



City of Westminster

**COUNCILLOR ADAM HUG
LEADER OF WESTMINSTER COUNCIL**

**COUNCILLOR TIM ROCA
DEPUTY LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING AND LEISURE**

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Wednesday 7 December 2022

Dear parent,

The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a significant impact on many Westminster families, and it is becoming more difficult for many to manage increasing food and energy bills. As a council, we are taking action by stepping in and supporting our residents who are feeling the impact of this crisis.

That's why we are very pleased to let you know that we are **offering free lunches for all Westminster primary-aged children in Years 3 to 6, saving parents up to £550 per child, per year.** This funding now means that all Westminster primary-aged children attending schools in Westminster will receive a free, nutritious lunch in term-time, ensuring they can thrive at school by benefitting their learning and improving their overall health. This is in addition to the £10 million support package for help with energy costs and assistance committed by the council during this crisis.

Families whose children are eligible, must continue to register on the government's website for the Free School Meal scheme as per the current process. This is to ensure your child can still access free activities and food over the school holidays as part of the government's Holiday and Activity and Food programme. It also means your child's school will receive additional funding, known as the Pupil Premium.

To find out more about the Free School Lunch Offer please visit our website at www.westminster.gov.uk/free-school-lunch-offer.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Adam Hug
Leader of the Council
Member for Westbourne**

**Councillor Tim Roca
Deputy Leader
Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning & Leisure
Member for Harrow Road Ward**



APPENDIX:

Free Lunch Offer in Westminster State Schools – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is eligible for Westminster’s new free lunch offer?

We have taken the decision to ensure that every school age child attending a **state-funded primary school** within Westminster will be eligible for a free lunch during term time. This means that all children in Key Stage 1 and 2 (for example from Reception to Year 6) will be offered a free meal. This extends the Government’s existing Universal Free School Meal Offer.

2. Why is the council looking to provide free lunches?

The cost-of-living crisis has resulted in even more households experiencing financial hardship, unable to meet growing costs. Beyond Key Stage 1 (Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6), pupils need to meet restrictive eligibility criteria in order to continue to receive Free School Meals. This low threshold means that many children from working families in poverty are not entitled to Free School Meals. Universal free school lunches could save families over £550 per year, per child. National research has also demonstrated the benefit of Free School Meals in increasing attendance and attainment, as well as healthy bodyweights.

3. How long will the Free School Lunch Offer run for?

This local offer has been introduced in light of the current cost-of-living crisis. Funding is being agreed for the next 18 months (January 2023 to the end of the summer term 2024) but there is an ambition to extend the offer. Schools will start to offer funding to parents from January, this will either be through vouchers to the value of £3 per day, or where possible, through a free hot meal at lunchtime.

4. What type of meal will be offered?

It is our aspiration that every eligible child will receive a healthy hot lunch, in line with the government’s healthy eating standards. However, we know that this will require time for schools to mobilise and may not be possible in every school. Where a hot lunch cannot be offered, food vouchers to the value of £3 per day, will be provided by schools to parents to pay for a packed lunch. Please speak to your child’s school for more information on how they will be implementing the scheme and the available food offer.

5. What if I don’t want my child to access the Free School Lunch Offer?

If your child does not need a free lunch offered through this initiative because you have sufficient lunch arrangements in place, please contact your school to let them know that you would like to opt out of the Free Lunch Offer. This will enable the school to make best use of the funds.

6. My child is already receiving a Universal Free School Meal, what does this mean for them?

All children in Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) already benefit from a national, Government-wide Universal Free School Meal and will continue to benefit from this. A child moving into Year 3 from September 2023 at a Westminster primary school will continue to have access to a free school lunch which will be funded by Westminster City Council.



7. My child is already receiving government funded, means tested, Free School Meals or may be eligible for them, what does this mean for them?

If your child is eligible or may be eligible for Free School Meals, you will continue to receive a free meal as normal. If you think that your child is eligible for government funded free school meals, then you must still apply for it. This means that your child will continue to benefit from a free lunch throughout their time in school. It also means that your child can access free activities and food over the school holidays as part of the government's Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) and food vouchers during the holidays at a value of £3.50 per day, funded via the Government's Household Support Fund. Additionally, your school will receive a higher rate of government funding, as part of the Pupil Premium Grant.

8. Why is funding only being made available to Primary school children?

At present, we are only able to extend Free Lunch Offer to every school age child attending a state funded primary school within Westminster. This does not cover nursery and secondary school pupils. We will continue to monitor the cost-of-living crisis and allocate funding to reach as many residents as possible through a range of different initiatives.

9. My child lives in Westminster but attends an out-of-borough school, are they eligible?

This local scheme provides support to primary aged pupils attending schools in Westminster. It will be rolled out by local schools within the borough and it is not possible to implement for pupils attending out of borough schools.