she was off site for any reason the Deputy Headteacher took on this role. This high level of involvement was required in order that adaptations could be introduced as required which has ensured the smooth running of the system

#### **Impact on Pupil Premium:**

Staff and Governors were very aware of the need to ensure that the numbers of pupils eligible for FSM leading to the Pupil Premium Grant did not drop.

Representatives from WIS who attended the Road show in Nottingham sought information and guidance from Pilot Schools and we have found the following strategies to have been successful in maintaining and possibly increasing the number of pupils eligible for FSM (Pupil Premium Grant):

- Newsletters and information meetings – at every opportunity we shared information with parents/carers about the need to still apply for FSM
- Introduced a form that we adapted from examples used by Pilot Schools. This gave us information that we could then use to check that all families eligible for FSM applied and were therefore entitled to the PPG
- Using the above form we contacted parents/carers individually to point out that from the information they had given us we felt it was worth checking eligibility. We were able to explain the benefits both to them as a family and us a school and as a result the numbers increased during the first few weeks of term
- School Uniform Vouchers – Governors agreed to extend the benefits by providing School Uniform Vouchers to all families who applied and were entitled to FSM. This is in addition to the financial support we previously offered for trips, clubs and funding for school holiday activities. The amount of money parents/carers could save by making a phone call checking eligibility was well advertised and seems to have been a successful strategy

At this stage we feel that all those families with eligibility for FSM have applied and are registered.

#### **Future Considerations:**

- Menu – as previously pointed out the children are young and many of them are not adventurous in their choice of food. We started with a 3 week menu but at half term this was reduced to a 2 week menu to enable us to ensure that we are offering balanced, nutritious choices that Xxxxxxxx children will eat and enjoy
- We have found that it is essential that we work closely with the Catering Staff to ensure that the menu suits the tastes of the pupils. We have now embarked on the Food For Life Programme and are working towards the Bronze Award during the academic year 2014/2015
- There is still work to be carried out on the financial implications of the introduction of UIFSM to WIS. However the positive impact has already impressed staff and governors
- A member of the teaching staff is now using the introduction of UIFSM as her Research Project in order to complete her Master's Degree Programme which will give us additional information about the introduction of UIFSM
- We need to continue to highlight the need for parents/carers to apply for FSM in order that we maintain the level of Pupil Premium Grant we as a school are entitled to

Staff and Governors feel we have embraced this opportunity to make genuine improvements for the pupils and families at Xxxxxxxx School. An area that does concern us is that Professional Organisations have encouraged schools to increase the numbers of pupils having dinner on the days when numbers are recorded for the Census.

We would like to point out to Schools Forum members that we do not consider this to be a good use of public money and is very unfair on schools like xxxxxxx who have given a great deal of time and consideration to introducing a system that is successful and will hopefully achieve what the original aim of the project was i.e.: 'To provide a tasty and nutritious school lunch to all pupils in R, Year 1 and Year 2'. We are able to provide paperwork to show that parents/carers have opted for, signed and agreed to pupils having a UIFSM but we feel that the system was introduced in a great hurry which has led to a lot of confusion and a lack of continuity in how the system is being run.

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**SCHOOL 6**

Below is a list of expenses incurred from the implementation of the Universal Free School Meals initiative:

- Hall extension. School paid a further £31,000 (final bill to be received) in addition to the grant from School Food Support (£17,000)
- Extended lunchtimes to be able to get all children served.
- Employment of an extra midday supervisor for 1.5 hours a day due to the extended lunch time.
- Kitchen serving staff allocated an extra hour a day each (2 staff members)
- Purchase of extra cutlery, bowls, plates etc
- Possible impact of numbers of infants registered for free school meals and therefore pupil premium is 24.

The Headteacher would very much appreciate any further funding towards the costs incurred if further grants become available.

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