

14 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

The Department for Education (DfE) has today clarified the details for the National Voucher Scheme (NVS), for those eligible to receive Free School Meals (FSM), confirming that this will be available from Monday the 18th of January.

The DfE's guidance up to this point has been for schools to provide food parcels but I am writing to inform you that it is our intention to begin providing vouchers, via the NVS, from next week. The value of this will be £15 a week and will be centrally funded by the DfE. Following the announcement this morning we have already begun to take the necessary steps to ensure this happens and are moving as quickly as the scheme allows us.

For students who receive FSMs and are currently attending school, it is important that they continue to do so and they will be provided with a high quality meal at lunchtime as we have been doing since 4 January. They are attending school because they need additional pastoral support and/or support with their learning. Their attendance at school must continue.

For transparency, we will continue to receive FSM funding, but this is not at the rate of £3 a day. We are expecting to use this funding to contribute towards the ongoing costs of catering which cannot be mitigated by other means and, in particular, to protect local employment. Naturally it is vital that our school's catering provision and its supply chain remains in place and ready to resume when schools return fully.

I anticipate that the NVS will work largely the same as it did in the first lockdown period as the same provider (Edenred) has been identified and the details we have received so far suggest that the process will also be the same.

Details of the vouchers and how to redeem them will be sent to the email address we hold for you in school and you will be able to redeem these at a number of supermarkets. Please note that your bank or card details **will not** be requested at any point in this process. Unfortunately fraudsters are trying to use similar communications to obtain details that they can use to commit fraud, please remain vigilant against this.

If you have recently applied for FSM we will need your email address to process your voucher once the Local Authority has confirmed to us that you meet the criteria. Please notify us of your email address by using the 'Contact Us' button on the school website.

If you believe you qualify for FSM under the extension to eligibility for No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) groups please read the guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups> and contact the school to discuss further.

I hope this is welcome news and I will keep you updated if anything changes. In the meantime if I could ask for your patience whilst we get this up and running. I anticipate there may be some delay, as a significant number of schools across the country try to access the NVS all at the same time. However, please be assured we are moving as quickly as possible.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Vickers
Principal