

**Oxfordshire Schools Forum
9 January 2018**

**Draft Schools Forum response to
DfE Consultation on Eligibility for free school meals and the early
years pupil premium under Universal Credit**

Settings		Sector		Voting Entitlement (for decision papers only)	
Academies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foundation Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	PVI Representative	
Maintained Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary	<input type="checkbox"/>	16-19 Representative	
PVI Nurseries	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	COTO Representative	
Special Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained Primary School Representatives	
Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	16+		Academy Primary School Representatives	
Schools Forum	<input type="checkbox"/>	High Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintained Secondary School Representatives	
				Academy Secondary School Representatives	
				Pupil Referral Unit Representative	
				Special School Representatives	
				Nursery Representative	

[See also OCC's response in Forum Paper 4.1]

Question 1: Do you agree with our proposed net earnings threshold to determine eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium under Universal Credit?

Leave Yes/No blank?

The methodology seems reasonable but it is difficult to comment on the proposed net earnings threshold.

Forum believes that it is absolutely essential that new money is provided to fully fund all of the additional children that will be entitled to Free School Meals (FSM), to pay for increased Pupil Premium and to fund the higher numbers in the funding formulae across all DSG Blocks.

Although paragraph 5.10 of the consultation gives assurance over the impact on Schools from the increase in eligibility as there is no detail of the financial support proposed it is difficult to comment on this. Again it is essential that new money is provided to fund this.

Question 2: Do you agree with our intention to protect those pupils who would otherwise lose their entitlement to free school meals, and those children who would otherwise lose their entitlement to the early years pupil premium, under the new eligibility criteria?

Yes. Provided it is funded

Question 3: Do you feel that the proposals in this consultation may adversely affect any children who share one or more of the relevant protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010?

No

Question 4: Do you have any views on the proposed management of the changes to the disadvantage measures or on the metrics we publish for the measurement of disadvantaged pupils' performance?

Yes.

Paragraph 5.1 refers to updating the checking system. This is a wholly inadequate response to the long-standing and overly bureaucratic and burdensome issue for schools trying to identify all eligible pupils whilst also trying to develop good relationships with vulnerable parents.

The Government should be informing Schools and LA's of their entitlement - they hold all the necessary data.

In July 2015 in THE PUPIL PREMIUM Next Steps published by the Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation it was stated that "The Government should consider introducing a data sharing system so that schools are automatically informed when pupils are entitled to free school meals and, therefore, pupil premium funding."

In March 2016 the DfE advised that "The Department is continuing to explore ways of increasing registration rates further."

[Hansard answer to written question 29996 7th March 2016 Answered 11th March 2016 by Sam Gyimah as Parliamentary under-secretary of State for Childcare and Education (DfE)].

Forum is extremely concerned about the impact on the comparative Data that the change to Universal Credit is already having. We do not believe that the proposals in Paragraph 5.14 are sufficient. We do not believe that comparative data at school level should be published during the transition period as some schools will inevitably be judged unfairly whatever caveats are noted in the small print. Of course schools' leaders, including their Governing Boards, should continue to robustly interrogate the data at school level but in the full knowledge of the constraints on the available data.

Forum requests that DfE publishes appropriate guidance for school leaders.

For ease of reference this is the link to the actual consultation document so that Forum members can read in particular, Para. 5.4 apologies because it is a PDF document I do not seem to be able to copy and paste it here.

https://consult.education.gov.uk/healthy-pupil-unit/fsm/supporting_documents/Consultation%20%20Free%20school%20meals%20and%20EYPP%20under%20Universal%20Credit.pdf

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