



SIMS

helping
schools
inspire



Evidencing Pupil Premium funding

Driving efficiency

Saving time and money

Simplifying the Free School Meals process

Oswald Road Primary School

Oswald Road Primary School is a co-educational primary school situated in the heart of Chorlton, Manchester. The school has over 600 pupils aged from 3–11, with a 52 place nursery. The school was judged 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection.

One of the challenges facing the school has been the low uptake of parents signing up their children for free school meals.

In September 2016, Oswald Road purchased the Online Free School Meals (OFSM) system from Capita SIMS, which helps to counter this barrier by removing any paperwork and making the process more convenient through an online form. Parents can either complete the application themselves in a few simple steps or give the school consent to fill it in on their behalf.

Sarah Nicholls, School Business Manager at Oswald Road, has already seen a steady rise in the number of children now claiming free school meals.

"One of the biggest challenges we've had was getting parents to find out if they are entitled to free school meals," says Sarah.

"Although parents do apply for free school meals, there are so many who don't – either because they don't realise that they are eligible, struggle with English as an additional language or don't have the time or the capacity to fill in a paper form. We needed a system that would make it easier for parents and with OFSM, this can now be done confidentially."

The school also benefits, as for every child that signs up for free school meals, they will receive Pupil Premium entitlement. Pupil Premium can be worth at least £1,320 per pupil in reception year to year 6, while a nutritious meal at lunchtime can help to improve pupil performance.

"In the short space of time that we've been using OFSM, we've already had five children sign up for free school meals," Sarah explains. "The cost of the software is also less than having one child on Pupil Premium, which means it's having a positive impact on our school budget."

Another benefit to using the product is that staff have since come up with the idea to include the form in their induction packs for new parents to help capture the information they need early.

Primary School SIMS case study

Aim:

To increase the uptake of parents signing up their children for free school meals.

Solution:

Online Free School Meals (OFSM)

Impact:

Oswald Road Primary School has streamlined the process to help parents complete the application online. As a result, the school has seen a rise in the number of children enjoying free school meals and benefited from an increase in Pupil Premium funding.

"It's important that we give parents all the help they need to apply for free school meals," says Sarah.

"While it sounds easy to ask a parent to fill in a paper form and send to the local authority, in the time it takes between handing them the form to then being informed by the local authority, it can be several months. With this new process, because we have all the children's information on SIMS, we know that their records are up-to-date. All we need is the parent's permission and national insurance number and we can quickly complete it for them."

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CAPITA

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