



Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer- Assalaamu alaikum / 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 Huggg. You should already have received a £15 shopping voucher to cover the cost of school meals for the last week. The school receives £2.50 a day for eligible children, so the value of the 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. 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 vouchers to cover the cost of school meals until Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January. We will be switching to the Government scheme from this week, which started on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

#### **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 four weeks during term time, whilst schools remain closed. Each four weekly voucher will have a value of £60 per eligible child for the four-week period (£3 a day).

When you receive your e-code from Edenred, you will need to visit the [www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk](http://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 24 hours of completing your order. Vouchers are currently available for the following retailers: Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Waitrose, M&S, McColl's, Iceland, Company Shop Group and Aldi. The Government is working to add more supermarkets to the scheme soon.

#### **How do I use my eCode to select a supermarket eGift card?**

You should order your supermarket eGift card at home before going to the store. To select your supermarket eGift card, follow the steps below:

1. Copy the eCode from your email. The email will come from [noreply@edenred.com](mailto:noreply@edenred.com) and the eCode will contain 16 numbers.
2. Go to [www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk](http://www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk)
3. Enter the 16-digit eCode (you can enter more than one eCode if you have more than one to redeem)
4. Select a supermarket
5. Enter the amount and add to basket
6. Checkout and enter the email address you would like the eGift card sent to
7. Your eGift card will be processed and sent (please allow up to 24 hours for it to be delivered to your inbox)



### **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@egslough.staracademies.org](mailto:FSM@egslough.staracademies.org). In these circumstances, we will consider alternative arrangements for your child.

### **Entitlement**

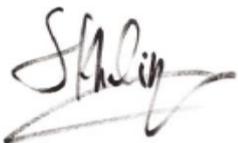
Please note that the arrangements outlined in this letter are only available to pupils who currently receive benefits-related free school meals.

Whilst the arrangements outlined above will only be in place for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals, 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](mailto: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.

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

I am very grateful to you for continuing to work in partnership with your child's school, particularly during these very challenging times. I hope that you and your family stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely,



Sajid Khaliq  
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 50p more than the current free school meal provision of £2.50 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.edenred.co.uk/Documents/DfE/DfE_FreeSchoolMeals_ParentCarerFAQs.pdf)