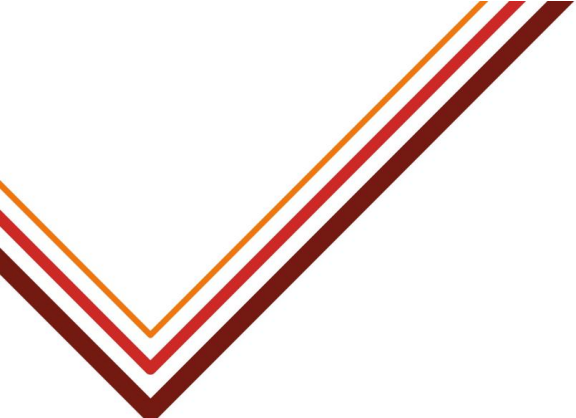




Free School Meals & Related funding

David Court – Head of School
Organisation & Commissioning



UFSM Programme Update

- The Mayor of London's Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) has been extended for 3 years until the end of the 2027/28 academic year.
- The first payment for 2025/26 has already been made to your school

Instalment	Payment date
1 - 50% of allocation	August 2025
2 - 25% of allocation	December 2025
3 - 25% of allocation	April 2026



How is the funding calculated?

- The 2025/26 funding is allocated based on your school's January 2025 census return.
- Schools are funded for 87% of pupils in Years 3 to 6 who were pupils NOT entitled to FSM (it was 90% in past years)
- Funding per child is £3.00 (per meal) x 190 school days.
- Jewish schools are funded for 100% of pupils in Years 3 to 6 who were pupils NOT entitled to FSM at £3.85/meal.



Claiming for higher than 87% take up

- Schools experiencing take up of more than 87% of eligible pupils will be able to claim additional funding.
- The process for evidencing and claiming the top up is yet to be advised for 25/26 - I will be in touch with further detail once they are advised to LAs.
- This top up payment will be made in May 2026.
- Jewish schools are already funded at 100% therefore are not eligible to claim the top-up



What about Universal Infant FSM (UIFSM) and Pupil Premium funding?

- The Mayor's UFSM is in addition to the UIFSM and Pupil Premium funding schools already receive.
- UIFSM and Pupil Premium funding is based on children registered as FSM eligible in your school census return.
- A **PLUS** and a **PROBLEM** - all children in Primary schools can take a free meal, but you still need to know whether they are eligible for FSM so you can claim the UIFSM and Pupil Premium funding.



How to maximise your funding

- To maximise your UIFSM and Pupil Premium funding you should **prompt families to register to have eligibility assessed**, even when they choose not to take a meal.
- The online application is confidential and simple to do via the Hackney Education website.
- You should **actively target and support vulnerable families** who may struggle to use the online application system.



How does it work?

- Parents apply via the [Hackney Education website](#)
- The Pupil Benefits team processes applications and determines who is eligible. The result is available for schools to view in SAM (School Access Module)
- SAM will show everyone who has applied **at any time in the past** and whether they are eligible or not eligible. Ineligible families are rechecked weekly.
- If a child on your roll does not appear in SAM it is likely they haven't applied ... support these families to apply



How does it work?

- The majority of families are expected to submit an [online FSM application](#)
- Schools can directly assist vulnerable families to create an account and apply online
- The [FSM FAQs for schools guide](#) outlines these and further options, gives an overview of how to use SAM, and answers many common questions.
- Full guidance for school is available on the [Services for Schools website](#)



The Pupil Benefits Team

- Kim McMillian - Pupil Benefits Manager
pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk / 020 8820 7437
- What the team does:
 - Process online FSM applications
 - Recheck ineligible applications weekly
 - Check Early Years applicants for FSM entitlement
 - Check Uniform Grant applicants for FSM entitlement
 - Conducts a Universal Registration process periodically



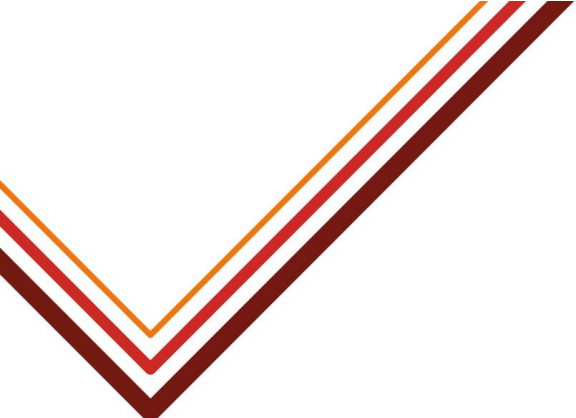
Universal Registration Process

- The team matches benefit and census data to identify potentially eligible families that haven't been assessed regarding eligibility for FSM.
- Eligibility is checked by the team and results show in SAM (either eligible or not eligible)
- 108 families (126 children) identified as potentially eligible for FSM in October 2025
 - 83 families (95 children) found eligible
 - 20 families (26 children) found ineligible
 - 5 families identified to schools to apply online.



FSM Protected Status Ends in August 2026

- Children eligible for free school meals/pupil premium currently have protected status until August 2026.
- The Pupil Benefits team will review all eligible pupils before August 2026, schools will be notified of this in advance.
- The ECS - Eligibility Checking Service that is used to check FSM eligibility is being replaced.
- The Pupil Benefits team will advise schools of any change to current processes and how it may affect you.



FSM data in SAM - Joiners

- Schools must **add a start date to SAM** for new children joining your roll via Hackney's In Year or Coordinated admission process so they show on your FSM list.
- Children admitted via a different route, e.g. out of borough children who have your school named on their Education, Health and Care Plan, need a CMJ (joiners file) to be sent to the Pupil Benefits Team for them to be added to your FSM list.
- If a child does not appear on your FSM list in SAM, it is likely that we do not know they are attending your school.



FSM data in SAM - Leavers

- Sending leavers information will ensure your SAM FSM list is kept accurate and up to date
- Schools **must** submit a CML (leavers file) to the Local Authority via AnyComms within five days of a child coming off your roll.
- If you encounter difficulties generating a leaver or joiner files please email Bo.Bagridge@hackney.gov.uk who will provide guidance



Questions?

David Court, Senior Responsible Officer, UFSM

david.court@hackney.gov.uk / 020 8820 7667

Kim Mcmillan, Pupil Benefits Manager, FSM

pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk / 020 8820 7437

**Bo Bagridge, Admissions and Pupil Benefits
Officer, Joiner/Leaver reporting**

bo.bagridge@hackney.gov.uk / 020 8356 4088