



Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-518  
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/05357/14

William Powell AM  
Chair Petitions Committee

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11 November 2014

Dear William

Thank you for your recent letter, received 30 October, regarding Free School Meals (FSM).

Ms Dodds is correct that the Welsh Government received funding as a consequence of England's decision to introduce FSM for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. However, Wales is a devolved government, and as such is not bound by the education policy decisions of England. Furthermore, the funding sent to the Welsh Government was not sufficient to put in place the same FSM scheme as that being introduced in England - UK Government departments submitted an additional 'top-slice' which provided supplementary funding for the scheme in England, but this was not replicated in Wales.

We used some of the funding consequential to launch Schools Challenge Cymru. This innovative and exciting initiative will inject resources, alongside proven expertise, to deliver a package of tailored support to meet the needs of 40 of our most challenged secondary schools and their cluster primaries. Schools Challenge Cymru is about recognising that some schools face unique challenges and that these require more intensive, additional support, above and beyond that which is provided as a matter of course.

The programme's concentration of efforts on a fifth of Welsh secondary schools in particularly challenging circumstances has the potential to encourage wider change. Alongside the 40 Pathways to Success Schools, many other schools in Wales will also benefit. This includes each school's cluster primaries and some of Wales' finest practitioners and highest performing schools, who will play a key role as they share expertise and leadership.

This collaborative approach will generate important learning with the potential to stimulate system-wide improvements.

We continue to be committed to ensuring that FSM are provided to those learners who need them most. In addition, it is important to remember that Wales led the way by introducing universal free breakfasts in maintained primary schools in 2004. Now, under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, local authorities have a duty to ensure that the provision of primary school free breakfasts continues in schools in Wales. According to the 2014 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), 82.6% of all maintained primary schools in Wales operate a free breakfast club.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

**Huw Lewis AC / AM**

Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau  
Minister for Education and Skills