

City Intelligence Unit analysis of pupil premium income from FSM universal registration approaches: Snapshot from 17 London boroughs, 2023/24 - 2024/25

November 2025

Introduction

Since launching Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) in 2023, the Mayor has made significant investments in supporting London boroughs to implement free school meal universal registration approaches. These approaches identify pupils eligible for Government funded free school meals (FSM) and maximise pupil premium funding for schools.

The GLA have used data sources available to build a picture of potential gains in pupil premium funding across a snapshot of 17 London boroughs as a result of FSM universal registration.

This note summarises the multiple strands of work which have each reported additional FSM eligible pupils and pupil premium income for schools and boroughs in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. This information has been drawn from GLA-commissioned research by Bremner & Co and Basis and the results of a Mayoral funded FSM registration campaign with Policy in Practice.

With thanks to the 17 London boroughs who have shared their data through these projects to inform the figures presented here.

This document outlines:

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1. Key findings

GLA-commissioned research has found that 17 London boroughs have realised over £11.5 million in pupil premium income for schools by identifying over 9,000 children eligible for FSM over the two academic years (2023/24 and 2024/25) since the Mayor introduced UFSM.

Since the introduction of UFSM in 2023, the Mayor has invested over £750,000 to ensure FSM eligible families are registered, and to help maximise pupil premium income for schools.

2. Additional pupils and pupil premium data

Table 1: Additional eligible pupils and estimated pupil premium identified by universal registration processes in 17 London boroughs, in 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years

Additional pupils	Estimated Pupil Premium	Number of boroughs
9,000	£11.5 million	17

Table 1 data:

- ‘Additional pupils’ refers to the number of FSM eligible pupils who have been newly identified as a result of FSM universal registration processes that boroughs have introduced.
- ‘Estimated pupil premium’ refers to the amount of additional pupil premium income London’s schools could receive in connection to the additional pupils identified through FSM universal registration processes in the 17 boroughs who shared their data. Pupil premium grants are provided to schools based on the number of FSM eligible pupils and number of previously looked after children on the school roll. The per pupil rates for pupil premium in the 2023/24 academic year were £1,455 for primary and £1,035 for secondary school children eligible for FSM, and in 2024/25 they were £1,480 and £1,050 respectively.
- ‘Number of boroughs’ refers to the total number of boroughs we have data for. See section 4.1 for the full list of boroughs.

This data is a conservative underestimate of the total number of pupils and pupil premium identified in these boroughs.

See Section 4 for information on the data sources.

3. Mayoral investment and pupil premium income

- Since the introduction of UFSM in 2023, the Mayor has invested more than £750,000 to ensure eligible families are registered and to help maximise pupil premium income for schools.
- In 2024, all London boroughs were offered an additional £20,000 grant from the Mayor to support local implementation of universal registration approaches like auto-enrolment. The Mayor has also funded Free School Meal registration campaigns with Policy in Practice in the 2024/25 academic year, as well as a dedicated borough support package delivered by Bremner & Co and Basis.
- Since 2023, City Hall has hosted FSM universal registration webinars, shared resources, and continues to promote FSM registration in public-facing campaigns.

- To consolidate this work, the Mayor mandated that boroughs have FSM universal registration approaches in place for the October 2025 school census – this is a new condition of grant for boroughs in their delivery of UFSM.
- The data we have gathered shows that 17 London boroughs have realised over £11.5 million in pupil premium income for schools by identifying over 9,000 children eligible for FSM over the two academic years (2023/24 and 2024/25) since the Mayor introduced UFSM.
- This data is just a snapshot and we expect further impacts across London. To support this, City Hall has commissioned a further phase of support work delivered by Bremner & Co and Basis between November 2025 and March 2026, focusing on sustainability of universal registration approaches and maximising impact.

4. Background on data sources and analysis:

4.1 Overview of data sources

- Data has been gathered through projects led by Bremner & Co and Basis and by Policy in Practice. Analysis has been led by the GLA City Intelligence Unit.
- The £11.5m pupil premium figure includes data from 17 of the 33 London local authorities for 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. For some local authorities, data only covers part of the two-year period.
- The 17 local authorities we have data from are: Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.
- For more information on data sources see section 4.2 for Bremner & Co and Basis research and section 4.3 for the Policy in Practice FSM campaign.
- Data is correct as of 28 August 2025, and it is possible that figures have been revised since.

