

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1140
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/02174/21

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

8 April 2021

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter regarding Petition P-05-1140, requesting that I revise guidance on free school meal provision to clearly specify that local authorities should operate a number of systems in parallel, including cash or voucher payments.

The Welsh Government's policy on free school meal provision continues to be that local authorities should be allowed the flexibility to decide which means of provision works best in their area. As I stated in my letter of 11 February to the Petitions Committee, local authorities have considered the means of free school meal provision they have adopted very seriously and I understand that at least one has both considered this issue and made a decision at Council level. Specifying that the systems local authorities operate should include cash or voucher payments will undermine decisions made locally but, it could also be impractical.

The guidance already encourages local authorities to run a number of systems in parallel but does not specify which system a local authority should adopt. This flexibility is important because it is possible that a local authority might not have in place the appropriate systems to provide vouchers or payments or may consider that vouchers or payments will not meet the needs of their resident populations. As I have said previously there will also be occasions when vouchers or payments will not meet the needs of vulnerable children.

With the third phase of our planned return to school enabling all learners across all schools and settings to access education provision on site from 12 April, my expectation is that the need for local authorities to make alternative provision for free school meals will be greatly diminished and that eligible children will soon be able to receive a healthy, nourishing lunch at school.

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

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

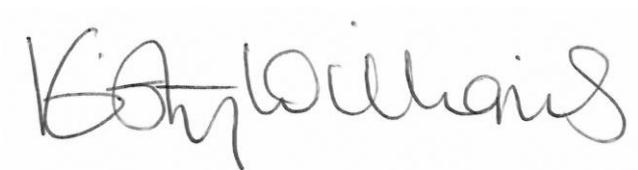
Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

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.

I hope the Petitions Committee find the information I have provided helpful, and, in the event that further details are required, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'W'.

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