

**FSM universal registration approaches:
Impact data from 28 London boroughs,
2023/24 – 2025/26**

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1. 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 (FSM) universal registration approaches. These approaches identify unregistered pupils who are entitled to Government funded free school meals and associated funding streams for London's schools.

The GLA commissioned a joint project with [Bremner & Co](#) and [Basis](#) between November 2025 – March 2026 with a focus on capturing the impacts of FSM universal registration approaches across London. This work builds on a snapshot assessment of potential gains in pupil premium funding across 17 boroughs, published in November 2025: [Free School Meals \(FSM\) Universal Registration Pupil Premium Impact Data Snapshot](#).

For this latest assessment, Bremner & Co and Basis have worked with the GLA and partners to explore the scale of additional funding that schools in 28 London boroughs could unlock as a result of FSM universal registration.

This note summarises the multiple strands of work which have each identified additional FSM entitled pupils in the 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years, and the associated potential income unlocked for schools. This information has been drawn from GLA-commissioned research by Bremner & Co and Basis, the results of a Mayoral funded FSM registration campaign with [Policy in Practice](#), and from [FixOurFood](#) research.

Our thanks to the 28 London boroughs for providing data that underpins these figures, and for their ongoing efforts to ensure the success of universal registration approaches.

This document outlines:

1. Key findings
2. Additional pupils and estimated school funding impact data
3. Mayoral investment and funding for schools
4. Background on data sources and analysis
5. Annex

1. Key findings

The latest GLA-commissioned research has found that 28 London boroughs could unlock over £49.2 million in additional funding for schools by identifying over 20,200 children entitled to FSM over the three academic years (2023/24, 2024/25 and the start of 2025/26) since the Mayor introduced UFSM.

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

2. Additional pupils and estimated school funding impact data

Table 1: Additional entitled pupils and estimated additional income for schools identified by universal registration processes in 28 London boroughs, in 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years

Additional pupils	Total estimated additional funding for schools	Number of boroughs
20,200	£49.2 million	28

Table 1 data:

- ‘Additional pupils’ refers to the number of FSM entitled pupils who have been newly identified as a result of FSM universal registration processes that boroughs have introduced.
- ‘Total estimated additional funding for schools’ refers to the amount of additional income London’s schools could receive in connection to the additional pupils identified through FSM universal registration processes in the 28 boroughs who shared their data. This total is a combination of estimations of potential income from three funding streams, outlined in Table 2.
- ‘Number of boroughs’ refers to the total number of boroughs we have data for. See section 4 for the full list of boroughs.

Table 2: Breakdown of total estimated additional funding for schools, by funding stream.

<i>Estimated pupil premium funding</i>	<i>Estimated Ever6 funding</i>	<i>Estimated additional Free School Meal grant funding</i>
£25.9 million	£19.9 million	£3.4 million

Table 2 data:

- ‘Estimated pupil premium’ - Pupil premium grants are currently provided to schools based on the number of FSM eligible pupils and number of previously looked after children on the school roll. The Department for Education’s guidance on using pupil premium states that schools must ensure the grant is used to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and that the approaches they select are informed by evidence¹. The pupil premium grant is a separate grant that schools receive under section 14 of the Education Act 2002. 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, in 2024/25 they were £1,480 and £1,050 respectively, and in 2025/26 they are £1,515 and £1,075 respectively.
- ‘Estimated Ever6 funding’ – Also known as FSM6 funding, is an additional funding stream for schools, allocated for each pupil who has been eligible for free school meals at any time in the last six years. Schools receive Ever6 as part of the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) which is their core funding allocation from Government and determined through the national funding formulae (NFF)². How each school spends its allocation is up to the school. The per pupil rates for Ever6 funding in the 2023/24 academic year were £705 for primary and £1,030 for secondary school children eligible for FSM, in 2024/25 they were £820 and £1,200 respectively, and in 2025/26 they are £1,060 and £1,555 respectively.
- ‘Estimated additional Free School Meal grant funding’ – Is funding that schools receive for the total number of FSM eligible pupils. Schools receive their FSM grant as part of the DSG. The NFF outlines that this funding is broadly intended to cover the cost of providing free meals for each eligible pupil. For the purpose of this analysis we have only looked at Secondary FSM grant funding, and have not looked at FSM grant funding for pupils already covered by the Mayor’s universal scheme. The per pupil rate for Secondary FSM grant funding in the 2023/24 academic year was £480.70, in 2024/25 it was £490, and in 2025/26 it is £495.
- All figures in Table 2 are rounded to the nearest £100,000.

