

**P-06-1442 Extend Universal Free School Meals to secondary schools -
Correspondence from St Joseph's Catholic & Anglican School and TCC
Youth in Action Group, 03 October 2024**

Senedd Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Dear Members of the Senedd Committee,

Re: Support for the No Hungry Learners Campaign

We, the students of St Joseph's Catholic & Anglican School, are writing to you as part of the TCC (Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru / Together Creating Communities) Youth in Action group to express our deep concern about the issue of school meal debt and its impact on young learners in Wales. Our campaign, #NoHungryLearners, aims to alleviate the burden of school meal debt and ensure that all children have access to adequate food, which is essential for their physical, mental, and academic development.

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that children and young people should be able to live in a way that helps them reach their full potential. This includes having access to adequate food and housing. Unfortunately, many students in our community are struggling with school meal debt, which not only affects their nutrition but also their ability to focus and succeed in their studies.

Our campaign has been primarily focused in Wrexham, but we believe this issue needs to be addressed across the whole of Wales. Throughout 2023, we have been actively working on this campaign. We have met with our Headteacher, Mr. Wilkinson, as well as local representatives including Ken Skates MS, Lesley Griffiths MS, and Education Lead for Wrexham, Cllr Phil Wynne, to discuss the issues and potential solutions. Our efforts were also highlighted at the National Child Poverty Summit in Swansea, where we presented our campaign and its goals to a wide audience, including the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes.

We believe that by addressing school meal debt, we can remove a significant barrier to education and help all children thrive academically. We urge the Senedd Committee to support our campaign and take action to ensure that no child in Wales goes hungry at school.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your support in making a positive change for the children of Wales.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

On behalf of the students of St Joseph's Catholic & Anglican School and TCC Youth in Action Group

Statement of Evidence: No Hungry Learners Campaign

Campaign Overview: The TCC (Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru / Together Creating Communities) Youth in Action group, comprising students from St Joseph's Catholic & Anglican School in Wrexham, launched the #NoHungryLearners campaign to address the issue of school meal debt and its impact on students' well-being and academic performance.

Key Findings:

- **Survey Results:** A survey conducted within the school revealed alarming statistics:
 - 30% of students reported being refused a meal due to debt on their account.
 - 30% of students had to skip a meal at school due to lack of money.
 - 73% of students who were refused a meal were informed about their debt in front of their peers, causing unnecessary shame and stress¹.

Campaign Activities:

- **Meetings and Advocacy:** The youth group met with key stakeholders, including:
 - Mr. Wilkinson, Headteacher of St Joseph's.
 - Ken Skates MS and Lesley Griffiths MS.
 - Cllr Phil Wynne, Education Lead for Wrexham.
 - Rocio Cifuentes, Children's Commissioner for Wales²¹.
- **National Child Poverty Summit:** The campaign was presented at the National Child Poverty Summit in Swansea, highlighting the issue to a broad audience of community and charity groups, as well as policymakers².

Impact and Progress:

- **Policy Changes:** Following discussions with the Headteacher, measures were implemented to ensure that students are discreetly offered a meal even if their account is in debt, in line with council policy¹.

- **Community Engagement:** The campaign has garnered support from local politicians and community organizations, enhancing its reach and impact¹.

Supporting Materials:

- **Campaign Video:** A video summarizing the campaign's goals and activities was created and presented at various events².
- **Attachments:** This statement includes a detailed letter and the campaign video for further reference.

Future Steps:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continued efforts to monitor the implementation of policies and support students facing meal debt.
- **Expansion:** Plans to extend the campaign's reach across Wales, advocating for systemic changes to eliminate school meal debt and ensure no child goes hungry at school.

Request for Support: We urge the Senedd Committee to support the #NoHungryLearners campaign and take necessary actions to address school meal debt across Wales. Ensuring that all children have access to adequate food is crucial for their academic success and overall well-being.