

FREE SCHOOL MEALS ANALYSIS – BRIEFING PAPER

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Free School Meals

Introduction

Free school meals (FSM) are used as an indicator of poverty, and used in calculations for school funding. However, it is a controversial indicator as there has been research done showing that it is not such an accurate measure of poverty as once thought. A recent report on such research in *The Guardian*¹ identified that around half of pupils living below the poverty line were not qualifying for free school meals. The most common definition of the poverty line is households earning 60% or less of the average UK household income in a year. A data set was constructed using data on Free School Meals and children in workless families (*The Guardian*²). This identified the percentage gap between the numbers of children receiving free school meals, and the number of children living in workless families. The percentage gap at regional level is a staggering 19 %, whereas for Northumberland it is 7%, Appendix A, Figure 4, has the full regional and county level data.

Northumberland data, 2008 - 2009

The data presented here is taken from the Northumberland 2008 and 2009 School censuses done in January each year. First school data has been used because older children have more choice in whether they eat at the school restaurant, bring sandwiches or eat outside the school, and specific local conditions could affect the results. The schools are allocated the Index of Multiple Deprivation indicator for their area, and this has formed the basis of the analysis. For example, an IMD indicator of 1% would show that this school was in an area belonging to the country's top 1% of most deprived areas. In the same way, an indicator 97% would indicate a very low rate of deprivation.

Figure 1 shows a comparison between 2008 and 2009 of all first school pupils, those falling into the 30% IMD rating and those falling into the top 30% rating (70%+). There was an increase in overall first school numbers of 1.1%, but an increase in the percentage of FSMs of 11.2%. The 30% IMD (worst deprived schools), of which there are 27 schools, showed a slight drop in school numbers of 0.8%, and an increase in FSMs of 11.8%. In the 70%+IMDs (least deprived schools), of which there were 23 schools, there was an increase in school numbers of 4% and an increase in FSMs of 10%.

Fig.1: Free School Meals, numbers, for Northumberland First schools, according to IMD, 2008 - 2009

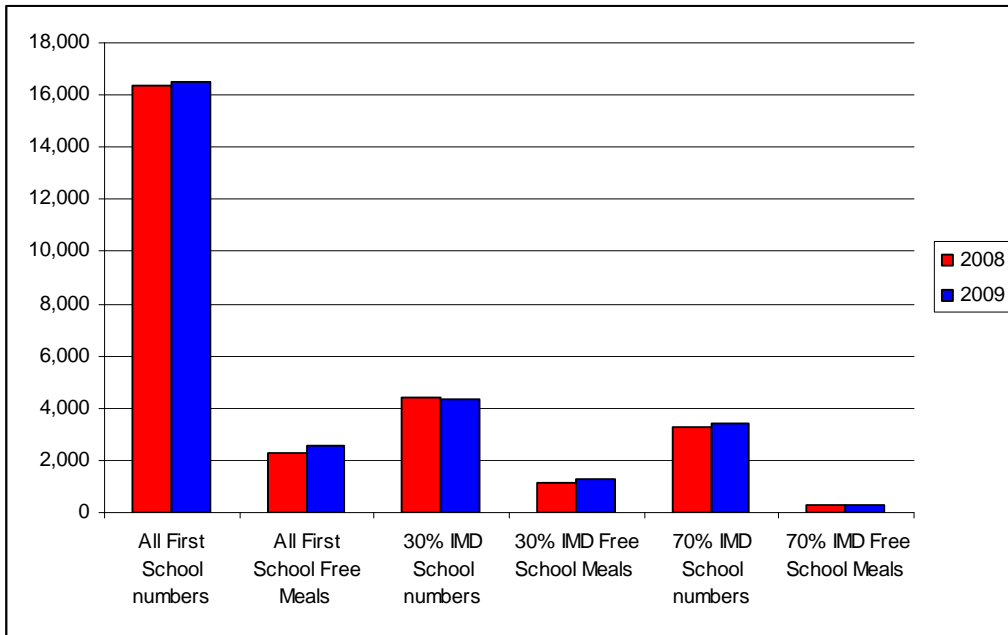
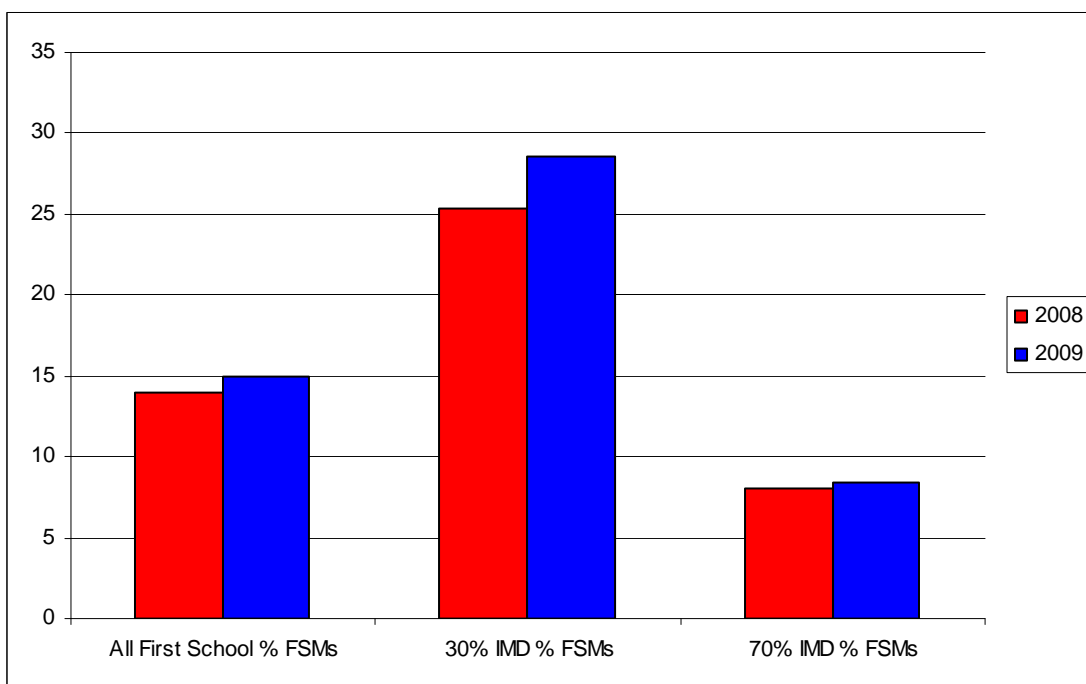


