

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 5/2015

Date: 12 November 2015

To: All Members of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: This briefing note was as a result of discussion at the meeting of this Committee on 8 October 2015

Heading: Universal Infant Free School Meal Programme

From September 2014 all state funded schools were required to offer a free school meal (FSM) to all reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools in England. This included academies, free schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision as well as maintained schools. To provide these meals, revenue funding is currently allocated to these schools at a rate of £2.30 per meal taken.

In 2014 Medway Council received £566,681 from the Department for Education (DfE) to support all maintained and voluntary controlled (VC) schools in meeting the capital requirements of the implementation of the Universal Infant Free School Meal Programme. In addition, £98,445 was allocated, for Medway voluntary aided (VA) schools. Academies were funded through the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund.

In order to determine the requirements for those schools which fall under the responsibility of the local authority a full review of the capacity of schools to implement the programme was carried out. This included scoping of potential adaptation, equipment requirements, full feasibility studies and liaison with schools and their catering contractors. Practical considerations were taken into account, for example, the realistic potential for repurposing additional space within the school and/or placing additional equipment. The funding was distributed according to need based on this information. As a result of this 25 schools benefited from Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) Capital Funding towards equipment, refurbishment or alteration.

As a result of these works all Medway schools were able to deliver the UIFSM programme to all Reception, Y1 and Y2 children in September 2014.

In 2015 Medway Council received a further £674,282 capital funding for further works. This funding covers maintained, VC and VA schools. The funding has enabled a number of key projects to be undertaken:

- An extension to the kitchen at Byron Primary to provide additional preparation area to ensure the kitchen meets Environmental Health regulations.
- Refurbishment and extension at St Peter's Infant School
- The provision of a kitchen at St Nicholas Infant School, the only Medway school which currently does not have its own kitchen.
- Upgrading of equipment in St Michael's Primary School to enable the school to meet the demands of the number of children taking meals, most particularly to deliver the full range of menu items to this number of children.

Planning is also underway for additional projects at further schools requiring:

- Floor space expansion needed to accommodate additional food preparation space and equipment for the increased meal uptake
- Upgrades required to meet food safety and fire safety regulations

No further capital funding has been advised to support with the Universal Infant Free School Meal Programme.

Should the UIFSM programme end and no further capital funding be received, the programme would rely on continued contributions from the Capital Maintenance Programme. Only schools that do not meet food safety, health & safety or fire safety regulations would be prioritised for feasibility studies and funding. As equipment comes to 'end of life' and requires replacement there would be approximately 5 schools who would fall into this category.

Schools are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of equipment. Following any kitchen expansion refurbishment programme funded from the Capital Maintenance Programme it becomes the responsibility of the schools, as they are delegated funding within their budgets, to maintain, repair or replace kitchen equipment.

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