

Minister for Children and Education

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR



Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

BY EMAIL

20 February 2023

Dear Chair,

School Meals Project

Thank you for your letter of 13th February requesting information on the above subject. Please see the below responses which I trust provide all the information you need, but please do not hesitate to contact me again if you need anything further.

1. Have you received information about schools which are ready to commence the project now?

I have been aware for some time that serveries have been completed in D'auvergne and Plat Douet schools. As soon as I became aware I pressed my team very hard to ensure a hot meal service was in these schools for September 2022. It became apparent that the current provider simply cannot produce any more food within their current kitchen facility, they are at maximum capacity providing to five schools. We explored various alternative providers to see if we could get these schools online sooner but sadly none of these alternative options came to fruition.

2. Is there capacity for the Project to commence sooner for those schools that are in a position to do so?

If there was capacity to bring these schools online sooner, I would have done so and as described above we have tried hard to do this but it has not been possible. I have met face to face with the current provider and they have confirmed to me that they cannot cook food for any more schools in their current facility, despite their strong desire to do so.

3. Please can you confirm whether the timescales allocated to this project in the 2023 Ministerial Plans will be reviewed?

I can confirm that a review of timescales is a natural part of any project. Whenever you create a new service or significantly expand one, there are risks to timelines that are continually reviewed and mitigated where possible. This project entails the development of all serveries across the 22 primary schools in scope. The five pilot schools along with D'auvergne and Plat Douet schools have the serveries completed, with the following 15 schools in various stages of development. The project requires the completion of the remaining serveries, the purchase of necessary equipment (with associated lead times), increasing capacity for food production and delivery network, plus additional staffing for the lunch services. I am not currently aware of any major revisions to timescales but please rest assured I will communicate these to you and other stakeholders should they occur.

My aim is to publish a roll out plan including a timeline by the end of March 2023, this will be shared with the Panel.


4. Please can you advise whether you intend for this Project to be implemented in all schools at the same time, or phased in on a school-by-school basis?

The project will be implemented on a phased basis. This is to allow for the development / identification of a suitable method of food production / delivery at the scale required and for building works to take place in schools, a number of which will require planning permission. The draft implementation plan (subject to change) sees five schools onboarded during 2023 and the remaining throughout 2024. An incremental approach in the on-boarding of schools is necessary to ensure that the methodology used in the preparation of meals and delivery process is sustainable and successful. The project team are currently looking at an upscale model to meet the 4000-school meal requirement, assessing the current methodology and making recommendations to ensure delivery. Once this has been completed more detail on the roll-out can be shared at the end of March 2023.

The school meals project is a priority for me as Minister and has been something I pushed for before coming a Minister. The Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers share my determination and commitment that we advance the roll out as soon as we can.

Scaling up to provide and deliver circa 4,000 meals a day to newly created and staffed school serveries in over 20 schools is a significant challenge and should not be underestimated. I will ensure my team do this as fast as we possibly can ensuring that quality, school food standards and safety of provision are not compromised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Inna', followed by a horizontal dash.

Deputy Inna Gardiner
Minister for Children and Education
D +44 (0)1534 440152
E I.Gardiner@gov.ie