

13th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

National voucher scheme for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals (FSM)

The government has this morning announced that they will be relaunching the national voucher scheme next week, to provide supermarket vouchers for all pupils eligible for benefits-related FSM. We do recognise that there has been a delay in supporting those families in receipt of benefits-related FSM where the pupil is not attending school. Thank you for bearing with us during this time.

Before ordering vouchers, we will check which pupils are eligible and currently in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. Vouchers will be sent directly to the parent or carer with caring responsibility for the pupil(s). Each eligible child will be entitled to £15 each week during term time (£3 per day). The school will be ordering vouchers this week to cover the first two weeks of school closure (week commencing 4th January 2021 and week commencing 11th January 2021) and eligible families should receive 'eCodes' by email early next week. Vouchers will then be sent on a weekly basis.

Please note that those pupils who are eligible but are currently attending in-school provision will not receive the vouchers as they will be served a lunch at school.

We will send an 'eCode' directly to the parent or carer of the pupil(s) eligible for free school meals – they will need to choose an eGift card from a range of supermarkets. You will receive instructions on how to do this.

If you do not have access to a working email address or internet, we will need to select an eGift card on your behalf, and print and post the eGift card to you or arrange for a secure collection at school. We will engage with you on which shops and supermarkets are most convenient for you to access. If you are in this situation, please phone the school so that we can assist you.

Any child currently in receipt of benefits-related free school meals is eligible. Hackney Education will continue to accept and verify free school meal applications. The eligibility criteria for free school meals can be found at [apply for free school meals](#).

Further details regarding how eCodes can be redeemed are available in the [parent/carer's user guide](#). The voucher does not have to be spent in full, in one transaction. To check how much money is left on the eGift card, parents can ask the supermarket's customer service team when in store.

You can currently access eGift cards for the following supermarkets:

- Aldi
- Iceland
- McColl's
- Morrisons
- Tesco
- Sainsbury's

- Asda
- Waitrose

- M&S
- Company Shop Group

Once you have received your voucher, you will be able to redeem this in-store at the selected retailer by either:

- Presenting the voucher on a smartphone or tablet
- Presenting a paper copy of the voucher

A reminder that the vouchers must only be used for food, and must not be redeemed for any age-restricted items, such as alcohol, cigarettes or lottery tickets.

When using the vouchers, families are free to select the most appropriate food and drink for their child. We encourage families to consider making choices that contribute to a healthy balanced diet. The [School Food Standards](#) may act as a useful guide.

There are a number of ideas and tips available online to support you in preparing healthy meals, including the [Change4life recipes](#) and [NHS Eat Well website](#).

I have included a list of Frequently Asked Questions which I hope you will find helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Gregory Logan
Head of School



Robin Warren
Executive Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions:

Will every child receive support?

This support focuses on those eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

Will my child receive a voucher if they are attending in-school provision?

No, as they will be provided with a school lunch whilst at school.

Will pupils who become newly eligible for free school meals be supported?

Yes. Hackney Learning Trust will continue to accept free school meal. Use this [link](#) to apply and confirm your child's eligibility for free school meals. You only need to apply once for **each child**. If you are not eligible now, Hackney Learning Trust will continue to check your details for future entitlement against information held by the Department for Education. You can also use this [step by step guide](#) to help you apply for free school meals/pupil premium.

What is the eligibility criteria for free school meals?

The eligibility criteria for free school meals can be found on the [Hackney Education website](#) and includes receipt of the following:

- Income support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- NASS support
- Guarantee element of State Pension
- Child Tax Credit, provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit for the four weeks after employment ends
- Universal Credit, provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400

What about infants that receive a free school meal under universal infant free school meals in Reception class, Year 1 and Year 2?

Only children in those year groups who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals will be supported. We would encourage you to apply for free school meals if your child is in one of the above year groups and you are receiving benefits. This will also allow the school to claim important extra funding that will benefit your child in the form of Pupil Premium.

How often will I receive vouchers?

Those families who are eligible will receive vouchers on a weekly basis.

What about families that do not have access to the internet?

Where we provide supermarket eGift cards to families that do not have access to emails, we may choose to:

- Print and post the eGift cards to families
- Arrange for families to collect their vouchers

We will engage with you on which shops and supermarkets are most convenient for you to access.