

15<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Free School Meals Voucher Update**

Dear Parent / Carer:

We write to you today to update you on the free school meals voucher initiative. The initiative was started in 2020 to help families during an extraordinary time (COVID-19 lockdown). Free school meal vouchers were never intended to be a permanent or long-term initiative that was started by central government.

The funding for free school meals that was being made available to the local authority was due to end, at the end of March 2024. Central government decided to extend this to the end of the school year for 2024.

The amount of funding that has been allocated to free school meals was only confirmed to the Local Authority last week. We have received confirmation that we have had 50% of funding that we received last year to cover the extended period to the end of this school year.

The school year consists of 13 weeks of school holidays (from 01/09/2023 to 31/08/2024). 9 of the 13 weeks of school holidays fall in the period 01/04/2024 to 31/08/2024. This means that we have not been allocated enough funding to be able to provide all the FSM eligible children with £15 worth of vouchers for each school holiday week.

We have had to make a very difficult decision to reduce the amount, of vouchers that we can offer eligible children for the school holidays. We will be offering £10 per child per week for the Easter and May school holiday period (for the Easter break the vouchers will be issued by schools retrospectively, provided your child qualified for benefit related free school meals before the start of the Easter break you will be issue with free school meal vouchers for the 2-week break for Easter). Due to funding constraints, we will not be offering any vouchers to 6<sup>th</sup> formers for any of the school holidays.

As the number of children that are entitled to benefit related free school meals is perpetually increasing, we cannot make a decision at this time on the amount that can be offered for the summer school break, a decision will need to be made closer to the summer break, which we will communicate out to schools once a decision has been made.

Slough Borough Council is committed to supporting and helping all our families. If you are facing financial difficulty, please call our customer services team on 01753 475111 who will be able to advise you of any additional help available in your particular circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Associate Director for Education and Inclusion &

FSM Administration