

SERVICE UPDATE

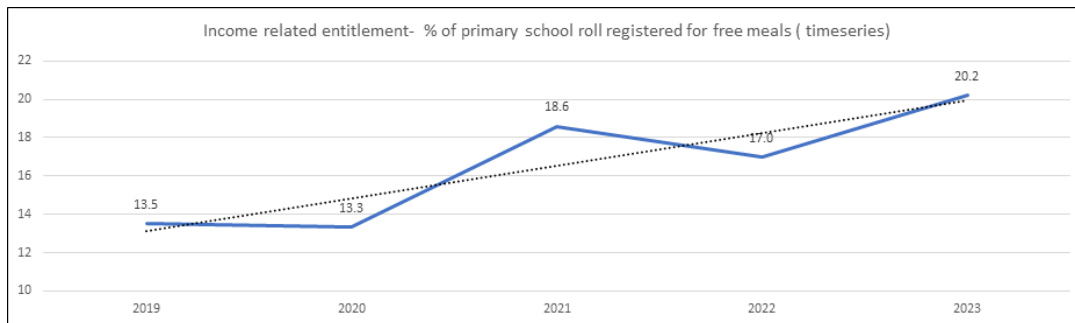
<u>Name of Function:</u>	Children and Family Services
<u>Date:</u>	21.08. 23
<u>Title of Update:</u>	FSM uptake in Primary and Secondary Schools
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UPDATE:

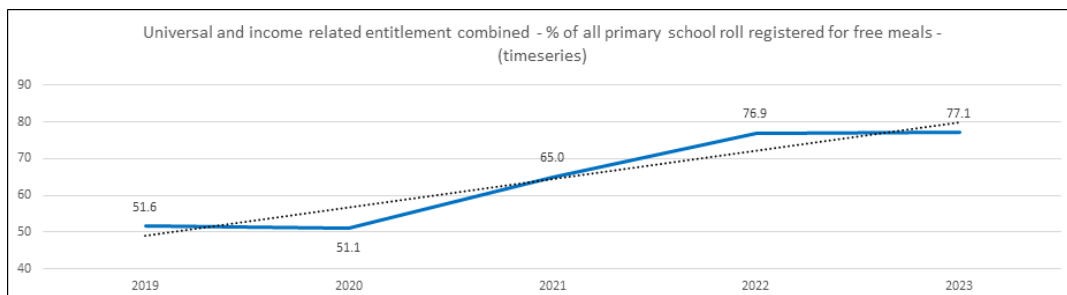
At the July ECS committee members asked for further analysis of Free School Meal (FSM) uptake in Primary and Secondary schools.

Primary Schools

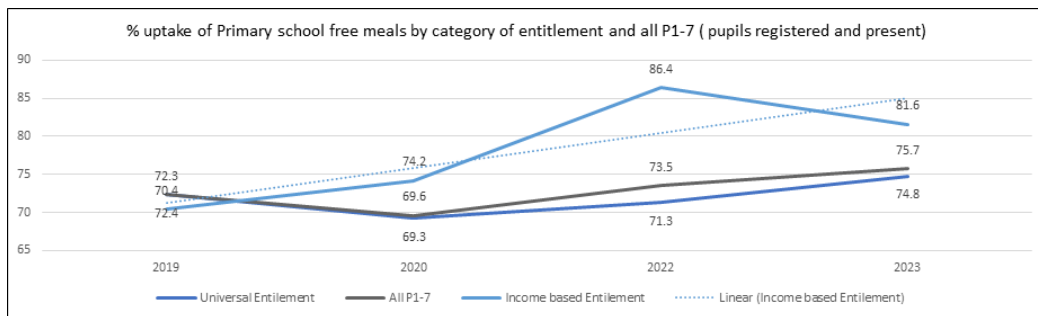
There is an upward trend in the percentage of primary school pupils registered for free school meals based on income related entitlement. Levels have risen to 20.2% which is higher than the highest level recorded (18.6%) during the pandemic. This is thought to be partially attributable to improved processes ensuring those registering for other benefits are automatically registered for FSM and due to the rise in those eligible as a result of changed economic circumstances.



