

## SCHOOLS FORUM - 18 JUNE 2015

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>FREE SCHOOL MEALS UPDATE</b>
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<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
This report provides a brief overview of the current processes in place to ensure Nottingham's schools are maximising their Pupil Premium funding even if those pupils are entitled to Universal Free School Meals (UFSM).	
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	
<b>1</b>	Note the impact that pupils not registering for Free School Meals (FSM) could have on the allocation of funding to schools as set out in Section 2.1 – 2.3.
<b>2</b>	Note the actions undertaken, as per Section 2.4, to ensure the process of identifying pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding is complete.
<b>3</b>	Note how the reduced number of pupils registering for FSM impacted on the budget setting process in 2015/16, as per section 5.

### **1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 To ensure Schools Forum understand the update provided in this report.

### **2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

2.1 From September 2014 new legislation was implemented entitling all children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 in state funded schools in England to be eligible for UFSM.

A number of these pupils are also eligible for Pupil Premium funding which in 2015/16 is £1,320 per child per year. This funding is allocated directly to the school and incorporates specific conditions of spend. It is based on the 'Ever 6' basis which takes 6 year averages for funding purposes.

2.2 Before the implementation of UFSM it was the responsibility of the schools to ensure that parents completed the forms to ensure that Pupil Premium was allocated appropriately. Those eligible received FSM. The funding is then allocated to schools based on a 6 year average and is called 'Ever 6'.

2.3 Since the implementation of UFSM the number of children registered as being eligible for Pupil Premium has reduced. Although this will not directly impact on Pupil Premium funding in 2015/16 continued under registration will affect the formula that it is allocated on in subsequent years.

2.4 Mitigation of this issue has been undertaken by the following activities:

- Created a new Universal Primary Pupil benefits registration form, see **Appendix 1**.

This new form was publicised in SCENE on 5 May 2015 and has been discussed at the recent meetings with School/Academy Business Managers in April/May 2015.

- Encouraging schools to circulate it to all parents for completion. (Schools are then asked to filter out the forms where the income threshold is exceeded and eligibility will not therefore be met).

It is hoped that this approach of asking for information from all parents will help identify some families that would be eligible, but have not sought to register for FSM particularly following the introduction of the UFSM's.

- This new form will also be used for eligibility checking of the new Early Years Pupil Premium, as well as for FSM, main school Pupil Premium and School Clothing Allowance.
- Target date for the return of forms to Pupil Benefits was May half term; as at that time only batches of forms had been received from 28 of 74 primary schools.

Reminder e-mails have been sent to those schools who have missed the date.

- Over 1,000 eligibility checks have been completed in the last month since the introduction of the new form, although a large number of these relate to claims that were already live.
- At the end of the Summer Term Pupil Benefits will undertake some data matching to other benefits system information to try to identify if there are any eligible pupils that have been missed.
- October 2015 census data will be used to identify if the trend in reductions of FSM eligible pupils has been reversed, as a result of the above action.

2.5 This process does not contravene any Data Protection Act.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 No other options were considered as part of this report.

### **4. OUTCOMES/DELIVERABLES**

4.1 To provide Schools Forum with the actions undertaken by Nottingham City Council and required by schools to ensure that Nottingham receives the correct amount of Pupil Premium Funding.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)**

5.1 The impact of not recording pupils eligible for FSM not only impacts on the value of Pupil Premium received but also on how the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is allocated.

DSG is allocated to schools on factors; one of those factors is Free Schools Meals.

5.2 In the 2015/16 budget process there was a reduced number of children registered for FSM on the October 2014 census. This reduction would have resulted in a reduced amount of funding being allocated to schools however, due to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) principle; schools only lost a maximum of 1.5% of any impact.

5.3 The balance managed through the MFG was c. £0.5m. The MFG is a principle set by the Department for Education.

5.4 If the number of pupils registering for FSM returns to normal levels by the October 2015 census consideration will need to be given for this movement in the 2016/17 budget setting process.

**6. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS).**

6.1 Not applicable

**7. HR ISSUES**

7.1 Not applicable

**8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions)

x

No

Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

**9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

9.1 Not applicable

**10. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

10.1 Not applicable