

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
BY DEPUTY J.H. PERCHARD OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 21st JANUARY 2020**

Question

Further to the answer to Written Question 458/2019, will the Minister state –

- (a) what proportion of the relevant school-age children in the Island will be eligible for free meals, and against what criteria these particular children have been identified as being in need of free meals;
- (b) on what basis the cost of £2.50 per meal was decided;
- (c) what assessment she has made of the number of children not eligible for free school meals who will struggle to afford to pay £2.50 per meal, and how she will ensure that no child in need of free school meals will be excluded from this initiative;
- (d) on what date Caring Cooks was chosen to be the provider for the pilot and on what date the exemption from tendering was approved; and
- (e) given that the form completed for an exemption from competitive tendering was approved by the Operations and Finance Director and the Director of Procurement, whether she was aware of this application and what role, if any, she had in approving it?

Answer

- (a) In the 2019-2020 academic year 26% of pupils of compulsory school age, in total 2,680, are in receipt of Jersey Premium and eligible for free meals.

The criteria for eligibility have been based on the same process for eligibility for free Jersey Premium. This is based on children of families receiving income support. This has been used as the best available identification of families who might find affording the price of school meals difficult. The ratios differ in each individual school. In the case of the two schools involved in the pilot programme eligibility was calculated as 53% of the school population.

- (b) £2.50 was a figure that was discussed and agreed collaboratively between Caring Cooks and Government. We researched providers across the UK and their pricing to confirm that figure as it was in line with what most were charging. We also did some research with parents across the Island around the pricing point they thought was affordable.
- (c) Similarly to Jersey Premium, school staff are able to identify families who might not meet the eligibility criteria and have the flexibility of ensuring access where there is evidence of need and benefit. The schools' senior leadership teams, officers from the department and Caring Cooks work closely in this regard.
- (d) The Service Level Agreement and service specification with Caring Cooks was signed on 15th May 2019. As previously stated the exemption form was signed off in September 2018.

The Minister was not aware of the application and did not have any role in approving it.