DS26(20) Wigan Deanery Synod Motion: Free School Meals for All

Rt Rev Simon Robinson, Bishop of Warrington, will present and speak to this item. With permission of Synod, guest speakers from Wigan Deanery will also address Synod on this matter and open the debate. Rev Canon Neil Cook, Team Rector of Wigan, will propose the Motion to Diocesan Synod.

For Synod's consideration, background to the Wigan Deanery Synod Paper is set out below, along with its Deanery Motion

Motion for Liverpool Diocesan Synod: That this Synod, on receipt of the Motion from Wigan Deanery Synod, i) requests Government reviews the funding for free school meals programme, acknowledging that current provision is underfunded and that any expansion of free school meal entitlement must be accompanied by adequate additional funding for schools; ii) supports the extension of free school meals to all children; iii) supports the wider campaign calling upon Government to implement this change; iv) encourages all parishes, deaneries and dioceses to raise awareness of child food poverty and support local initiatives addressing hunger; and v) encourages individual Synod Members to contact their Member of Parliament on this issue, as a witness to our shared commitment to justice and care for the most vulnerable.

Paper from Wigan Deanery Synod

'No Child Left Behind' – Supporting the case for free school meals for all.

In spring 2026 **Revd Sandra Jones** *Hub Leader - Wigan South,* proposed a motion to ***Wigan Deanery Synod*** supporting No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a national movement backed by educators, doctors, cross party MPs, faith and communities to ensure all primary aged children in England receive a Free School Meal (FSM).

She highlighted:

The issue: Right now, while Free School Meals (FSM) for all are provided in Wales, Scotland (up to age 10) and London, in England it stops after Year 2 (age 6-7). Although all schools must offer breakfast clubs, this provision does not go far enough. When children are hungry, they cannot learn. As a former educator SJ confirmed the negative impact of children not having access to FSM.

The evidence: Nuffield-funded research found that Universal Free School Meals reduce childhood obesity, improve reading score and boosted attendance while saving hard-pressed families £500 a year. Where FSM for all is offered, there is high take, which stands in contrast to the current situation, where there is a stigma which deters parents from accessing this vital support.

The call to action: We could partner with NCLB by growing the local petition/coalition, distributing campaign leaflets through eg. pantries (there are info packs for volunteers, schools and organisations) and forming delegations to make the case to MPs.

On April 4, 2026, Wigan Deanery Synod resolved to:

1. express its support for the extension of free school meals to all children;
2. add the name of this Deanery Synod to the wider campaign calling upon the government to implement this change;

3. encourage parishes within the deanery to raise awareness of child food poverty and support local initiatives addressing hunger;
4. request that this motion be communicated to our Diocesan Synod and local Members of Parliament as a witness to our shared commitment to justice and care for the most vulnerable;
5. That the Government be requested to review funding for the free school meals programme, acknowledging that current provision is underfunded and that any expansion of free school meal entitlement must be accompanied by adequate additional funding for schools.