

**ANGUS COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 25 AUGUST 2011**  
**UPDATE ON SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE**  
**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

This report provides an overview of school meals provision in Angus schools.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Education Committee note the contents of this report.

**2. BACKGROUND**

**2.1** At its meeting of 3 June 2010 the Education Committee considered report 426/10, and approved the introduction of a free breakfast service in 9 schools.

**2.2.** This approach was followed by the publication in October 2008 of the evaluation of a Scottish Government pilot to provide free school meals to P1-P3 pupils in a small number of authorities. Initially, the Scottish Government proposed that all P1-P3 pupils should receive a free lunch in accordance with the Concordat commitment to provide local authorities with the power to provide free school lunches to all P1-P3 pupils.

**2.3** In December 2009, acknowledging that the financial situation has changed since the Concordat was agreed, more flexibility was provided. Authorities now have flexibility to provide a free nutritious meal to 20% of P1-P3 pupils, with priority given to schools serving the most deprived communities.

**3. CURRENT POSITION****3.1 School lunches**

Historically, the Education Department has administered the application process for the assessment of entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM). The Finance Division's Revenues and Benefits Service administers entitlement to Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB). The information supplied and held for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit is largely the same as that required to award entitlement to Free School Meals. Accordingly, following a review, the application for and assessment of Free School Meals was transferred from Education to Revenues and integrated with the assessment of entitlement to Housing and Council Tax benefits. This has resulted in:

- a streamlined and improved service to parents/carers
- more children now receiving Free School Meals
- additional entitlement to Housing and Council Tax benefits being identified and paid

Linking FSM with HB/CTB entitlement removes the need for annual re-applications from applicants whose circumstances have not changed. Customers now only need to complete a single application form for assessment of entitlement to all three of these benefits.

The new arrangements have proved successful in identifying families eligible for school meals. This has resulted in an increase in free school meal entitlement to 2,400 in May 2011 (9% increase).

School meal uptake (both free and paid) continues in a generally upward trend as illustrated in the table below showing the total number of free school meals per annum:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	% increase (compared to 2007/08)
	000s	000s	000s	000s	
Primary	633	669	683	688	8.7
Secondary	412	419	457	450	10.9

While bad weather affects uptake each year, it is undoubtedly the case that exceptional snow falls seriously impacted on uptake prior to Christmas 2010.

In Secondary schools, the meals service has had difficulty in encouraging pupils to remain in school and benefit from the nutritionally balanced meals provided. A number of pupils choose to leave the school campus to purchase foods from the plethora of food outlets in the local vicinity (where they can purchase many of the food items that are not permitted to be sold in schools under the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008).

In order to encourage pupils to remain in school, a consultation exercise involving pupils at Forfar Academy was undertaken to ascertain their views on the current service and foods on offer. From these discussions it was suggested an 'external catering outlet' within the school grounds be introduced. This would help to alleviate large queues within the dining area and to offer a fast snack service option for pupils and staff. The outlet was named, by pupil ballot, Meet 'N' Eat and opened on Monday 13 September 2010. The outlet has proved to be a success with the meal uptake figures at Forfar Academy increasing by 12% compared to the previous year.

In addition, during the current summer term, a trial of a new Secondary menu has begun at Arbroath Academy which is offering the pupils a selection of food styles and packages that are currently being sold by popular high street food outlets. The foods being offered in school have all been nutritionally analysed to ensure they meet Nutritional Requirements. Initial feedback from pupils has been positive and it is planned to build on this approach in the coming year.

### 3.2 Primary School Breakfast Clubs

A free Breakfast Service for all pupils in 8 school clubs has been established and is operating effectively as outlined below:

School	2010 Average Daily Attendance	2011 Average Daily Attendance
Hayshead Primary	25	29
Southesk Primary	25	40
Warddykes Primary	30	59
Andover Primary	25	17
Ladyloan Primary	10	24
St Thomas Primary	n/a	29
Strathmore Primary	n/a	42
Muirfield Primary	n/a	17

Through joint work with colleagues in NHS Tayside an evaluation of the Breakfast Club was recently carried out by an Abertay Undergraduate Student. Feedback from Head Teachers indicated that their perception was that overall pupils' behaviour, punctuality, concentration and participation had improved. The pupils themselves reported that they enjoyed attending the Breakfast service because they could meet friends, found it fun and they liked the food.

However, a number of challenges were identified:

- need to continue to raise awareness of the Free Breakfast club amongst parents and carers throughout the school term
- identify ways with pupils in which the environment where breakfast service is delivered may be enhanced

- review the Healthier Breakfast Club Policy to provide further guidance on portion control and address the request for improved choices of foods and drinks

Discussions are ongoing regarding establishing a service in Southmuir Primary School, Kirriemuir. There is a service in another two schools where a notional charge is made to pupils for the food provided.

The findings of the evaluation are broadly consistent with the view of officers. On the whole the increase in the number of pupils using the service is encouraging, albeit it is clear uptake can be improved in some schools. Accordingly, further work will be undertaken in 2011/12 with the aim of improving the service and uptake.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The net cost of the school meals service is £1,697,000 for which there is provision within the 2011/12 Education Department budget. The average cost of operating a free breakfast club is £5,900 per school. An evaluation of the costs of the service, relative to levels of actual uptake and benefits accrued, will be undertaken and considered in preparing future years Revenue Budget.

#### **5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Human Rights implications arising from consideration of this report.

#### **6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An [equalities impact assessment](#) has been undertaken.

#### **7. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

- our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens

#### **8. CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Finance and Head of Law and Administration and Managing Director, Tayside Contracts, have been consulted in the preparation of this report

**NEIL LOGUE  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**NOTE:** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

E/CTC