



Supporting schools to deliver free school meals in Southwark

The London Borough of Southwark does not have a central catering contract. Rather the provision of school meals is delegated to the individual headteachers and governing bodies. Southwark has 75 primary schools, this includes 6 academies and 3 free schools. 21 of these schools provide an in-house service, the remainder provide the service through an external contractor.

A manifesto commitment was made in the 2010 elections to offer free school meals to all pupils attending primary school. Southwark went on to implement the policy, phasing in free meals for reception and year 1 in 2011. By 2013 all primary age children were offered a free school meal, of which 95% were taking up the offer by autumn 2013.

To support the implementation of free primary school meals the Borough developed a project team of one officer with some administration support, who sat in the Council's Children and Adult Services department. As well as overseeing the implementation they:

- Commissioned an audit of all school kitchens to determine their capacity to deliver the anticipated increase in meals.
- Provided a toolkit for headteachers and governors to support them in their responsibilities. This focused on supporting schools to 'manage' the contract or in-house team
http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200326/free_school_meals_programme/2304/fhsm_toolkit_support_for_heads_and_governors
- Developed a simple application form for entitled free school meals, which required only minimal information. Parents are given the form when their children join the school, it is then checked using the DfE checking system. This has helped ensure that children eligible for free school meals are registered, thus safeguarding pupil premium funding and government funding for free school meals.

Downloadable resource: <http://whatworkswell.schoolfoodplan.com/> 'Making It Happen'

