



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**

Department for Education Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df

House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

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Dear Diana,

I am writing to respond to a question you raised during the OPQ on Wednesday 2 April 2025. This was regarding the level of potential loss of entitlement to free school meals as a result of transitional protections moving from phase 1 to phase 2.

The Department monitors entitlement for free meals. We publish this data annually through a robust statistical release: [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#). We also undertake regular and extensive internal analysis as part of general good practice.

To comment on the specific question that you raised, the implications of transitional protections on the level of entitlement to free meals has been considered internally. However, a formal assessment has not been made. It is for this reason that I am unable to comment on speculation that is out in the public.

I want to take this chance however to reassure you that this government recognises how important the provision of school food is to breaking the unfair link between background and opportunity. This is why we are considering the government's school food offer as part of our broader work on child poverty.

As part of our Plan for Change, we have already taken wide-ranging action, despite our incredibly challenging fiscal inheritance. This includes setting up the Child Poverty Taskforce which is looking at how best to: support households to increase their income including considering social security reforms that support people into work and alleviate poverty; help to bring down essential household costs, build savings and tackle problem debt; and alleviate the negative experience of living in poverty, including through supporting families and the role of public services.

We are also working at pace to deliver our manifesto commitment to free breakfast clubs for all state-funded primary pupils, which demonstrates the importance we place on the provision of free and nutritious food in schools.

Thank you for your engagement on this important issue. A copy of this letter will be deposited in the House Library.

Yours sincerely,

**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
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