

13th October 2014

To Head Teacher
All LGfL Connected Schools

Dear Colleague

New FSM / Pupil Premium checking service

Based on data obtained from the DfE, London schools served by LGfL, are missing out on a total of about £50m in unclaimed Pupil Premium.

LGfL's Board of Trustees has considered how LGfL could assist schools in addressing this, and the purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in an initiative led by LGfL to maintain and drive up the funds received by schools through Pupil Premium.

To simplify the process by which a parent checks for free school meals eligibility, LGfL has worked in collaboration with the DfE, local authorities and supply partner Atomwide to create an eligibility checking web site which provides an immediate response to a parent's application and also notifies the school of eligibility, allowing the school to make arrangements for meal provision and pupil premium.

The total Pupil Premium paid out in respect of each school is determined by the number of known FSM-eligible pupils at the time of the DfE census return – 15th January 2015. Following testing and pilot use, the new eligibility-checker web site at www.fsm.lgfl.net is set to go live on 3rd November.

We hope that you would wish to inform parents of this new facility and encourage them to use it.

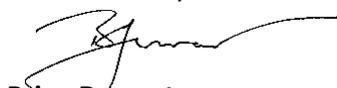
As a 'thank you' to parents for making a check and as an incentive to participate, (even if their child would not be eligible), LGfL is making available to parents, free of charge, the same Sophos Anti-Virus software provided to all LGfL-connected schools, to protect the computers at home used by pupils.

Accompanying this letter is a template letter which may be useful in informing parents of this new facility. We hope that you will welcome this initiative.

For your school to successfully take part it is necessary to:

1. Be running 'AutoUpdate' on your school's MIS system – otherwise please see www.autoupdate.lgfl.net - if you are unsure, please see Appendix 1
2. Be set up to use OpenCheck – otherwise please see Appendix 2

Yours sincerely



Brian Durrant
Chief Executive

Appendix 1 - AutoUpdate

AutoUpdate is already in daily use in 90% of London schools (2141 to be exact!). It is the software system which enables the secure staff and pupil identity data held for LGfL by Atomwide to be regularly kept up to date. By this means, for example, each teacher and pupil is able to have a personal login for use in school or at home to access LGfL learning resources and services.

If you need to check whether your school is already using AutoUpdate please visit the following link: www.AU-check.lgfl.net

If this shows that your school IS using AutoUpdate, make sure that reports are enabled for *students*, *staff* and *contacts* - i.e. the button beside each of these is green.

If your school is not yet using AutoUpdate, and you would like to enable this important facility, please contact the support desk on 020 8255 5555 (then select Option 3) or arrange for one of your school's Nominated Contacts to raise a support case making this request.

'Who are my school's Nominated Contacts?' – find out at www.uso.lgfl.net

Appendix 2 - OpenCheck

OpenCheck has been popular with schools across London since its launch following sudden extreme weather conditions in February 2009 with 60% of schools already putting it to good use.

It is a solution to problems such as 'How can we communicate quickly to parents when an event such as extreme weather results in a sudden unplanned school closure?' At such times websites and phone systems generally become overwhelmed. OpenCheck is designed to cope and provides a number of resilient means to enable essential communication to large numbers of people in a short space of time. Like AutoUpdate, it is provided to LGfL connected schools at no additional cost.

You, or one of your Nominated Contacts, can check if your school is using OpenCheck simply by logging in to the support site via www.support.lgfl.net and if not, the process to set an initial 'Open as Usual' status is very straightforward:

Visit www.opencheck.lgfl.net, click on 'Log in' (see black bar near the top of the display), login with your USO credentials, click on Admin, select Status Administration and use the simple interface to set your school's 'Open as Usual' status. This status can then be amended in the future by the same means, when required.

Appendix 3

Template letter for schools to send out to parents

– please copy and paste into your own school letter head

Dear Parent / Carer

Free School Meals and the Pupil Premium

From November 3rd a new 'Free School Meals / Pupil Premium Service' www.fsm.lgfl.net will be a web site where parents can quickly and easily check eligibility for free school meals and, if eligible, also gain welcome additional funding for their child's school, known as 'Pupil Premium'. If eligible, you are not obliged to accept the free school meals for your child if you wish to make other arrangements, but we do want to encourage applications as the additional funding gained would still benefit education provision at the school.

What the service does for parents:

After entering essential details into the web site, the online application process links to the Department for Education system for checking eligibility and gives an immediate 'yes' or 'no' response, and will notify the school.

This system is being provided to encourage parents to apply and take advantage of free school meals while at the same time increasing the benefit to schools from Pupil Premium funding, a substantial amount of which does not reach schools because not all parents who are eligible apply for free meals for their child.

By way of a 'thank you' to parents for taking part, and regardless of individual outcomes, The London Grid for Learning (LGfL) would like to provide parents of children attending LGfL-connected schools with Sophos Anti-Virus software, free of charge, to protect the computers used by pupils at home.

To gain access to this software there is a short registration process which will also give you access, if required, to other LGfL services and benefits that are available to your child's school. Please be assured there is no catch, no cost and no advertising. LGfL (a UK education charity set up in 2001 and owned by London's 33 local authorities) exists to support education and is leading this initiative to make it easier for parents to apply for free school meals and to encourage the drawdown of unclaimed Pupil Premium.

What the service does for schools:

As the government has now introduced free school meals for all children in Key Stage 1, it is more important than ever for schools to know the number of pupils for whom they can claim Pupil Premium funding. These funds enable schools to take on additional staff and invest in additional equipment, resources and activities to the benefit all children.

Please visit www.fsm.lgfl.net enter the necessary details and support this worthwhile initiative.

Yours etc