

My ref: Parent Letter – FSM WSG Feb  
Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Contact: Please contact your school  
for more information



To Parents/Carers of pupils in  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Schools and Colleges

**People & Communities**  
Education Directorate

Dear Parent / Carer,

## **Free School Meals and the Winter Support Grant (February Half Term)**

### Free School Meals

We understand that families continue to live in uncertain times and many are facing changes to their financial circumstances as a result. If you have not previously applied for Free School Meals, or your name has recently changed, and feel you now meet the below criteria, please visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) to apply online;

- Income Support.
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Child Tax Credit - but no element of Working Tax Credit - and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)) that does not exceed £16,190.
- If you are supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit.
- Working Tax Credit during the four week period immediately after your employment finishes or after you start to work less hours per week.
- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400.

Also schools are continuing to provide support for eligible families, in the form of either food parcels or vouchers, during this period where pupils are unable to attend. Your school will be able to confirm the support that they are offering. The form is simple to complete and will give you an immediate response.

### Winter Support Grant

In November, the government announced funding for Local Authorities for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme. This grant is intended to provide a range of support to families over February half term when schools will be closed and are not able to provide free school meals for those families who need additional support at this challenging time. We are making two offers for families –

#### 1. Direct Food Voucher Scheme

A supermarket voucher will be made available to parents or young people who meet the criteria for (A detailed list of criteria is attached to this letter – appendix 1);

- Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income based criteria (children aged 2)
- Early Years Pupil Premium under the income based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)
- Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)

- 16-19 students in Sixth Forms eligible for Free School meals or for the 16+ bursary (young people aged 16 to 19).

If your child normally receives Universal Infant Free School Meals (in Reception, Y1 and Y2) but you do not meet the criteria for income related Free School Meals, you will **not** be eligible for Free School Meal support during this period of school closures or a half term food voucher.

If you have any queries in relation to free school meal entitlement please contact our Education Welfare Benefits Team on [ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or telephone them on 01223 703200.

It is our intention to automatically issue each eligible child/young person with a £15 supermarket voucher by the 12<sup>th</sup> February for the half term week. We will use information held by schools and the Local Authority to allocate the vouchers using a system called Wonde. Vouchers will be sent by email and text to the allocated parent. If your child is eligible for income related free school meals, on or before the 4<sup>th</sup> February they will automatically receive a voucher to cover the February half term holiday period. New eligible claimants up until the 19<sup>th</sup> February will receive a voucher and these will be distributed when we are notified.

Schools may be able to help you if you cannot access the vouchers by this route. Details of the supported supermarkets and how Wonde works can be found in the frequently asked question document sent with this letter. Please note that all unclaimed vouchers issued in December will be withdrawn on the **19<sup>th</sup> March**.

If you **do not** wish to receive a food voucher please let your school know as soon as possible so that we can reallocate the voucher to someone else in need.

If you have not received your voucher by the 15<sup>th</sup> February and meet the criteria or have any queries about this scheme, please complete the form which can be found at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintersupport](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintersupport) or [www.peterborough.gov.uk/wintersupport](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/wintersupport)

## 2. Accessing additional support for families

We understand that families who are eligible for the Direct Food Voucher Scheme may need further support. We also know there will be families who don't meet the above criteria but are in need of help. Therefore, there is a network of hubs run by the city and district councils that will help you to access further support. Details of support in your local area can be found below:

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintersupport](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintersupport)  
[www.peterborough.gov.uk/wintersupport](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/wintersupport)

The hubs have been set up during this time to ensure that all residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have access to the support that is available. If you are unable to access the information online, you can call your local hub on 0345 045 5219. The team is available Monday – Friday 9am-5pm.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Lewis  
Service Director – Education,  
Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

## Appendix 1 – Eligibility for Direct Voucher Scheme

### Parents eligible for Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income based criteria (children aged 2)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- Tax credits, and your household income is £16,190 a year or less before tax
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

### Parents eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium under the income based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- [Income Support](#)
- Income-based [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- Income-related [Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- Support under [part six of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#)
- The guaranteed element of [State Pension Credit](#)
- [Child Tax Credit](#) (provided you are not also entitled to [Working Tax Credit](#)) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- [Working Tax Credit](#) run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

- Universal Credit - your household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax not including any benefits you get

<https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding>

### Parents eligible for Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- 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 run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

If you wish to apply for a free school meal, please apply online at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals/](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals/) / [www.peterborough.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)

### Eligible for 16+ bursary (young people aged 16 to 19)

- You're in, or have recently left, local authority care
- You get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- You get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- You get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

### Eligible for 16-19 Free School Meals

Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

[Free meals in further education funded institutions: guide for the 2020 to 2021 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)