

MAYOR OF LONDON

Guidance document on maintaining pupil premium registrations

With the introduction of the Mayor of London's expansion of universal free school meals in September 2023, it is important for boroughs and primary schools in London to continue to ensure that families continue to register for the Government's Free School Meals (FSM) programme to maintain pupil premium funding. This builds upon the work that schools already do to secure registration in the background of the Government's Infant Universal Free School meals offer.

We have created a range of resources to support schools with effective communications to families to maintain, or increase, registrations. There was a best practice webinar about the range of approaches across London and a recording of this can be found on our hubs. This guidance document outlines models used in a range of London boroughs to maintain or increase FSM registrations.

Universal approach

- Schools may wish to ask all families to complete a form to register for Government FSM, rather than targeting only those who they believe may be eligible. This approach is the one that we suggest schools and boroughs to take as it supports getting high rates of completion.
- Islington undertake this approach, whereby all families must register their child to receive the borough's current offer of free school meals. With this model, the form is completed by all families regardless of eligibility for the Government scheme. They have found that by asking every family to fill out the form as part of taking up the offer, they have identified a large number of children who are eligible for FSM but had never applied. As a result, the borough has benefitted from an additional £500k pupil premium funding and they see form completion rates of 95-98%.
- Many schools also ask parents to fill out a Government FSM form as part of starting school, or at other key points of contact during the school calendar.

Targeted approach

- Schools are trusted voices in their communities and have close relationships with the families they serve. Many schools will know which families are most likely to qualify for Government FSM so may wish to continue to reach out to families who they believe may be eligible, but who have not applied. This works best done via direct communication with these families, reinforcing the benefits of completing the form.

Incentives based approach

- This approach focuses on introducing other benefits for eligible families to encourage registration. For example, a number of schools in London provide access to breakfast clubs or after school clubs for children who are eligible for Government FSM. Some boroughs also link registration for Government FSM with holiday food programmes, including things like supermarket vouchers.
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Reinforcing the importance to the individual, the school and the community of registering for free school meals

There are a range of benefits to registering for Government FSM to all involved. Remind families that the benefits are felt by both them and the school.

Importance to the individual (i.e. the child and their parent/carer/guardian):

- Reinforce to parents that by registering for Government FSM, they can contribute to the overall well-being and educational success of their child, as any increases in the schools' funding and resources can positively impact their own child's learning experience.
- Through increases in Pupil Premium funding, schools may be able to invest in professional development for teachers, new technology and new materials and resources. Link the benefits of filling in the form with your reporting on how you spend your Pupil Premium

Importance to the school:

- Remind families that by registering for Government FSM, they can help your school access additional resources and support services. Every parent wants their child's school to be doing well.
- Inform parents that pupil premium funding enables your school to offer a range of additional support services and resources to disadvantaged students. Give them real examples of what this looks like in your school, whether it be targeted interventions, access to extracurricular activities, specialised equipment, mentoring programmes, social and emotional developmental supports, further academic support, or other services and materials.

Importance to the community:

- Pupil Premium funding plays a key role in reducing educational inequalities, enhancing workforce skills, improving social mobility and breaking cycles of generational poverty. Addressing these issues can help to bridge the attainment gap and empower students to thrive both in academic and personal endeavours. Research shows that when students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a strong support system in place, they are more likely to succeed, which contributes to the development of the wider community and society as a whole.
- By registering for Government FSM, parents are providing further commitment to supporting their both child's education and future opportunities, and their community's needs. Parents who aren't eligible may still be motivated to hear about the support your school is offering to others in the school community who need it.

Here are some examples of schools webpages pages on Government FSM and Pupil Premium that speak directly to families:

[Pupil Premium - St Antony's \(stantonyscatholicprimary.co.uk\)](http://stantonyscatholicprimary.co.uk)

[Pupil Premium – Bigland Green Primary School](#)

[Pupil Premium - Edgware Primary School](#)

Engaging and communicating effectively

- **Promote strong engagement with families:** There are a range of creative ways you can connect with families to both learn from them and provide them with the information they need. You could organise a parents evening (see an outline on the [Mayor's online hubs](#)), a workshop, an information session, invite a guest speaker (such as a community leader or local Councillor). You can encourage families to actively engage with your school community through this and other initiatives so that they feel a sense of empowerment and that they are adding value when participating.
- **Use a range of communications platforms and channels:** Families like to receive information through a range of different avenues, and the best way to reach them all is to use various channels, such as social media, newsletters, your website, direct communications and any other methods your school has access to. Please see the Mayor's [online hubs](#) for templates and assets to use on all of these platforms.
- **Use the Mayor of London's resources:** The Mayor of London has created a suite of resources for schools to use to support your communications with families, such as templates, social media assets, branding guidance, logos, copy, FAQ sheets and more. Find them on the [online hubs](#).
- **Follow best practice guidance and learn from others:** Learn from other schools in your borough and beyond about what has worked effectively for them in increasing their registrations. Our [online hubs](#) have recordings of our best practice webinar sessions as well as links to examples of best practice from boroughs, schools and partners. Working in partnership is the best method to developing joint initiatives that promote improvement for all.
- **Share success stories:** Similarly to the above, when you do something well – shout about it and celebrate it! Highlight your big and small wins with your families and with your colleagues. By celebrating achievements, you can showcase what works well and also reinforce to families the importance of registering. You can also celebrate achievements from other schools in London to motivate families to engage.

Ensuring the process is straightforward

- **Streamline your application process:** There is no national requirement for exactly how the form must look. Work with your borough to ensure the process is suitable for your community and explore which options (print or digital) are most user-friendly and accessible.
- **Provide further assistance where necessary:** Some families may struggle with the application process due to language barriers, digital inaccessibility, privacy concerns, worries about stigma, time constraints, or other challenges. Where these struggles do arise, these can often be worked through via further support in-person, guiding them through the process. Schools know their families better than anyone and you will understand the individual needs of the communities you serve.
- **Confidentiality:** Reassure families that the registration process is entirely confidential and ensures their personal information is protected and their details will only be used for the purposes stated.
- **Provide reminders:** As many parents have constraints around their time, provide them with gentle reminders to complete the form, reinforcing the above messaging about why it is important. Provide as many opportunities as you can to engage.

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Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

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Telephone **020 7983 4000**
www.london.gov.uk

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