4.2 Bremner & Co and Basis research

- [Bremner & Co](#) are an independent food policy and practice consultancy, and [Basis](#) help local authorities tackle complex challenges through consultancy, training and facilitation. In 2025 the GLA commissioned a joint project with Bremner & Co and Basis to review and support London borough implementation of FSM universal registration approaches.
- Impact data gathered by Bremner & Co and Basis from a snapshot of 12 boroughs shows that over 7,300 additional pupils have been identified as eligible for government funded Free School Meals, unlocking over £9.3 million in pupil premium for schools.
- The 12 boroughs that Bremner & Co and Basis gathered impact data on are: Brent, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.
- This data was gathered by Bremner & Co and Basis between April – August 2025 via surveys, desk-based research and email communication with London boroughs.

- Where possible, boroughs provided cumulative impact data, representing the benefits of implementing universal registration over multiple months or years, depending on their approach. However not all were able to provide cumulative totals and could only share data from one point in time.
- The impact data totals are based on combined primary and secondary school data for each borough. Where primary and secondary school data were provided, pupil premium was calculated by multiplying the enrolment numbers for each against the relevant pupil premium rate. If only a total number was provided, half of the total was assumed to be in primary school and half in secondary school, with each multiplied by the relevant pupil premium rate (aligned with the method used by FixOurFood¹). This means the pupil premium figure is likely to be a conservative estimate; we know that most unregistered pupils are expected to be in primary schools², where pupils receive UFSM, meaning there is a higher risk of under registration.
- For the reasons above, we know that the impact data presented here is an underestimation of the full benefits seen by the boroughs and does not represent the full London picture.

4.3 Policy in Practice FSM registration campaigns

- **Policy in Practice** is a social policy software and analytics company helping people access benefits. The Mayor funded Policy in Practice to work with London boroughs to run Free School Meal registration campaigns in the 2024/25 school year.
- Policy in Practice provided the GLA with interim impact data to inform our pan-London analysis of FSM universal registration impacts. This has been shared ahead of the formal end of the project.
- Policy in Practice have shared data from the eleven boroughs who have run GLA-funded FSM take-up campaigns in the 2024/25 school year. These boroughs are; Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Newham, Redbridge, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.
- The pupil premium figures provided by Policy in Practice are based on exact number of primary and secondary school pupils identified by the campaign and multiplied by the respective pupil premium rates of £1,480 (primary) and £1,050 (secondary).
- The totals presented in Table 1 include the Policy in Practice data, which has been added to the cumulative totals from Bremner & Co and Basis, with an effort made to avoid any duplication in the counting where multiple data points were available for each borough.

4.4 GLA data analysis and methodology

- For the GLA analysis, some changes were made to the methodology compared to the approach from Bremner & Co and Basis to calculate total pupil premium income.

¹ Bryant, M. et al. (2025) 'Auto-enrolment of free school meals: a "No Brainer"?' , Public Health Nutrition, 28(1), p. e70. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980025000382>

² Under-registration for free school meals in early primary school: How could this be tackled? Education Policy Institute. September 2024. Available at: <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/under-registration-for-free-school-meals-in-early-primary-school-how-could-this-be-tackled/>

- Where data was available for a local authority from both Policy in Practice and Bremner & Co and Basis, the data from Bremner & Co and Basis was used as it aligned more closely with the two-year time period of interest.
- For the local authorities where data from Bremner & Co and Basis was used, the primary and secondary pupil premium rates for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were used to calculate the total pupil premium income depending on the year of activity. Where the total did not include a breakdown by education stage, the assumption was made that half of pupils identified were in primary schools and half in secondary schools.
- For the remaining local authorities where data from Policy in Practice was used, data referred to activity in 2024/25 only and exact pupil premium income was calculated by Policy in Practice using pupil premium rates for 2024/25.

5. Annex

Definition of universal registration refers to any local authority processes aimed at increasing the registration of entitled children for FSM. These processes typically take an 'opt-out, auto-award' approach, where authorities use existing data to identify and register entitled children. However, there are other methods, such as including FSM registration opt-in fields on benefits application forms or establishing opt-in processes coordinated with schools.

CITY INTELLIGENCE

For more information please contact City Intelligence

Greater London Authority,
City Hall,
Kamal Chunchie Way,
London E16 1ZE

Tel: 020 7983 4000
e-mail: socialevidence@london.gov.uk

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