

P-04-518

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on 17th April
2014

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The National Assembly For Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
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20th March 2014

Dear Petitions Committee,

Whilst I appreciate the Minister's response regarding free school meals, I was very much disappointed by it.


Since I started my petition, it has come to my attention that the Scottish Government has now also agreed to introduce universal free school meals. I believe this once again shows how important this is. Welsh families are going to be at a huge disadvantage.

Not only will free school lunches ensure that all pupils are enjoying a healthy lunch, which helps them concentrate better, but it also helps the family budget. It is also the case that 25% of all pupils eligible for free school meals do not even claim their meals. One of the reasons often cited for this is the fear of stigma. Universal free schools meals would put an end to this fear of stigma.

The Minister referred to free school breakfasts. I welcome this initiative, but see no reason for it to be an excuse not to introduce free universal lunches. It should be pointed out that only around 24% of primary age pupils in 2012-13 took a free school breakfast. Free school lunches would reach practically every child.

This policy also has cross-party appeal. While the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and the Scottish National Party are in the process of introducing free schools meals, both Labour and Plaid Cymru's 2010 General Election manifestos pledged to explore the potential to also introduce the policy. The benefits are evident. Therefore I call on the Welsh Government to think again and agree to introduce this policy.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Dodds