

Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill

[AS AMENDED AT CONSIDERATION STAGE]

LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE

At Introduction the Member in charge of the Bill, Mr Danny Baker, had made the following statement under Standing Order 30:

“In my view the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.”

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TO

Make provision for direct payments to be made during school holidays to pupils entitled to receive free school meals; and for connected purposes.

BE IT ENACTED by being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and assented to by His Majesty as follows:

Modification of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986

1. After Article 58(1)(b) of the 1986 Order insert the following paragraphs—

5 “(1A) Subject to Article 58(1B), the Authority shall, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department, during the relevant periods provide financial payments in lieu of milk, meals or other refreshment to the parent of a pupil.

(1B) Article 58(1A) applies to parents of pupils who are in receipt of free school meals, determined in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department.

10 (1C) Without prejudice to the generality of Article 58(1A), where a pupil is attending school on a day within any relevant period, that pupil shall be entitled to both the free school meal and the financial payment detailed in (1A).

15 (1D) The Authority shall, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department, make the financial payments to an eligible parent under Article 58(1B) by means of a payment to a bank account nominated by that parent.

20 (1E) If an eligible parent does not have access to a bank account, the Authority shall, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department, make the financial payments by an alternative method.

(1F) The financial payments shall be equivalent to a daily allowance specified by the Authority, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department.

(1G) The Authority shall—

(a) maintain records of the financial payments made under Article 58(1A);

(b) share records maintained under Article 58(1G)(a) with the Department; and

5 (c) together with the Department, store records maintained under Article 58(1G)(a) for the minimum retention period as set out from time to time in the model Disposal of Records Schedule or such other guidance as may replace it.

10 (1H) The Department may make regulations to determine the financial payments payable under article 58(1A) in accordance with Article 58(1F).

(1I) The Department may make regulations to amend the definition of “the relevant periods”.

(1J) The Authority shall publish on the website of the Authority the daily allowance specified under Article 58(1F).”

15 **Consequential amendments**

2.—(1) In Article 2(2) of the 1986 Order—

after the definition of “the funding departments” insert—

““the model Disposal of Records Schedule” means the schools model disposal of records schedule currently in operation;

20 “the relevant periods” means—

(a) Summer holidays (all weekdays in July and August);

(b) Halloween (five weekdays specified in arrangements under Article 58(1A));

25 (c) Christmas (ten weekdays specified in arrangements under Article 58(1A));

(d) February mid-term (five weekdays specified in arrangements under Article 58(1A)); and

(e) Easter (ten weekdays specified in arrangements under Article 58(1A)).”

30 (2) In Article 59(1) after “under paragraph (1),” insert “(1A),”.

Interpretation

3. In this Act—

“the 1986 Order” means the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

35 “the relevant periods” has the meaning given in Article 2(2) of the 1986 Order.

Short title and commencement

4.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.

5 (2) This section comes into operation the day after the Act receives Royal Assent.

(3) The other provisions of this Act come into operation on such day or days as the Department of Education may by order appoint, which shall be no later than the first day of the next relevant period.

10 (4) The Department of Education may by order make incidental, supplementary, transitional, transitory and saving provision in connection with the coming into operation of any provision of this Act.

(5) Any provisions under subsection (4)—

15 (a) which repeal or revoke, or alter, remove or add to any text of, or otherwise modify, any primary legislation may not be made unless a draft of them has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly, and

(b) are otherwise subject to negative resolution.

Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill

[AS AMENDED AT CONSIDERATION STAGE]

A Bill to make provision for direct payments to be made during school holidays to pupils entitled to receive free school meals; and for connected purposes.

Introduced by: Mr Danny Baker

On: 03 March 2026

As amended at Consideration Stage: 21 September 2026

Bill Type: Non-Executive Bill

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS

**An Explanatory and Financial Memorandum is printed separately as
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