

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
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Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1178
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/10796/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
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8 August 2021

Dear Jack

Thank you for your letter of 22 July about the Petition P-06-1178 (Free school meals for all pupils in Wales).

Free school meal provision continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government and we are committed to ensuring that our learners who are most in need continue to benefit from this provision. Our Programme for Government includes a commitment to continue review the eligibility criteria for free school meals, extending entitlement as far as resources allow. Since the start of the pandemic the number of learners in receipt of free school meals has increased steadily.

The latest provisional Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2021 data shows there are 108,203 pupils eligible for free school meals (FSMs). This figure is an increase of almost 18,000 pupils since the 2020 PLASC data showed there was 90,662 pupils eligible for FSMs. This increase supports the need to review the eligibility criteria for free school meals and I am pleased to report that we have now commenced this work, gathering data and setting out a structure and the scope of the review, which includes careful consideration of research and evidence, such as that commissioned by the Bevan Foundation and the Wales Anti-Poverty Coalition. The scope of the review will include families with no recourse to public funds who are living in poverty.

I will provide an update on the progress of the review and a timetable for completing this work when we return in September.

Yours sincerely,

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.