

Children, Young People and Families

School Food Service, Business Strategy
Service Manager : Leah Barratt
Level 7, West Wing
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PL
Tel: 0114 2735175
E-mail: leah.barratt@sheffield.gov.uk
www.sheffield.gov.uk



May 2014

To All Parent / Carers of Infant Children

Dear Parent/Carer

UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS – SEPTEMBER 2014

This letter is to tell you about the Government's new policy of a free meal for all infant children that will be introduced in schools from September 2014, and to let you know how you can help your school to provide this new and important service.

Why the Government Have Introduced a Free Meal for Infant Children

There are very high nutritional standards for school meals and they consistently offer children a third of their nutritional requirements every day which is essential to their growth and development. Having a meal at school has been proven to help children settle to learning quicker, improve their concentration and help with their energy levels to get them through an active school day. The Government have recognised that good food at school is particularly valuable for the youngest of our children and have therefore introduced a free meal for infants as a new legal duty for schools to deliver.

We hope that you will take up the offer of a free meal for your child from the start of the Autumn term in September. It will be a great way of giving your child the opportunity to enjoy a nutritionally balanced and healthy meal, eaten with their friends and learning all about how to socialise together in the dining room. It introduces them to a wide variety of foods as well as learning how to make choices and try different things.

It is likely that the numbers of meals provided every day by your school will go up in September. Where necessary school kitchens are being remodelled and additional staff recruited to make sure that although the numbers of meals increase, this will not compromise the quality of meals provided. So your school will be getting ready to provide many more meals from the start of the new term, keeping the quality and variety in place and we are working with them to achieve this deadline. There are some things, however, that you as a parent can do that will really help your school in making the new service a success and give your child a happy lunchtime.

How You Can Help Your School

1 Income Based Free School Meals

Schools will be given funding by the Government to provide free meals and this will come from different sources. Funding that is based on your family income levels is still needed and gives

schools a variety of ways to support the meal on offer but also individual children. For every child who qualifies for free meals due to family income or benefit levels, your school receives the maximum funding to support your child through something called the Pupil Premium. It is only available to schools **if you apply and are eligible** for income based free school meals. It also means that your child can have **free milk** at break-time. With Pupil Premium funding, schools can organise extra help and support for children such as more teaching assistants, set up breakfast clubs and buy learning tools for the classroom. It also helps schools to decide how much to charge for trips, music lessons or after school activities so it will really help your school if you qualify for income based free meals for lots of reasons.

Applying for free meals is very quick and easy so if you or your partner think you may qualify for free school meals, please still take the time to apply. Even though your child will be able to have a free meal anyway, **your school needs the funding that comes from Income Based Free School Meals**, receiving the right funding at the right time - now and in the future. To find out if you are eligible, please go to the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk and search for 'free school meals'. Or ring on 273 4567. It is a very quick and simple process.

2 Take Up the Meal

It would be useful to let your school know before the end of July if your child will be having a meal at school from the start of September. This will help the school get the right level of support in place in the dining room and also help the catering team get the right amount of food organised, otherwise they will have to guess how many meals to prepare on the first day of term.

3 Medical Diets

If your child has a medical condition that is affected by what they eat, we can help. The process is straightforward – please provide the details of your child's dietary needs by calling the School Food Service on 2735314 / 2052726 once you have the necessary medical evidence from your doctor, hospital or dietician. A copy of the evidence will be needed before the diet can be arranged. This is then used by the Nutritionist at Taylor Shaw, who will work out the best menu plan for your child and make sure that a suitable meal is ready in September. It is important that **you tell us before the school closes in July** to save any problems at the start of the new term in September. You can find more details about Medical Diets on our page on the Councils' website – just go to www.sheffield.gov.uk and search for 'school meals'.

We hope you find the information above useful, but if you have any queries, or want to know more about Universal Infant Free School Meals, please do not hesitate to contact us on the numbers below:

☎ (0114) 2052726 or (0114) 2735314 – for queries about Medical Diets

☎ (0114) 2734767 – for any other queries regarding school food.

Yours sincerely



Leah Barratt,
Service Manager
School Food Service