

Useful strategies for maximising the uptake of free school meals

Here are three strategies you can use to maximise the uptake of free school meals in your school:

1. RAISE AWARENESS OF THE ENTITLEMENT

Leaflets and forms from your local children's services department could be placed within reception, given to all parents of new joiners, or distributed within local community centres. Friendly notices can be placed on the parent notice board explaining simply how to register for free meals.

2. REVIEW YOUR DINING ROOM ENVIRONMENT

Think about allowing children who eat packed lunches and children having school dinners to sit and eat together. Children are keen to spend the lunch period with friends, so they may not want to claim their free school meal if their friends on pack lunches sit elsewhere.

3. DEVELOP CASHLESS SYSTEMS FOR MEAL PAYMENT

Consider the possibility of developing a cashless system for your school meal payments to remove the stigma of separate treatment.

Cashless systems may give the following benefits:

- Quicker and easier service by removing all cash transactions, leaving more time for pupils to enjoy eating their food
- Can encourage pupils to stay on premises during lunch hour
- Reducing bullying because pupils do not need to carry cash and those who receive free meals cannot be identified
- Pupils can earn points from buying certain healthy foods.
- Easier monitoring of nutritional information by schools.
- Parents know their money is being spent on school meals.
- Less administration for the school.

