

# Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 21 August 2023

## PE1926/K: Expand universal free school meals for all nursery, primary and secondary school pupils

Thank you for your letter of 4 July seeking an update on the timescales associated with the pilot of universal free school meal provision in secondary schools.

As you are aware, in December we announced that the next phase of our free school meal expansion programme will be to expand provision to primary 6 and 7 pupils who are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment, as the next step towards universal provision in primary schools. I can confirm that this remains my priority.

Since this announcement, we have been in discussion with Local Authorities to identify the resource and capital needs to address the challenges that they may face, in what I envisage as a phased roll out of free school meals provision. The Scottish Futures Trust are undertaking a survey of Local Authorities' needs in this regard and we expect to have their returns in by the end of September. You will understand that this is an important step in supporting the planned rollout and our overall aim for free school meals in meeting the needs of our children.

As I have mentioned, my priority remains building towards universal free school meals for all primary school pupils. However, we will also bring forward further detail on how we will deliver a pilot of universal free school meal provision in secondary schools to inform our consideration of further expansion.

To this end, my officials have had initial discussions with local authorities to hear their views around a pilot in secondary schools and these views are now being carefully considered. This has been an essential first step to the delivery of a pilot and we will bring forward further detail when these views have been appropriately considered.

I hope that this information is helpful and will update the committee on progress with our planned work across this area in due course.

**JENNY GILRUTH MSP**