

Education, Young people and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee

17/05/2024

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UPFSM) PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose:

To update on the progress made on the roll-out of UPFSM across Carmarthenshire.

The Scrutiny Committee Is Asked To:-

Review and assess the information contained in the Report and provide any recommendations, comments, or advice.

Reason(s)

To enable Committee to keep abreast of the roll out of provision and review the challenges faced by the Catering Service.

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder:- Cllr. Glynog Davies (Education and Welsh Language)

Directorate:

Education & Children

Name of Head of Service:

Simon Davies

Report Author:

Chris Pugh

Designations:

Head of Access to Education

Senior Catering Manager

Tel Nos. / E Mail Address:

Sidavies@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

01267 246471

cgpugh@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UPFSM)

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE ROLL-OUT

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The attached document provides a brief update on the roll out of the Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) offer. The report considers the following:

- The scale of the roll out and provision to serve all primary education settings.
- Progress to date against Welsh Government targets.
- How specialist diets are managed
- The funding received to expand provision.
- An overview of the challenges in terms of capacity issues, including:
 - Kitchen facilities
 - Staffing resources

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?

YES - UPFSM Roll Out in Carmarthenshire update March 2024

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :



Signed:

Head of Access to Education

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Physical Assets	Staffing Implications	Biodiversity and Climate Change
YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

In December 21 the Welsh Labour/Plaid Cymru Co-operation Agreement announced the expansion of free school meals to all full-time primary school pupils in maintained settings in Wales (UPFSM). This policy focuses on tackling child poverty and embedding healthy eating habits from a young age.

Universal Primary Free School Meal (UPFSM) provision will help remove the stigma associated with Free School Meals (FSM) and encourage a greater number of families to take up the offer. The Child Poverty Action Group note that take-up is higher among pupils who would usually be eligible for FSM when a universal approach is in place. Additionally, UPFSM will relieve financial pressure on families.

3.Finance

A total of £3.8M funding has been received to facilitate the roll out as follows:

- Preparation Grant - £97,605.63
- Capital Grant 1st payment – £1,570,320.00
- Capital Grant 2nd payment - £2,198,448.00

5. Risk Management Issues

The increase in the number of primary meals provided has meant an increase in the risk posed by special diets.

We ask the parents of pupils with special dietary requirements to make the Headteacher aware of their needs.

A robust system is now in place to identify pupils with special dietary needs and cater for them safely. Work is also underway to collate all the information in relation to special dietary requirements centrally.

6. Physical Assets

A vast amount of work has already been completed in our school kitchens and is still on-going to increase capacity and improve the infrastructure. Final works are due for completion during the Easter break 2024, ensuring all kitchens have capacity to cater for a theoretical 100% uptake of UPFSM across all age groups.

During the initial phases work was prioritised to take advantage of the Summer breaks, allowing for forward planning and mitigation of delays caused by equipment lead in times. Through 2023 and into 2024 these lead times have steadily decreased as market pressures have eased.

7. Staffing Implications

There are ongoing staffing pressures within the service which have further been exacerbated by the roll out of UPFSM. Rural areas are particularly affected. The demographic and skill set of the current workforce presents the greatest ongoing risk to the service. The required pace of change has increased levels of sickness and absenteeism which in turn places pressure on the area managers within the department.

Uptake monitoring is conducted on a quarterly basis to ensure the labour needs of each school are identified and actioned through either amending the contracted hours of current staff or advertising positions.

8. Biodiversity and Climate Change

Additional equipment required by the implementation of UPFSM will result in additional energy consumption.

Where possible equipment installed for the implementation of UPFSM is as energy efficient as possible e.g. electric rather than gas.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED YES	Include any observations here	
Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW.		
Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire UPFSM – Information on website	N/A	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/school-meals/free-school-meals/
Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language – Written Statement	N/A	Written Statement: Extending Free School Meal entitlement to all primary school children (17 December 2021) GOV.WALES