



Department of  
**Education**

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AN ROINN  
**Oideachais**

MÁNNYSTRIE O  
**Lear**

To: All Voluntary Grammar Schools with  
Preparatory Departments and  
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary Schools  
operating a School Meals Service

Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
Bangor  
BT19 7PR

Tel No: (028) 9127 9768  
Fax No: (028) 9127 9100  
Email: [eve.stewart@deni.gov.uk](mailto:eve.stewart@deni.gov.uk)

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Dear Colleague

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF MILK, MEALS AND RELATED FACILITIES**

The Department has recently been made aware that a number of statutory nursery provisions (nursery schools and nursery units within primary schools) have made it compulsory for their pupils to take school dinners.

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to the statutory requirements in relation to school meals in all grant-aided schools. These are those outlined in the Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities made under Articles 58 and 59 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, as amended. The current Arrangements are dated June 2009 and are available on the DE website at:

[www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-schools\\_meals.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-schools_meals.htm)

The mandatory provision under the Arrangements, in relation to nursery and primary schools and preparatory departments, requires the Trustees or Board of Governors, as appropriate, to provide school dinners on every school day for day pupils who wish such provision. Therefore, a school cannot compel children to take school dinners.

It should also be noted that, regardless of whether a nursery child is having a school dinner or eating a packed lunch, it is expected that the "usual" lunch routines will take place, for example, hand-washing, preparing the tables with water etc, all children seated in small groups and adults also seated and joining in conversation with the children.

The Department appreciates that this letter may not be relevant to all schools to which it is being issued. However, as the Arrangements mentioned above apply to all nursery and primary schools and preparatory departments, the letter is being issued to all such schools.

I have written in similar terms to the Education and Library Boards in respect of the controlled and maintained sectors.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eve Stewart".

**EVE STEWART**  
**Head of Participation and Parenting Team**