

## School Dinners to be made Free?

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Free school meals are currently available to around 16% of children whose family income is below the current threshold for qualification. However, estimates have put the number of children missing out on school dinners due to cost at a staggering 400,000 - this means that they are not benefiting from a nutritional meal purely based on the cost.

To try and help reduce this figure, the Government's Department of Children, Families and Schools is piloting free school meals for all - regardless of household income.

Unfortunately, the seemingly omnipresent Jamie Oliver thinks this is a bad idea and will lead to the school dinner standards dropping. Why this would be is anyone's guess, as the more children taking up a cooked school dinner means more money for the school caterers which should in turn be reinvested back in to the dinner programme.

Before a universal roll-out were to happen, a £20m pilot scheme is taking place in two especially deprived areas which will monitor the effect of free meals for all on children's health, behaviour and academic standards over a period of two years.

The Scottish Government have already announced that from August 2010 all five to seven year-olds will have school dinners for free, following a successful pilot scheme which saw more children opting for dinners and becoming willing to try unfamiliar healthy foods.

Free prescriptions and free dinners in Scotland then.....