

## **Report to the Schools Forum 18 November 2021**

### **De-delegation for Free School Meal Eligibility Checks**

#### **1 Introduction**

1.1 De-delegation decisions only apply to maintained, mainstream schools and not to academies, special schools or PRUs. Voting is as follows:

- maintained primary school representatives, for maintained primary de-delegations;
- maintained secondary school representatives, for maintained secondary de-delegations.

1.2 Services for which de-delegation can be agreed are as follows:

- additional school improvement services
- contingencies (including schools in financial difficulties and deficits of closing schools)
- behaviour support services
- support to underperforming ethnic groups and bilingual learners
- free school meals eligibility
- insurance
- museum and library services
- staff costs supply cover (for example, long-term sickness, maternity, trade union and public duties)
- licences and subscriptions; except for those paid for by the DfE.

1.3 For the last three years, de-delegation in T&W has only been agreed for one service, free school meal eligibility checking. For 2022/23 we will also be requesting de-delegation for school improvement service due to the forthcoming reduction, then abolition, of the School Improvement Grant (see separate paper covering this).

1.4 For 2021/22, de-delegation for free school meal eligibility checks was agreed both by representatives of maintained primary schools and maintained secondary schools.

1.5 DfE rules around de-delegation and academy conversion are as follows:

- Any maintained schools that convert to academy status on or before 1 April will not be subject to de-delegation;
- De-delegation amounts for converters in the summer term will be retained by the LA for the period until 1 September 2022;
- De-delegation amounts for converters in the Autumn or Spring terms will be retained by the LA for the period until 31 March 2023.

#### **2 Proposed de-delegation for free school meal eligibility checks 2022/23**

2.1 The following de-delegation is proposed for maintained schools for 2022/23.

Service	Basis of de-delegation	Estimated Total
Free school meals eligibility	£8.50 for each pupil eligible for free school meals, on October 2021 census	£30,000

- 2.2 The amount per pupil is proposed to be the same for primary and secondary schools as there is no difference in the work carried out.
- 2.3 In terms of the service provided, T&W's benefits team process the applications for Free School Meals (FSM). Claimants who receive some tax credits, certain benefits or who are asylum seekers complete an application for free school meals for their children and their entitlement is assessed by the benefits team using the government's Eligibility Checking Service. Entitlement is reassessed at regular intervals.
- 2.4 In order to avoid schools having to make individual arrangements for this process to be completed, **it is proposed that maintained primary and secondary schools de-delegate a sum of £8.50 per pupil eligible for free school meals at the October 2021 census.** This would result in around £30,000 being de-delegated. The amount per pupil is unchanged from the last three years.
- 2.5 Any institutions that are not part of de-delegation or agreed contribution arrangements will be charged for free school meal eligibility checks.

Tim Davis  
Group Accountant  
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