



Free school meals (FSM) guidance during COVID-19

02 April 2020

The government has announced that low-income families whose children are eligible for free school meals will be offered vouchers, food or meals to make sure they continue receiving this support, even if they are no longer attending school due to the coronavirus outbreak. Please read the government guidance below for further details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

Eligibility for FSM

Both parents and schools can check with the local authority which pupils are eligible for free school meals. Schools will hold this data in their Capita system or on the Free School Meals portal.

Families may be eligible but have not registered for free school meals therefore these children will be unknown to the school; parents will need to make an application following the guidance below:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/schools-and-learning/free-school-meals/>

Alternatively contact the local authority on: 01226 787787 option 3.

There is no requirement to provide universal infant free school meals. Children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals will be supported; families may need to make a new application for FSM if they are not already in receipt due to claiming UIFSM, following the details above.

Easter

Whilst the Government has stated they will not fund the cost of free school meals during the Easter break, schools are encouraged to put in place provision to continue to support the most disadvantaged during these unprecedented times. Schools will continue to be in receipt of FSM funding from DfE through their 2020/21 budget allocations, the Government have also stated that schools will be compensated for any additional costs of providing free school meal entitlements during term time, therefore it is anticipated that schools should have sufficient funding capacity to continue to support FSM entitlements during non-term time periods.

Catering

Schools have different approaches to how they currently provide meals to disadvantaged children. In line with Government guidance we should aim to reduce direct contact as far as possible. Speak to your catering provider to see if they can prepare meals or food parcels that could be delivered to or collected by families.

Vouchers

Effective immediately, if your school is closed and your school catering team cannot provide meals or food parcels, the government is advising schools they should offer food vouchers to families of pupils eligible for FSM as an alternative. Where possible, vouchers should be restricted for use against age-related products, e.g. cigarettes and alcohol.

The Government has developed a national voucher framework to assist schools with this process; further guidance can be found [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

As an alternative schools may also look to adopt their own local voucher scheme. You can order supermarket and shop vouchers (for shops in the local area) directly from a number of retailers. We would recommend administering this similar to the national scheme.

Below are some useful links, we will update this list as further information becomes available:

<http://help.wonde.com/en/collections/2215176-free-school-meals>

<https://www.asdaforbusiness.co.uk/>

<https://www.tescoforbusiness.com/>

<https://www.sainsburysbusinessdirect.co.uk/products/gift-cards/>

<https://www.sodexoengage.com/>

Eligibility, purchasing and issuing of vouchers should be fully recorded and maintained and proof of purchase and issue retained for future reference / inspection requirements.

Where possible schools should look to order and issue voucher codes via electronic means to limit face to face contact.

Schools must ensure that they maintain a system of internal control around the issuing of vouchers whether they decide to use the Edenred scheme or adopt their own approach.

Assistance for those unable to access eVouchers or collect their food pack/vouchers

Schools are asking parents to contact the school if they are unable to collect their food pack/vouchers or are unable to access an E-voucher. The LA is keeping further measures such as delivery under review. Should you require assistance with distribution please contact Admin-SchoolsAlliance@barnsley.gov.uk.

There is a limited resource to redeploy and wherever possible schools should attempt to make their own arrangements.

Social distancing and self-isolation

Schools are reminding parents, students and staff of the social distancing and self-isolation government guidance and asking parents to send a friend or relative if they or their household have symptoms. Providing staff with PPE, encouraging regular hand washing when distributing food packs or vouchers, and keeping collection in a designated location to minimise circulation around the school site.

Reimbursing costs to schools

The government has stated that it will centrally fund schools who incur additional costs in providing free school meals or vouchers to pupils affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). For those schools who adopt the national voucher scheme schools will incur no cost. Further guidance is expected to be released shortly to determine how schools who incur direct costs will be reimbursed.

LA contacts:

Barnsley Schools Catering
SchoolMeals@barnsley.gov.uk

PFI Schools
PFI@barnsley.gov.uk

General enquires
Admin-SchoolsAlliance@barnsley.gov.uk