



Jane Bryant MS
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

25 January 2024

Dear Jayne

Free School Meal Holiday provision

Thank you for your letter of 18 December in which you asked specific questions about the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) and our consideration of alternative schemes or measures to the holiday free school meal provision.

SHEP, which is branded as Food and Fun, is not a replacement scheme for holiday free school meal provision and operates only during the school summer holiday period for a minimum of 12 days. There are currently no plans to extend SHEP to other holiday periods. £4.85m provided by Welsh Government in 2023-4 enabled schemes to operate during Summer 2023.

Data on SHEP participation levels during Summer 2023 is available and is attached to this letter. The WLGA gather and analyse the data (year group, gender, and free school meal information) and has given permission for the data to be shared with Committee.

The decision not to reinstate provision of free school meals during school holidays, was informed by an integrated impact assessment (IIA), published [here](#), and recognised the negative impact of this decision. However as previously stated, due to the significant financial pressures facing the Welsh budget, provision of free school meals during the holidays was simply unaffordable and has ceased indefinitely.

The Welsh Government has a range of mitigating measures in place, as identified within the IIA. We have also provided a further £2m this year to support community food organisations to help families experiencing food poverty. Our support for food partnerships has also helped to enhance activity in each local authority area which is helping to put in place structures to tackle the root causes of food poverty and ensure that limited resources are targeted at the areas of greatest need.

During the school day, I committed to increase the availability of free school meals. Working with our Cooperation Agreement partners, Plaid Cymru, we are rolling out universal free school meals to primary school children. To date more than 15 million additional free

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales

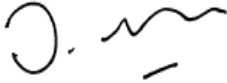
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

meals have been served across Wales, with around 145,000 more pupils eligible since the beginning of this academic year.

I do, however, understand how difficult this is for families and my officials have written to local authorities reminding them of their discretion to provide meals without charging, and of the expectation that no child should be denied an offer of a meal if they arrive at school hungry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Attendance



The WLGA provided an attendance sheet for schemes to take a log of all registered children and mark their attendance at Food and Fun. These sheets, which were anonymised, were then submitted to the WLGA.

In 2023, Food and Fun was delivered to 278.75 cohorts across 175 schemes, creating 11,150 places for children per operating day.

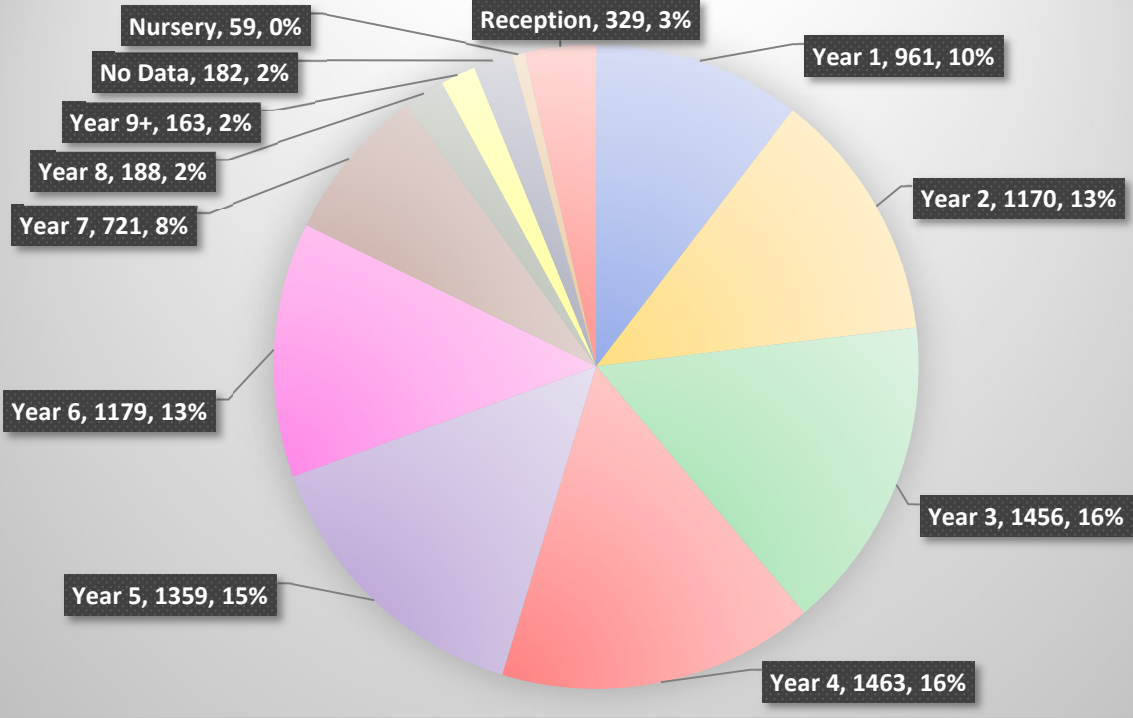
WLGA received attendance data from 154 schemes and one special school was exempt from this analysis due to utilising a different timetable model. Therefore, this analysis represents those 153 schemes (88%) delivering Food and Fun in 2023.