When we combine the universal and the income related entitlement data, there continues to be a rise although not as steep. This could be attributed to the variation in roll at each stage P1-5 year on year.



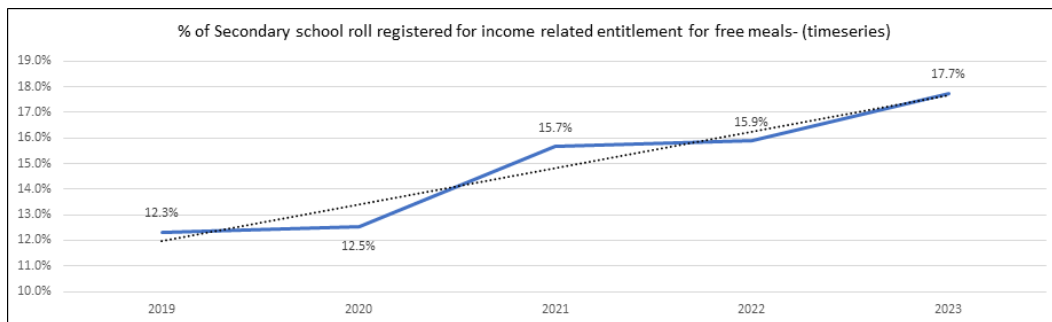
The percentage of pupils registered and present for the combined categories shows a dip from 86.4% in 2022 to 81.6% in 2023. We need to interpret this data with caution as this could be related to the menu on offer on that day.



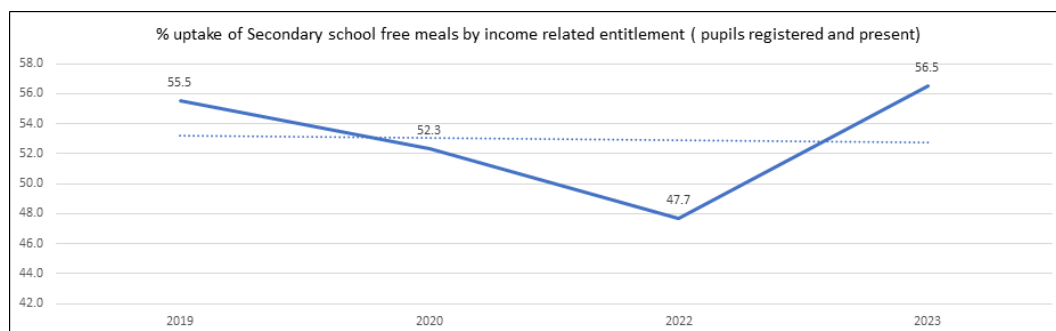
Although cohorts change year on year the data supports us to safely assume that the cost of living crisis has contributed to the rise in FSM registration across our primary schools.

Secondary

Income related entitlement uptake in Secondary follows the same pattern as that of primary with an increase from 15.9% to 17.7%. This is higher than the highest level recorded during the pandemic.



The uptake in Secondary shows a steep increase from 47.7% to 56.5%. Although this is the highest uptake in the last 4 years the level of uptake is still lower than we would aspire for at 56.5% and is unlikely to have been impacted solely by the choices available on the survey day as secondary canteens offer a wide range of options daily. As young people become more independent, they are keen to spend time with friends away from the school building and look for alternatives to school catering. The school catering service is exploring this more fully by engaging with young people.



In conclusion registration for FSM entitlement continues to rise in both sectors. The school meal census provides us with data for one day and this is not definitive as the menu could have an impact in Primary schools. There is a need to better understand the low uptake in secondary schools with young people to determine next steps and this work is being progressed by the catering service. This work will be undertaken in the Autumn term and will be completed prior to the next census date.

N.B. Registration data covering 2021 is drawn from the Pupil Census publication as a result of suspension of the national Healthy Living Survey in that session year. This publication does not provide for assessment of uptake of free school meal provision.