

12 May 2025

Dear

## **ATISN 24562 – Free School Meals**

### **Information requested**

Thank you for your request which I received on 19 March 2025. You asked for:

1. Details and a full breakdown of the total amount of expenditure on Free School Meals policy for each financial year since its implementation.
2. The total budget for Free School Meals policy for 2025-2026
3. The recent total figures of individuals eligible for free school meals.

We interpret this request to be in relation to Universal Primary Free School Meals which began implementation in September 2022.

### **Our response**

The information you requested is contained within the attached appendix.

### **Next steps**

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,  
Welsh Government,  
Cathays Park,  
Cardiff,  
CF10 3NQ

or Email: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto:Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales)

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow,

Cheshire,  
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

## **Appendix 1**

### **Freedom of Information Request ATISN 24562 - Free school meals**

1. Details and a full breakdown of the total amount of expenditure on Free School Meals policy for each financial year since its implementation.

The table below provides details of pre-implementation capital expenditure for 2021-22 and the revenue and capital expenditure for the delivery of Universal Primary Free School Meals during 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. Total expenditure for 2025/26 is not provided as the financial year does not end until March 2026.

Expenditure Category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Local Authority Revenue Grant Claims	-	17,379,965	54,667,960	79,378,370
Local Authority Capital Grant Claims	25,000,000	35,000,000	4,203,540	10,278,048
UPFSM Programme Costs (including research, evaluation, publicity campaign, secondee costs etc)	-	366,843	369,615	322,609
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000,000</b>	<b>52,746,810</b>	<b>59,241,115</b>	<b>89,979,027</b>

2. The total budget for Free School Meals policy for 2025-2026

Revenue funding of £93.5m has been made available to support delivery of Universal Primary Free School Meals during the 2025-26 financial year. Funding for the policy is demand led, and the final cost will depend on the level of take up of the offer.

Further details on the budget for 2025-26 can be found here:

[Draft Budget 2025 to 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

[Final Budget 2025 to 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

Additionally, £5m capital funding is available to local authorities on a business case basis where required.

3. The recent total figures of individuals eligible for free school meals.

To establish the number of additional primary school children eligible for free school meals from September 2024 as a result of the Universal Primary Free School Meal commitment, Welsh Government used the data in Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2024. Numbers are estimated by subtracting the number of pupils already eligible for free school meals through traditional benefits-based eligibility or transitional protections from the total number of primary pupils on roll.

This estimates an additional 174,491 primary learners are eligible for a free school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals through means-tested routes and transitional protection can be found in the census data link below.

[Pupil Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\)](#)

Updated data from the School Census in January 2025 will be published in Summer 2025 and will inform future estimates in relation to individuals eligible for Universal Primary Free School Meals from September 2025.