

MAYOR OF LONDON

Parents session outline

Please see below a suggested outline of a session to support conversations with parents, carers and guardians in your school to provide them with information about the Mayor's Universal Free School Meals programme. This session could be held online or in person. Resources to use at this session (including FAQ and PowerPoint slides) can be found on our online hubs.

This session outline can serve as a starting point and can be customised based on local arrangements.

Introduction – 5 minutes

- Welcome and opening remarks from headteacher/staff
- Overview of purpose of the session
- Run through the agenda of the session

Setting the scene – 5 minutes

- Provide an intro to the Mayor's Universal Free School Meals programme, including the reasons why it is being introduced
 - The Mayor announced an historic £130m emergency, one-off funding plan to help families with the spiralling cost of living by expanding London's free school meals offer, ensuring that primary school children in London will receive free school meals in the 2023/24 academic year. Rollout will take place in September 2023.
 - This funding will help up to 270,000 primary school children in the capital receive free school meals and could save families around £440 across the year.
 - This is emergency funding and he will continue to call on Government to step forward and provide the funding to make this permanent.
 - Discuss the benefits of providing universal free school meals
 - Extending free school meals to children who do not currently receive it, potentially saves families up to £440 per academic year.
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- In a review of UIFSM, students receiving FSM 4-8 weeks' more progress in Maths and English than similar pupils in comparison areas. Improvements in attainment were strongest for pupils from less affluent families.
 - Research from CPAG suggests that making FSM universal helps reduce stigma and boosts take up among families who need them most.
 - Food insecurity affects children's wellbeing, with children from families experiencing food insecurity more likely to suffer from mental health problems and disorders.
 - In a study of the impact of UIFSM in 4 London boroughs, receiving UIFSM reduced prevalence of obesity by 9.3 per cent among Reception children and 5.6 per cent among Year 6 children on average.
 - Economies of scale can make large savings. When Islington introduced universal FSM, it re-tendered its catering contract on a joint contract with Camden, which saved them £1m per year.
 - Provide information about any involvement your school has had in the scheme development process with the GLA

Details of Mayor's scheme – 10 minutes

- Details about implementation in your school
- Logistical arrangements for lunchtime in your school
 - Information about Government FSM registration and pupil premium funding
 - Remind families that it is important to still register for Government free school meals under the universal scheme, even if they think they may not be eligible.
 - They may help the school to secure additional funding to support pupils that need it most, which is potentially worth £1,300 per year per pupil
 - There may also be further financial support that they are entitled to linked to registration.

Collaboration and engagement with families – 5 minutes

- Reinforce the importance of the involvement of families and any opportunities for providing feedback

Q&A (see sample questions and answers below) – 20 minutes

1. What is the Mayor's expansion of universal free school meals?

Currently the Government provides universal free school meals to all infants and to some older children that meet a strict eligibility criteria. The Mayor's funding aims to expand free

school meals so that every child in a state London primary school will have the offer of a free lunch.

2. Why is the Mayor providing universal free school meals?

Families across London are desperately struggling with the spiralling cost of living and are in urgent need of more support. City Hall has repeatedly called for the Government to provide universal free school meals to help already stretched families, but they have simply failed to act. That's why, in light of the growing pressures on families, the Mayor is providing this emergency one-year funding.

3. Who is eligible for these universal free school meals?

It is proposed that the Mayor's programme is consistent with the Government's existing funding of Universal Infant Free School Meals and will cover pupils in state-funded primary schools, special schools and pupil referral units, including faith schools.

4. How do I get a free school meal for my child? Do I need to register?

Your primary school children will automatically be enrolled to receive a free school meal for the 2023/24 academic year. Your school will be in touch to ask for the information they need to plan the number of meals they need to prepare.

It's really important that you still complete your school or borough's registration form in case your child's is eligible for extra funding for their school from the Government, worth £1,300 per year.

Those parents whose children already qualify for free school meals under the Government's existing offer must also continue to apply for FSM as before.

5. What are the benefits of providing universal free school meals?

Extending free school meals to children who do not currently receive it, potentially saves families up to £440 across the year. Providing universal free school meals also removes the stigma associated with means-testing and helps improve take-up overall.

Food insecurity affects children's wellbeing, with children from families experiencing food insecurity more likely to suffer poor mental health. Without a healthy school lunch, children struggle to concentrate and learn in the classroom. A free school meal will help all children to reach their potential.

6. What types of meals are provided under this initiative?

Like with other free school meals, schools are expected to provide nutritious and balanced meals to children. The meals should meet the Government's food standards, which ensure that children receive a variety of food groups and essential nutrients.

7. What about children with specific dietary requirements?

Please inform the school if your child has any specific dietary requirements, so appropriate arrangements can be made for their meals.

8. I would prefer to send a packed lunch for my child. Can I still do this?

We hope you will take up the offer of support to your family but you will still be able to send a packed lunch for your child if you would prefer. Policies on packed lunches are set by individual schools.

9. Where can I find more information?

The Mayor has set up an online families hub with all of the information you need: <https://www.london.gov.uk/free-school-meals> You can also directly contact your school for information.

Next Steps – 5 minutes

- Provide information of the timeline and what to expect next

Closing Remarks – 5 minutes

- Summary of information provided
 - Thank them for their attendance
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Other formats and languages

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