

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1178
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/11178/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

19 October 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 21 September 2021 (regarding petition P-06-1178-21 Free School Meals for all pupils in Wales).

The review of free school meal eligibility criteria will include a number of options. Whilst I have not ruled anything out, funding is not unlimited and making universal provision of free school meals would necessitate difficult choices being made elsewhere. Most importantly I want to ensure that funding is used to benefit families who need it the most.

I want to be explicit that the review is designed to ensure that more children in Wales receive free school meals, and, as such, I will be extending eligibility. However, funding is an important consideration because extending eligibility for free school meals is a long term financial commitment which will impact beyond the term of the current Welsh Government. There is a balance to be achieved between benefitting as many families as possible whilst making the optimum use of public money.

The review is being taken forward via a number of work streams, one of which will consider research and learning from the approaches adopted elsewhere. Officials will look at the examples Mr Johannes cites in his letter to you in order to see if there is good practice that is relevant for Wales.

Another work stream of the review is considering the impact of changing eligibility criteria on those grants and initiatives that are predicated on numbers eligible for free school meals. This must not be allowed to stand in the way of an increase in free school meal eligibility. However, as Mr Johannes points out, it is vital that if we de-couple these grants and initiatives from free school meal eligibility, we must try to ensure that families do not miss out as a result.

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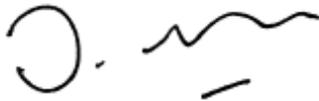
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

Mr Johannes suggests joined up thinking and costing and I would like to confirm that I intend to put in place arrangements for monitoring uptake and evaluating the impact of any changes I make. This will include increasing the understanding of the impact of receiving free school meals on the health and educational attainment of eligible children and young people.

I hope that the committee finds this information helpful. However, should members require further details, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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