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Guidance

Free school meals: supplementary grant 2020 to 2021

Published 24 February 2021

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1. Introduction

The Secretary of State for Education is providing financial assistance to state funded mainstream, academies and special schools in the form of the free school meals: supplementary grant (FSMS) for the financial year beginning 1 April 2020.

FSMS provides funding for schools to help them meet the costs of providing extra free school meals before the lagged funding system catches up.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will pay the FSMS funds, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, to local authorities in February 2021 and academies and free schools in March 2021.

The following terms and conditions apply to the FSMS for the financial year beginning 1 April 2020.

You can also access the [FSMS rates and eligibility](#).

FSMS allocations will be calculated for all schools who were open on 1 January 2021.

2. Allocation and payment to schools

The 2020 to 2021 FSMS allocation calculation for each school, as at 1 January 2021 is set out in the [FSMS guidance](#), for 2020 to 2021 the rate will be £450.

Local authorities must pay the amounts shown for each school in the allocations table to each of the following that they are responsible for maintaining, or were responsible for maintaining at 1 January 2021:

- maintained primary and secondary schools
- maintained special schools
- pupil referral units (PRUs)
- all through maintained schools

Local authorities must comply with this condition irrespective of any deficit relating to the expenditure of the school's budget share.

We pay the FSMS grant to academies and free schools directly. This is for all academies and free schools that are open on 1 January 2021.

FSMS is not part of schools' budget shares and is not part of the individual schools budget. It is not to be counted for the purpose of calculating the minimum funding guarantee.

3. Permitted use of FSMS funds

Local authorities must ensure that their maintained schools only spend FSMS for the purposes of the school, or for the benefit of pupils registered at other maintained schools or pupil referral units.

Academies and free schools must ensure that they only spend FSMS for the purposes of the school.

FSMS funds do not have to be spent in the financial year beginning 1 April 2020, some or all FSMS funds may be carried forward to future financial years.

4. Certification

Local authorities will be required to certify that they have passed on the correct amount of funding to schools or, where funding has been spent centrally, that it has been spent in line with these conditions of grant. ESFA will issue a certification form in April 2021.

5. Variation

The basis for allocation of this grant may be varied by the Secretary of State from those set out above.

6. Overpayments

Any overpayment of FSMS by the ESFA to a grant recipient shall be repaid by the grant recipient upon on such terms and conditions as the ESFA or Secretary of State for Education shall determine.

7. Further information

Books and other documents and records relating to the recipient's accounts shall be open to inspection by the Secretary of State and by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Comptroller and Auditor General may, under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983, carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the recipient has used its resources in discharging its grant-aided activities.

Grant recipients shall provide information as may be required by the Secretary of State to determine whether it has complied with these conditions.

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