Figure 2 shows the percentage of pupils claiming FSMs. For all first schools in Northumberland, the rate has increased from 14% in 2008 to 15% in 2009; for those falling in the 30% IMD bracket, the rate has increased from 25.4% to 28.6%; and for those in the 70%+ bracket, the rate has increased from 8% to 8.4%. See Appendix B for full list of first/primary schools in Northumberland.

Fig. 2: The Percentage of Pupils claiming FSMs 2008 - 2009



By the three characteristic areas

An analysis was done of free school meals eligibility in the three characteristic areas, the results can be seen in Figure 3. This shows that the South East has over one fifth of its first school children eligible for free school meals, that the West only has just over 6% and that the North has 11%. This is in line with the % of schools in each area falling into the 30% or less IMD bracket: with only 2 for the West, 6 for the North and 19 for the South East.

Fig. 3: Eligibility and IMD in the 3 areas 2009

| Area | % of children eligible for fsm | No of schools with IMD 30% or below |
|------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| North | 11.0% | 6 |
| West | 6.5% | 2 |
| South East | 22.7% | 19 |

Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn are:

- The number and percentage of pupils claiming free school meals has increased by at least 10% between 2008 and 2009.
- The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is much greater in the schools with an IMD of 30% or below (29%), compared to Northumberland as a whole (15%).
- The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals has increased in all the ranges of IMD, although by a smaller amount in least deprived areas.
- Other data sources suggest that the free school meals indicator should be used with caution as an indicator of poverty.
- It could well be that there are as many pupils as those receiving free school meals who are also below the poverty line, according to the worklessness data.
- That the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals within each area reflects the IMD profile of that area.

References

1. The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/dec/16/school-meals-funding>
2. The Guardian: <http://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?key=phNtm3LmDZEOHGJjQ6VMmRg>

Data taken from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and an independent consultant Donald Hirsch

APPENDIX A

Fig. 4: Free School Meals at Schools In England, Compared to Local Children In Poverty, 2008

