

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services Committee	13/12/2019
Subject: Free school meals for all children attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School – Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For decision
Report author: Theresa Shortland, Head of Service – Education and Early Years	

Summary

This report updates Members on the impact of the pilot project to provide all pupils receiving free school meals at Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School. From the spring term 2018, the offer of a free school meal was extended to all pupils attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School in years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

The impact of all pupils receiving free school meals outlined in this report has been positive and met the aims of the pilot. The aims were to enhance academic attainment, encourage positive attitudes to healthy eating, and to help low-income families.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note the impact of the pilot project and agree to continue to fund the free school meals for all children attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School. The funding will be sourced from the Education & Early Years' Service budget, subject to annual review.

Main Report

Background

2. All Government-funded schools must offer free school meals to every pupil in reception, years 1 and 2. All pupils entitled to pupil premium funding are also entitled to free school meals. The universal infant free school meals are funded by the Government and allocated to schools via local authorities. The total allocation for each school is based on the average number of pupils they record in their school census each term.
3. The statutory school food standards apply to schools maintained by local authorities in England. These school food standards are to ensure that food provided to pupils in school is nutritious and of high quality. The standards also

promote good nutritional health for all pupils and protect those who are nutritionally vulnerable by promoting good eating behaviour.

4. In May 2018, a report outlining the proposals to introduce the offer of free school meals to all pupils attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School was agreed by this Committee. Funding of £73,000 for the financial year 2018/19 was secured from the City of London 'Priority Investment Pot' to undertake a pilot in support of this proposal. From the spring term 2018 to summer term 2019 (four school terms) all children have been offered a healthy balanced meal at lunchtime at school at no cost to the pupil.

Current Position

5. The offer of free school meals was extended in the spring term 2018 to all pupils attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School in years 3, 4, 5 and 6. The take-up of the offer is currently 99.7%. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in academic year 2017/18 was 17.5%.
6. The aims of the pilot were to enhance academic attainment, encourage positive attitudes to healthy eating, and to help low-income families. Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School has evaluated the impact of all pupils receiving free school meals in the summer term 2019. (Appendix 1)
7. In terms of academic progress, the educational outcomes for the school in 2018/19 were excellent and an improvement on previous years. The school recognises that these outcomes are not solely associated with free meals, but staff have noticed that, through having a healthy and balanced lunch, the children were able to focus and concentrate better in lessons during the afternoon.
8. The main impact has been on the increased and high take-up of the offer at 99.7%. The evaluation has identified that the offer has eased the poverty gap within the school. This has also enabled children to develop an interest in food and food waste over the last year. The report identified that 87% of children now claim that the school encourages them to eat, drink and exercise properly. Through daily hot lunches in school, the children are also developing their cutlery skills.
9. Pupils at the school have also been interested in supporting local homeless people. The children invited staff from the City of London Homeless team to visit the school and talk about homelessness and ways they could support homeless people locally. An outcome was that the children have chosen St Mungo's as one of the class charities; they have also collected food for the local food bank.
10. A further outcome has been the reduction of staff time for administrative duties such as the collection of dinner monies and chasing of debts.

11. The original proposal for the pilot suggested that if the pilot was a success following the evaluation from Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School a decision would be made on the sustained funding for this proposal.
12. From September 2019 we have continued to fund a free school meal for all pupils at the school with funding from the DCCS budget. Based on the success of the pilot members are asked to agree to continue to fund the free school meals for all children attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School. The funding will be sourced from the City local risk budget and subject to annual review.

Conclusion

13. The report identifies outcomes that have met the original aims of the pilot. The aims were to enhance academic attainment, encourage positive attitudes to healthy eating, and to help low-income families by offering a free school meal to all pupils at John Cass's Foundation Primary School.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. This initiative fits in with one of the City of London's key strategic aims of 'Enabling children, young people and adults to learn, thrive and achieve their full potential'.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – Report from the Head Teacher at Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School on the impact of all pupils receiving free school meals (summer term 2019).

Background Papers

- Community and Children's Services Committee, 08/06/2018 – Free school meals for all children attending Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School.

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Appendix 1.

Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School Free school meals evaluation report

Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in academic year 2017/18: 17.5%

Take up of the City's offer of Free School Lunches: 99.7%

Why falling numbers of pupil premium children does not mean that our children are less in need of free school lunches than other children:

Pupils are eligible for free school meals if they are in Key Stage 2 and qualify for the pupil premium. In order to qualify for the pupil premium, the stipulation is that a family's net income is less than £7,400. This figure was introduced in April 2018. Prior to 2018, families who received one of a number of benefits and had an annual gross income of up to £16,190 were eligible.

The Pupil Premium purely takes family income into account. It does not take the number of members within the family into account – a one-child family and a five-child family would be treated the same way. Similarly, it does not take the number of occupants in the household into account.

Our school community is one of large and extended families living together, with just one earner. For example, an overcrowded flat of seven, with one employed adult on a low income would have great difficulties in providing substantial meals daily and paying for a school meal or providing a healthy packed lunch. For this reason, the City's provision of free school lunches has been invaluable to our students and their families.

Impact of all children eating a school hot meal at lunch times:

- In terms of academic progress, we have just experienced the best pupil outcomes in many years. Whilst it is impossible to link the outcomes purely with free meals, we can definitively say that through having a healthy and balanced lunch, the children were able to focus and concentrate better in lessons during the afternoon.
- Children's engagement in afternoon learning is high. Children are able to participate fully in their learning and staff are not constrained by having to put maths and English lessons in the mornings. This allows for the profile of all other curriculum subjects to be raised.
- We can ensure that all children have a balanced meal at least once per day.
- The children have developed a real interest in food and food waste over the last year:
 - They have been keen to collect food for the local food bank and have suggested doing it on a more regular basis.
 - They have chosen St Mungo's as one of the class charities to support this year, making sure the local homeless community are well looked after and have food to eat.
 - A number of our children and families have also become actively involved with OLIO, the food-sharing app and now collect leftover food from local shops to share with homeless people and others who need food.
- 87% of children now claim that the school encourages them to eat, drink and exercise properly.
- Through daily hot lunches in school, our children are developing social skills they may not otherwise have, due to the reduction in the number of families who eat around a table together.



Children are also developing their cutlery skills, something that an increasing number of children are entering school without.

- Reduction in administrative duties for office staff – such as collection of dinner monies and chasing of debts.
- School meals are funded, and all school funds can be allocated directly to teaching and learning rather than supporting families who cannot provide their children with healthy lunches.

School children's comments on the City's provision of free lunches:

"Please keep our school lunches free. It helps my parents because they found it hard to afford before." Y6.

"I try different foods that I don't get at home." Y2.

"Thank you for our lunches." Y3.

"I like being able to eat with my friends." Y3.

"It would be really good if we could keep the school lunches free because some of the children don't get any other hot meals." Y6.

"School dinners give me more energy." Y5.



"It's good how we all eat together; even the teachers. The TAs make sure we eat a healthy meal." Y4.

"I eat peas now. I didn't before." Y1.

"The yoghurt and fruit pudding is really good." Y4.

"My class like the chicken pie. I think it's good because we are all warm when we go to the playground and it's cold." Y5.

Staff comments on the City's provision of free lunches:

"Children are really aware of which food groups they need to eat."

"Children like the puddings but know that having cake every day isn't good for them. They help to create the menus."

"Children have the confidence to tell adults off if they don't have enough vegetables or salad on their plate."

"Some of our children with dietary needs who always had packed lunches are eating the school lunches some days. They want to be like their friends."