Based on returns from 153 schemes	2022	2023
Number of funded places for children	7,740	9,770
Potential Attendances	101,469	128,810
Total Actual Attendances	67,907 (67%)	82,241 (64%)
Number of children who attended at least once	6884	8546
...of which eFSM	2906 (42%)	3793 (44%)
Average number of days attended per registered child	8.8	8.9

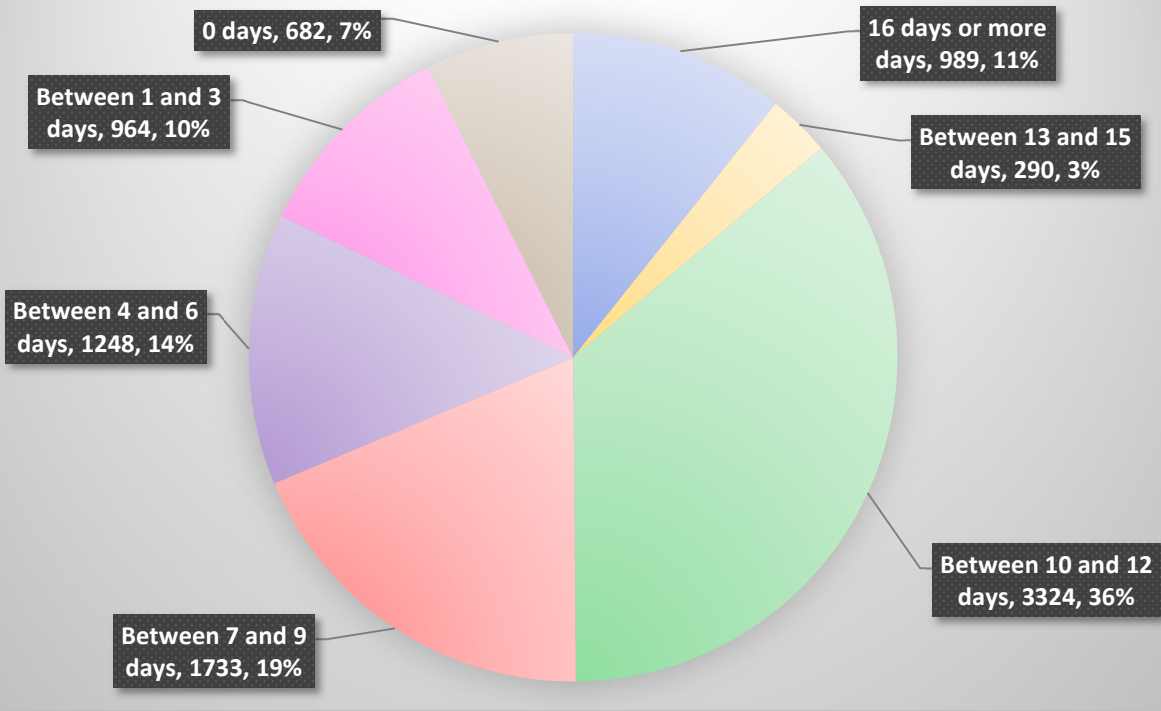




Year Group Split



Days Attended Per Child





Gender Split		
Gender	Count	%
M	4603	50%
F	4525	49%
Non-Binary	4	0.04%
No Data	98	1.1%

Please note that Year Group Split chart and Gender Split table above are inclusive of all registered children and therefore includes the 776 children who were registered for the scheme but did not attend.

