

Information regarding Free School Meals during the COVID-19 Closure period

We are following the latest guidance from the Department for Education concerning the impact of coronavirus on pupils currently eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

This guidance explains what we are doing to make sure **eligible pupils have continued access to free school meals** where the pupil is not attending school.

Existing school food arrangements

Currently Ambleside Academy is providing food vouchers for all Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), and FSM families in KS2, as well as some additionally identified vulnerable families. The vouchers are being collected directly from the site on designated days (30th March-2nd April) at set times. Further information about this service is available from the academy. *Please contact us, and ask to speak with Ms Bromley or Miss Boulton, if you are concerned about being able to provide food for your children while they are not at school.*

From Monday 20th April, Ambleside, and all other Academies within the Raleigh Learning Trust will be utilising the government's support to distribute vouchers centrally.

National voucher scheme after Easter holiday period:

This will only be for pupils currently eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

The government have developed a national scheme to provide supermarket vouchers via the Edenred online portal.

How to receive vouchers

Once your eligibility has been established your Academy will:

- set a weekly £15 rolling voucher
- combine funding where a family has more than one child eligible for benefits-related free school meals

To receive these, we can either:

- send an 'eCode' directly to the parent or carers of the pupils(s) eligible for free school meals - you will need to choose an eGift card from a range of supermarkets
- select an eGift card on the parent or carer's behalf, and print and post the eGift card to them

The approach we take with you will depend on individual parents and carers' ability to access the internet.

Sending eCodes to families

We can send a redemption eCode from the Edenred system directly to the parent or carers of the pupil(s) eligible for free school meals.

You will receive instructions on how to use this eCode to create an eGift card, you should receive this within 3 hours of activation. We will only consider this approach if the family receiving the support has a working email account which they can access.

Alternative approach

You can choose a supermarket let us know, and then we send the eGift card to the parent or carer. You will be able to redeem the eGift card as soon as it arrives. We will take this approach if the family receiving the voucher does not have access to an email address or the internet.

If you choose this option, you should think carefully about:

- which shops and supermarkets are most convenient for you to access
- how to share vouchers with you in a safe and easy way - this may include posting the voucher or arranging for a secure collection

Supermarkets available

Through Edenred, you can currently access eGift cards for the following supermarkets:

- Morrisons
- Tesco
- Sainsbury's
- Asda
- Waitrose
- M&S

We recognise that it may not be convenient or possible for some families to visit one of these supermarkets, and the government is working to see if additional supermarkets can be added to this list. If families are unable to visit one of these supermarkets, let us know and we will continue to try to work out a local solution to supporting pupils eligible for free school meals.

Redeeming the vouchers

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

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

Families are free to select the most appropriate food and drink for their child. When selecting products, we encourage families to

consider health and nutrition. The [School Food Standards](#) may act as a useful guide for families.

The vouchers should not be redeemed for any age-restricted items, such as alcohol, cigarettes or lottery tickets.

There are a number of online resources available to support families in preparing healthy and nutritious food, including on the [NHS Eat Well website](#).

Q&A

Will every child at home due to school closures receive support?

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

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

Yes. Schools and local authorities should continue to accept free school meal applications. Parents should make contact with the school or local authority, who will verify eligibility and award free school meals.

What is the eligibility criteria for free school meals?

The eligibility criteria for free school meals can be found on [apply for free school meals](#).

What about infants that receive a free meal under universal infant free school meals?

It is right that schools concentrate their effort and resources on those who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals at this time. There is no requirement to continue to provide universal infant free school meals to pupils in reception, year 1, or year 2 who are unable to attend school. **Children in those year groups who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals will be supported.**

What about children who are attending school?

In the [maintaining educational provision](#) guidance, we ask schools to continue to provide care for a limited number of children, including those who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Where schools are open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children, schools should continue to provide meals for pupils in attendance. Meals should be free of charge for pupils who would normally receive free school meals, and schools have discretion as to whether they charge other pupils.

Will this continue over the Easter holidays?

No.

The vouchers are for term time only. It is not manageable to continue within schools' existing resources and there is no additional funding available for this purpose.

It is for schools to decide locally how their arrangements for free school meals will operate. This will not continue at Ambleside Academy over the Easter period but the decision will be reviewed and considered as the subsequent holiday period approaches.

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

Schools are best placed to decide how to support eligible families in their areas with access to free school meals.

Where schools want to provide supermarket eGift cards to families that do not have access to emails, the school may choose to:

- print and post the eGift cards to families
- arrange for families to collect their vouchers