| | TOTAL free school meals, all schools | TOTAL PUPILS AT SCHOOL | % on free school meals | % those in area in workless households | % point gap between those on FSM and those in low-income households |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|---|
| ENGLAND | 864,800 | 7,421,830 | 11.70% | 30% | 18% |
| NORTH EAST | 53,910 | 382,890 | 14.10% | 33% | 19% |
| Darlington | 2,090 | 15,054 | 13.90% | 21% | 7% |
| Durham | 9,118 | 72,916 | 12.50% | 16% | 4% |
| Gateshead | 3,963 | 28,344 | 14.00% | 23% | 9% |
| Hartlepool | 2,604 | 15,277 | 17.00% | 27% | 10% |
| Middlesbrough | 4,996 | 22,320 | 22.40% | 31% | 9% |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 6,902 | 36,189 | 19.10% | 29% | 10% |
| North Tyneside | 3,042 | 29,500 | 10.30% | 20% | 9% |
| Northumberland | 4,415 | 48,134 | 9.20% | 17% | 7% |
| Redcar and Cleveland | 3,469 | 22,211 | 15.60% | 25% | 9% |
| South Tyneside | 3,680 | 21,913 | 16.80% | 27% | 10% |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 3,588 | 29,024 | 12.40% | 21% | 9% |
| Sunderland | 6,066 | 42,017 | 14.40% | 23% | 9% |

APPENDIX B

| First / Primary Schools | IMD | No in school 2009 | No. Eligible for FSM 2009 |
|---|-----|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Blyth Morpeth Road First School | 1% | 202 | 127 |
| Coulson Park First | 4% | 173 | 45 |
| Welbeck Community First School | 5% | 137 | 37 |
| Cambois First School | 10% | 48 | 31 |
| Bedlington Stead Lane First School | 10% | 138 | 54 |
| Lynemouth First School | 12% | 84 | 42 |
| Bedlington Station First School | 15% | 138 | 33 |
| Croftway First School | 16% | 309 | 80 |
| Ashington Central First School | 18% | 381 | 138 |
| Blyth New Delaval First School | 18% | 107 | 48 |
| Blyth Newsham First School | 18% | 274 | 84 |
| Morpeth Stobhillgate First School | 18% | 149 | 23 |
| Mowbray First School | 21% | 209 | 64 |
| Newbiggin by the Sea Moorside First School | 21% | 170 | 77 |
| Amble Links First School | 21% | 89 | 38 |
| ST Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided First School, Amble | 21% | 65 | 8 |
| Hawthorn C of E controlled First School | 22% | 145 | 29 |
| St Aidans RC Voluntary Aided First School | 22% | 159 | 20 |
| Blyth Malvins Close First School | 22% | 299 | 66 |
| St Andrews RC Voluntary Aided First School | 22% | 179 | 29 |
| Pegswood County First School | 22% | 120 | 25 |
| St Michaels CoE First School | 27% | 175 | 31 |
| Seaton Delaval First School | 28% | 158 | 44 |
| Ashington Wansbeck First School | 29% | 350 | 38 |
| Herdley Bank C of E Voluntary Aided First School | 30% | 20 | 2 |
| Whitfield C of E Voluntary Aided First School | 30% | 27 | 1 |
| Choppington First School | 30% | 51 | 33 |
| Holy Island C of E First School | 31% | 8 | 1 |
| Scremerston First School | 31% | 44 | 3 |
| Spittal Community School | 33% | 117 | 10 |
| Abbeyfields First School | 34% | 250 | 32 |
| Windsor First School | 34% | 138 | 38 |
| Prudhoe Adderlane County First School | 35% | 85 | 22 |
| Hareside Primary School | 35% | 427 | 55 |
| Beaconhill Community Primary School | 35% | 207 | 64 |
| St Cuthberts RC Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick | 36% | 67 | 9 |
| Tweedmouth West First School | 36% | 140 | 14 |
| Seghill First School | 36% | 128 | 34 |
| Bedlington West End First School | 37% | 249 | 36 |
| ST Bedes RC Voluntary Aided First School | 37% | 144 | 26 |
| Hugh Joicey C of E Aided First School | 38% | 54 | 9 |
| Lowick Church of England controlled First School | 38% | 32 | 2 |
| Milfield Community First School | 38% | 7 | 3 |