See Section 4 for information on the data sources.

¹ Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders

² The national funding formula for schools and high needs 26-27

3. Mayoral investment and funding for schools

- Since the introduction of UFSM in 2023, the Mayor has invested more than £750,000 to ensure entitled 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 in 2025 and 2026.
- 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 London boroughs have FSM universal registration approaches in place for the October 2025 school census – this is an ongoing condition of grant for boroughs in their delivery of UFSM.
- The latest GLA-commissioned research has found that 28 London boroughs could unlock over £49.2 million in additional funding for schools by identifying over 20,200 children entitled to FSM over the three academic years (2023/24, 2024/25 and the start of 2025/26) since the Mayor introduced UFSM.

4. Background on data sources and analysis

Overview of data sources

- Data has been gathered from London boroughs by [Bremner & Co](#) and [Basis](#), with input from [Policy in Practice](#) and [FixOurFood](#), who have conducted their own UR research and/or campaigns. Analysis has been led by Bremner & Co and Basis, with support from the City Intelligence Unit.
- The £49.2 million figure includes data from 28 of the 33 London local authorities for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years. For some local authorities, data only covers part of the three-year period and data is only partial for 2025/26 as the academic year has not yet concluded.

- The 28 local authorities we have data from are: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, City of London, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, and Westminster.
- For more information on data sources see the section on Bremner & Co and Basis research.
- Data is correct as of 20 March 2026, and it is possible that figures have been revised since.

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.
- The March 2026 impact data presented here was gathered by Bremner & Co and Basis from a snapshot of 28 boroughs shows that over 20,200 additional pupils have been identified as eligible for government funded Free School Meals, unlocking over £49.2 million in additional funding for schools.
- The latest updated data was gathered by Bremner & Co and Basis between November 2025 – March 2026. This data builds directly on the [November 2025 Data Snapshot](#) with new information gathered via surveys and direct communication with London boroughs. It also incorporates data shared by [FixOurFood](#) and [Policy in Practice](#).
- FixOurFood provided data collected through their auto-enrolment action research project via multiple national surveys, engagement with boroughs and use of data specification forms. Policy in Practice supplied data for the 11 boroughs that used its Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) tool to run data matches to identify unregistered FSM-entitled students. Both FixOurFood and Policy in Practice helpfully provided this data to Bremner & Co and Basis, who incorporated it into their analysis using the methodology described in the data analysis and methodology section.

Data analysis and methodology

- Data analysis has been led by Bremner & Co and Basis.
- The figures represent cumulative impact data provided by the boroughs over the three year period.
- Borough data collection and reporting of impact data used different approaches and had varying levels of detail. For this reason, the following assumptions were made when cleaning and analysing the data to ensure consistency:
 - **Setting split:** Where a year-group breakdown was unavailable, funding allocations were estimated using an assumed 60/40 split between primary and secondary pupils. This assumption reflects Bremner & Co

and Basis' experience that FSM under-registration is typically higher in primary settings, potentially linked to Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) policy.

- **Annual grouping:** Data from multiple rounds per year were grouped by the relevant school year (e.g. May Census 2025 falls into the 2024/25 year).
 - **Data prioritisation:** the most recent and granular data was prioritised. FixOurFood data was prioritised over Policy in Practice data for its inclusion of setting-level breakdowns. Policy in Practice data was used when other council-provided or survey data were unavailable.
 - **Range of data:** If there was a range in the report for identified children, the uppermost numbers were used in the analysis.
 - **Universal offers:** Localised universal offers (e.g. Southwark's secondary offer for pupils in households in receipt of Universal Credit and above the £7,400 threshold) were included in the total numbers identified but excluded from the pupil premium funding calculations.
- Estimated additional pupil premium and Ever6 funding was calculated by multiplying the identified pupils with the Pupil Premium or Ever6 funding rate for primary or secondary schools in the given year.
 - Estimated additional Free School Meal grant funding was estimated by multiplying the number of estimated pupils identified in a secondary school setting by the per pupil secondary school meal rate in the given year. Primary school pupils are excluded from this calculation as all pupils in state-funded primary schools in London are already offered a free meal since the Mayor introduced UFSM in 2023/24, whether they are identified as FSM eligible or not.
 - For the purposes of this report the Ever6 and FSM grant calculations were aligned with the [National Funding Formula](#) (NFF) values. However, in practice, each borough will determine its local funding rates through their School's Forum.
 - For the reasons above, we know that the impact data presented here is an estimate of the full benefits seen by the boroughs and may not represent the full London picture.

5. Annex

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.

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