



Guidance on the new National Voucher Scheme for those entitled to Free School Meals

Dear Parent / Guardian

The Government has introduced a national scheme to provide food vouchers for those entitled to free school meals. Here is how it will work.

Arrangements in Stockton on Tees until 20th April

In Stockton arrangements are in place to provide free school meals, which run until the 17th April and so include the Easter holidays.

Families with children and young people who would normally have a free school meal and will not be able to get one by attending their usual school/setting can visit their nearest Family Hub to receive food for their child.

It'll be a nutritious packed lunch that's ready to take away.

The hubs will be serving between 11:30am and 2pm.

If you're unable to get to a hub, a number of voluntary organisations are on hand to help. Contact Help Point on 01642 527225 or your local Family Hub:

- Billingham Family Hub, Ochil Terrace: 01642 524731
- Redhill Family Hub, Redhill Road: 01642 527224
- Stockton Family Hub, Yarm Road: 01642 528977
- Thornaby Family Hub, Tedder Avenue: 01642 528947

Arrangements from 20th April

The Government National Voucher scheme will come into force from the **20th April** and will run during term time, until further notice. The 1590 Trust is supporting this scheme but is not responsible for or able to influence, how it operates. The guidance provided here is correct as at 1st April but could change.

The scheme is open to those families who qualify for a free school meal but **does not** cover the Universal Infant Free School meals, normally operated in primary school infants. Those using the Universal Infant Free School meals may be eligible for a free school meal under this scheme, if they met the criteria, see below for how to check.

Each school already has a list of those previously registered as eligible and will be contacting them shortly. If your circumstances have changed and you feel you are now eligible please see the section and link below.

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](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals). (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>)

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- **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).

New applications for free school meals

If your circumstances have changed and you feel you may now be eligible please use the links here:

Log on to the [Citizens Portal](#) (Stockton Council) or use this link:

<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/schools/school-meals/>

If your child is eligible/not eligible you will receive an instant notification informing you of the decision. For eligible cases free school meals will be awarded from the day following receipt of your application.

Accessing the Vouchers (from the 20th April)

The school will e mail on a weekly basis those families who are eligible, a redemption eCode. Instructions on how to use this eCode to create an eGift card, will also be provided, but may take up to 3 hours to receive. This will give you a voucher for £15 per child. It is vital that the school has been provided with a working e mail address to get the voucher to you quickly and safely.

If you do not have a working e mail, the school will make alternative arrangements for you to access a paper voucher and will contact you. This will involve calling into school with a form of identification and collecting the vouchers in person.

The following supermarkets are involved in the scheme (as at 1st April) – **ASDA, Morrison, Sainsbury, Tesco and Marks & Spencers**. Others may be added in future. You may need to nominate the supermarket you wish to use when downloading the e Gift Card.

Once families have received their voucher, 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. The vouchers cannot be redeemed for any age-restricted items, such as alcohol, cigarettes or lottery tickets.

Fraud / Scams

We have been informed that some parents have received an email stating the following: *'As schools will be closing, if you're entitled to free school meals, please send your bank details and we'll make sure you're supported'*.

We can confirm that this is a scam email and is not official. We urge parents that if you receive any emails like this, please do not respond, and delete it immediately.

The eGift card / vouchers will be provided strictly for the purpose of feeding the children and families of those eligible for free school meals, in this time of national crisis. Any malicious or fraudulent misuse of the scheme may be referred to the Police.

Final thoughts

Please check we have your up-to-date e mail address

Check your eligibility for FSM straight away

Look out for further information from the school

Stay safe and look after yourself

Thank you

M Carlton

Mrs M Carlton

Bewley Primary School

The 1590 Trust