



Minister Urges Applications For Increased School Meals Funding

Funding Increased To €6.4million For 2005

Funding to provide nutritious meals for children in schools is available under the expanded school meals programme, Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D, said today. Minister Brennan has increased this years funding by nearly 40% to €6.4m for the programme which targets children who are at risk of leaving school early, disadvantaged children and children with special needs.

“School meals funded by my Department are helping children to engage in class in a more meaningful way, improving attendance and punctuality, changing dietary habits and enhancing future life chances. With this in mind, I have increased the funding available this year to €6.4m, an increase of nearly 40%,” Minister Brennan said.

“I would urge school managers who want to put a school meals programme in place, and have not done so already, to contact my Department,” said Minister Brennan.

“Last year the programme was extended to community based, not-for-profit groups that provide preschool education for disadvantaged children. I’d also like to encourage applications from managers of these groups,” added Minister Brennan.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs provides significant funding for school meals under two strands, the urban school meals scheme and the local projects scheme.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Last year funding of €4.65m was issued under the programme. Some 386 national schools, with a total of over 50,800 pupils, benefited from the urban scheme while 387 projects (schools and voluntary organisations) received funding under the local projects scheme, benefiting some 41,300 children attending 451 schools (326 national and 125 secondary schools).

As part of the local projects scheme, a special initiative promoting the school food programme was undertaken in Donegal last April. This initiative has proved successful with 16 schools already interested in operating the scheme from September 2005. It is proposed to extend this initiative to other counties over the coming year.

Any school interested in applying for funding for the forthcoming school year should

Contact the number below. Applications should be submitted by 7th October 2005.

Address: Department of Social and Family Affairs
School Meals Section
C/o SWA Section
Pension Services Office
College Road
Sligo.

Telephone: (071) 9138613

Ends

Note for News Editors

The Department of Social and Family Affairs provides significant funding for school meals under two strands, the urban school meals scheme and the local projects scheme.

The Department funds 50% of the food costs under the urban scheme and the relevant local authority funds the remaining 50%. Under the local projects scheme it provides funding based on a standard rate per child per day for each meal type. These rates are:

Breakfast:	€0.60
Light Meal:	€1.40
Dinner:	€1.90
Snack:	€0.60



Department of Social and Family Affairs

The school meals programme aims to provide regular nutritious food to children to help improve their daily diet. Apart from the nutritional gain, it is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement by the children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The long-term objective is to ensure that school-going children have access to appropriate meals in a manner that positively impacts on their educational opportunities and their overall health.

In the past three years the level of funding of school meals by the Department has almost doubled, from €3.2 million in 2003 to nearly €6.4 million in 2005. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of pupils availing of the food supports.

The Department of Education and Science is using its "Schools Completion Programme" and "Giving Children an Even Break Initiative" to encourage the introduction and extension of school meals projects.