| | | | |
|--|-----|-----|----|
| Berwick St. Mary's C.E. First School | 38% | 114 | 13 |
| Branton Community First School | 39% | 16 | 1 |
| Ellington First School | 39% | 144 | 8 |
| Linton First School | 39% | 15 | 3 |
| Cragside C of E controlled Primary School | 40% | 318 | 28 |
| Prudhoe West First School | 40% | 280 | 26 |
| Tweedmouth Prior Park First School | 41% | 150 | 35 |
| Bedlington Whitley Memorial C of E First School | 41% | 242 | 44 |
| Holywell Village First School | 42% | 146 | 12 |
| Harbottle C of E Voluntary Aided First School | 42% | 23 | 0 |
| Netherton Northside First School | 42% | 14 | 0 |
| Whittingham C of E First School | 42% | 38 | 2 |
| Stakeford First School | 42% | 106 | 19 |
| Seaton Sluice First School | 42% | 127 | 9 |
| Seahouses First School | 43% | 78 | 8 |
| Cornhill County First School | 44% | 17 | 2 |
| Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E First School | 44% | 23 | 5 |
| Haltwhistle First School | 44% | 209 | 38 |
| Broomhill First School | 44% | 64 | 5 |
| Red Row Community First School | 44% | 72 | 25 |
| Holy Trinity C of E First School | 45% | 131 | 7 |
| Belford First School | 45% | 78 | 9 |
| Shilbottle First | 46% | 100 | 14 |
| Greenhaugh First School | 46% | 36 | 0 |
| Kielder Community First School | 46% | 9 | 2 |
| Otterburn First School | 46% | 48 | 1 |
| Wark C of E First School | 48% | 33 | 0 |
| Morpeth First School | 48% | 290 | 15 |
| ST Roberts RC Voluntary Aided First School | 48% | 129 | 9 |
| Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E First School | 49% | 22 | 4 |
| Greenhead C of E First School | 50% | 34 | 3 |
| Henshaw C of E First School | 50% | 49 | 2 |
| Ponteland First School | 50% | 288 | 14 |
| Belsay First School | 51% | 85 | 1 |
| Cambo First School | 51% | 30 | 0 |
| Ellingham C of E Aided First School | 51% | 45 | 4 |
| ST Pauls RC Voluntary Aided First School | 52% | 129 | 11 |
| Blyth Horton Grange First School | 53% | 270 | 89 |
| ST Matthew's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School | 54% | 85 | 3 |
| Rothbury First School | 54% | 77 | 6 |
| Whittonstall First School | 55% | 66 | 4 |
| Wooler First School | 56% | 89 | 10 |
| Chollerton C of E Voluntary Aided First School | 56% | 29 | 4 |
| Eglington C E First School | 56% | 17 | 0 |
| Alnwick South First School | 58% | 211 | 22 |
| St. John's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School | 58% | 95 | 12 |
| New Hartley First School | 60% | 102 | 13 |
| Stannington First School | 61% | 60 | 0 |
| Whalton C of E First School | 61% | 56 | 2 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|----|
| Bellingham First School | 62% | 42 | 5 |
| West Woodburn First School | 62% | 30 | 3 |
| Ovingham C of E First School | 63% | 135 | 12 |
| Slaley First School | 63% | 50 | 0 |
| Whitley Chapel C of E First School | 63% | 43 | 1 |
| Acomb First School | 63% | 44 | 0 |
| The Sele First School | 63% | 396 | 36 |
| St Marys RC Voluntary Aided First School | 63% | 122 | 5 |
| Haydon Bridge Shaftoe Trust First School | 63% | 83 | 6 |
| Hipsburn First School | 64% | 68 | 3 |
| Stamfordham First School | 65% | 70 | 6 |
| Blyth South Beach First School | 65% | 400 | 25 |
| Allendale Community First School | 66% | 95 | 5 |
| Humshaugh C of E First School | 66% | 23 | 0 |
| Acklington C of E Controlled First School | 68% | 23 | 4 |
| Warkworth C of E First School | 68% | 63 | 2 |
| Beaufront First School | 68% | 63 | 0 |
| Broomhaugh C of E First School | 68% | 63 | 0 |
| Newbrough C of E First School | 70% | 67 | 4 |
| Ashington Alexandra First School | 71% | 125 | 71 |
| Amble County First School | 73% | 135 | 28 |
| Longhorsley St Helen's C of E First School | 73% | 74 | 1 |
| Tritlington C of E First School | 73% | 41 | 1 |
| Shanklea Primary School | 74% | 331 | 32 |
| Eastlea Primary | 76% | 178 | 65 |
| Prudhoe Castle First School | 78% | 124 | 4 |
| Heddon on the Wall St. Andrew's C of E First School | 79% | 105 | 4 |
| Felton C of E First School | 81% | 42 | 4 |
| Swarland First School | 81% | 70 | 3 |
| Guidepost Ringway First School | 82% | 81 | 7 |
| Mickley First School | 83% | 60 | 2 |
| Hexham East First School | 86% | 103 | 22 |
| Longhoughton C of E First School | 87% | 126 | 1 |
| Broomley First School | 87% | 118 | 2 |
| Corbridge Cof E Aided First school | 88% | 146 | 4 |
| Thropton Village First School | 88% | 34 | 0 |
| Wylam First School | 93% | 125 | 2 |
| Burnside | 93% | 410 | 10 |
| Northburn Primary School | 93% | 314 | 9 |
| Morpeth All Saints C of E Aided First School | 97% | 153 | 3 |
| Darras Hall First School | 97% | 420 | 6 |