



02 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer, Assalamu Alaikum (May Peace be with you),

We wanted to ensure that all our pupils who are entitled to benefits-related free school meals continued to receive support when our schools closed, so we quickly put in place a voucher system with Tesco. You should already have received a £25 shopping voucher to cover the cost of school meals for the last two weeks. The school receives £2.40 a day for eligible children, so the value of the Tesco voucher is higher than the amount we receive from the Government.

This week, the Government has launched its national free school meals scheme. It is optional for schools to join the scheme. Through the Government scheme, parents/carers will receive shopping vouchers worth £15 a week per child. The vouchers will be available for a choice of supermarkets. This means that parents/carers will receive £2.50 a week more per child than through our temporary scheme and you will also have a choice of retailers. As it offers a better deal to you, we will be joining the Government scheme. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause you.

We have issued you with Tesco vouchers to cover the cost of school meals until Friday 3rd April. We will be switching to the Government scheme from the start of the summer term, which was due to begin on 20 April 2020.

How the Government voucher system works

The Government has appointed Edenred to supply free school meal vouchers. Through the scheme, Edenred will email an e-code to the parent or adult with caring responsibility for all children who are currently eligible for free school meals. The vouchers can be only be used to purchase food and will be issued every two weeks during term time, whilst schools remain closed. Each fortnightly voucher will have a value of £30 per eligible child for the two-week period (£3 a day).

When you receive your e-code from Edenred, you will need to visit the www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk website where you can choose an eGift card from a range of supermarkets. You should receive your eGift card by email within three hours of completing your order. Vouchers are currently available for the following retailers: Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Waitrose and M&S. The Government is working to add more supermarkets to the scheme soon.

Redeeming the vouchers

Once families have received their eGift card, they 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.



Families without internet access

If you do not have an email address or internet access, please contact school as soon as possible and advise us which supermarket you would like vouchers for. We will order your eGift Card for you and post a copy to your home address. You will then be able to redeem your voucher by following the process outlined in this letter.

If you do not wish to receive a supermarket voucher in place of your child's free school meals, then please notify us urgently either by phoning the school office or emailing FSM@oliveblackburn.staracademies.org. In these circumstances, we will consider alternative arrangements for your child.

Entitlement

Please note that the arrangements outlined in this letter are only available to pupils who currently receive benefits-related free school meals.

The Government is continuing its current arrangements, which means that free school meals will only be available during term time. The Tesco vouchers we have issued cover the last two weeks of the spring term, so the new arrangements will begin after the Easter break. It is very important to us that all of our families are well looked after, particularly at this difficult time. We understand that some families may be struggling to afford everyday essentials at the present time, so if you'll struggle without the food vouchers during the Easter holiday please email info@oliveblackburn.staracademies.org and we will do our best to support you.

I have included some further information about the voucher scheme below.

I am very grateful to you for your continued support. I wish you a peaceful Easter break and hope that you and your family stay safe and well.

Yours faithfully,



Smeena Riaz
Principal

FAQs - Free School Meals

What is the value of each voucher?

Each voucher will be worth £30. The vouchers will be issued every two weeks. This equates to £3.00 a day, which is 60p more than the current free school meal provision of £2.40 a day.

Will vouchers be issued in advance or arrears?

The vouchers will be issued in advance at the beginning of each two-week period.

Will the vouchers cover school holidays?

No. The vouchers will only cover days when pupils would have been in school.

What exactly will I receive?

If you opt to receive your child's vouchers by email, you will receive an e-code which can be redeemed on the Government's free school meals website (www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk) for an eGift Card for your chosen supermarket. If you opt to receive your child's vouchers by post, you will receive a printed copy of your eGift Card.

How long is the e-code valid for?

The e-code can be redeemed for a supermarket eGift card within 1 month. The eGift cards have different expiry dates.

What is an eGift card?

A supermarket eGift card is a digital voucher. The eGift card email contains a link to a barcode which can be presented at the till in-store either on a smartphone screen or printed on a piece of paper, just like a gift card. Some eGift cards can be used to purchase online.

Can I use the voucher to buy anything?

No. The voucher can only be used to purchase food and drink for your child. The vouchers should not be redeemed for any age-restricted items, such as alcohol, cigarettes or lottery tickets.

Where can the voucher be spent?

Once you have received your eGift card, you will be able to redeem it in-store at the selected retailer by either presenting the voucher on a smartphone or tablet or presenting a paper copy of the voucher.

Will I be able to use the voucher online?

Some eGift cards can be used to purchase online, but it depends on the supermarket. Currently, Asda and Waitrose are the only retailers to accept online purchases.

What should I do if I'm not able to get to the supermarket?

You can pass the supermarket eGift card to someone else to purchase goods on your behalf if you're not able to get to the supermarket. The eGift card email contains a link to a barcode which can be presented at the till in-store, just like a gift card.

My child isn't eligible for Free School Meals, but I'm struggling to afford everyday essentials. What should I do?

We recognise that some of our families may struggle to afford everyday essentials over the coming weeks, particularly those who are self-isolating. If you require support with the cost of food and other essential items for your family during this difficult time, please email info@staracademies.org and include your child's name

and school. We are here to support the Star family through this difficult time and will try to support you as best we can.

Further information for parents can be found at:

www.edenred.co.uk/Documents/DfE/DfE_FreeSchoolMeals_ParentCarerFAQs.pdf