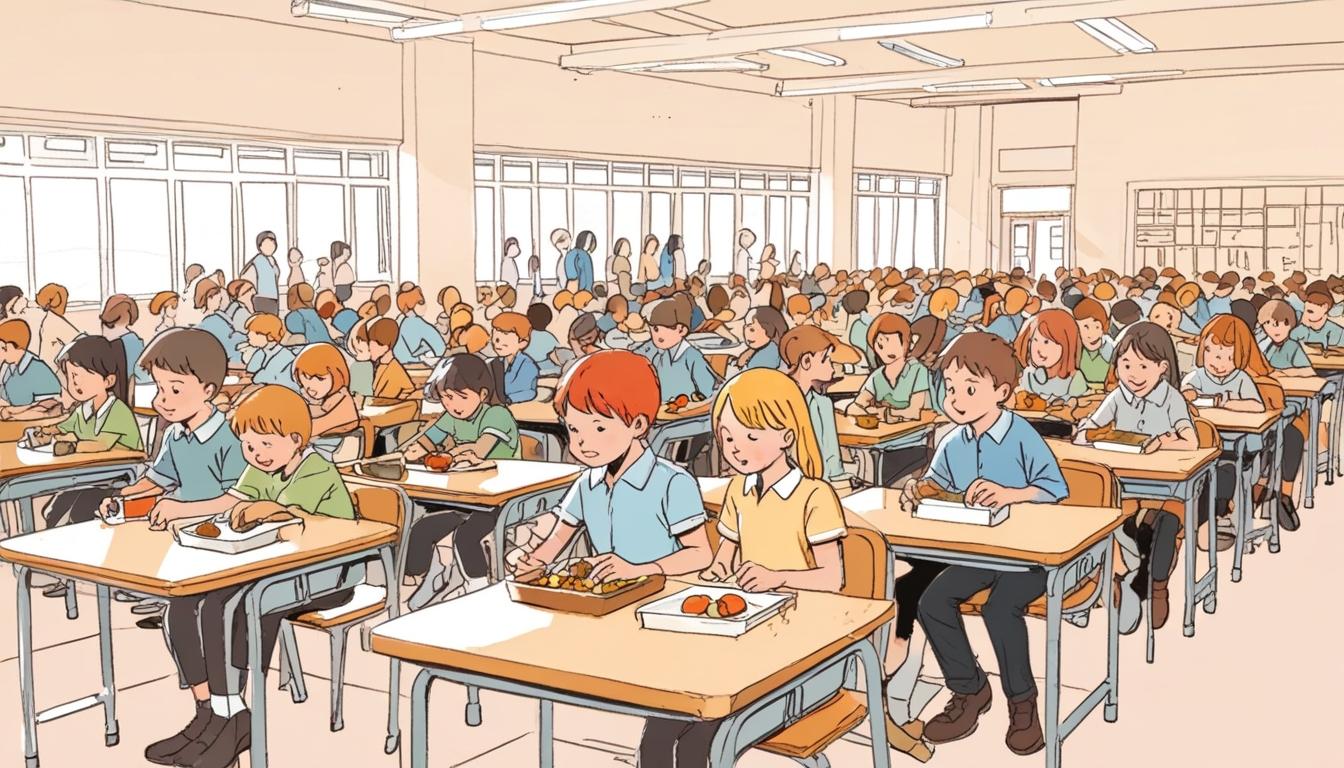
# Rising school meal costs put pressure on families in Scotland



A recent investigation by the Sunday Mail has revealed significant increases in school meal costs across various local authorities in Scotland, with some families experiencing hikes of more than 20%. The findings indicate that many low-income parents are facing overwhelming financial pressures as these prices rise amid broader economic challenges.

In South Lanarkshire, the cost per child has surged by £85.50 annually, pushing the total price for school lunches to £497.80, which is up 20.6% from previous rates. Aberdeenshire Council has seen the steepest increase, raising annual meal costs by £76 to a total of £579.50. Falkirk Council is set to raise meal prices by £30 per day starting in August, resulting in annual expenses reaching £570. Although Glasgow City Council has opted not to increase lunch prices this year, Edinburgh's council has imposed a 15p per meal increase, bringing the annual total to £503.

Labour MSP Monica Lennon expressed concern regarding these developments, stating, "There is clear evidence that high numbers of children are going hungry in school because families are struggling financially. These price increases will make that problem worse, and the best thing would be for school meals to be free both at primary and secondary level." Lennon advocates for universal school meal access to ensure children receive the necessary nutrition.

Conservative MSP Miles Briggs voiced frustration at what he perceives as failure on the part of the Scottish National Party (SNP) government, stating, “Families are paying a heavy price due to the SNP hitting councils with brutal funding cuts.” Briggs called the lack of universal free meals a betrayal and noted that rising costs would further exacerbate the difficulties faced by struggling families.

The current provision allows for all children from primary one to primary five to access free school meals regardless of their parents' income. The Scottish Government has announced plans to extend free meals to Primary six and seven pupils who qualify for the Scottish Child Payment. A pilot scheme is also in place in eight council areas to provide free meals for eligible secondary pupils.

The issue of rising meal costs comes as thousands of low-income families are grappling with financial strain. An inquiry into local authorities revealed that South Lanarkshire Council has confirmed the highest rise per meal at 45p, raising prices from £2.17 a day to £2.71 in the 2024–2025 financial year. Falkirk Council will implement a £2.70 meal cost in April 2025, marking a significant increase from the previous amount.

Several councils, including Edinburgh, are adjusting school meal prices. Edinburgh, facing an eight per cent rise in council tax, confirmed that meal costs rose by six per cent, now set at £2.65 for Primary Six and Seven pupils, and £3.05 for secondary students. Aberdeenshire Council reported an increase from £2.65 to £3.05 for older primary pupils as well.

While some councils, such as North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire, have maintained their meal pricing at £2.05 and £2.35, respectively, others like Glasgow, Clackmannanshire, and Dundee have opted for no increases in the upcoming year. Inverclyde Council provides universal free school meals for all primary children.

Edinburgh Council Leader Jane Meagher acknowledged the impact of these decisions on families, stating, “We understand how important it is for our children and young people to have access to nutritious food at lunchtime and that the rising cost of school meals is not ideal for families.” She emphasised the importance of maintaining quality and stated that the increased price reflects the higher costs associated with providing healthy meals.

The Scottish Government maintains that its investment in free school meals currently benefits over 273,000 eligible pupils across Scotland, helping to save families approximately £400 per child each year. Plans are in motion to further expand access to free meals, potentially impacting an additional 25,000 pupils in Primary Six and Seven from August.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://cullodenacademy.com/general/school-meal-price-increases/> - This URL supports the claim that school meal prices are increasing in various local authorities across Scotland. For instance, Highland Council will increase meal costs for both primary and secondary schools.
2. <https://www.gov.scot/news/school-healthy-living-survey-school-meal-uptake-statistics-2024/> - This URL provides information on school meal uptake rates in Scotland, supporting claims that there is an ongoing discussion about access to school meals. It highlights recent increases in meal uptake and ongoing efforts to improve meal access.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-local-government-finance-green-book-2023-24/pages/33/> - This publication details financial allocations for school meals across different regions in Scotland. It supports the broader context of financial management and investment in school meal programs.
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