

To Parents/Carers of pupils in Cambridgeshire Schools
and Early Years Settings

Dear Parent/Carer,

Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme – Christmas Holiday

Cambridgeshire County Council is continuing to run its holiday voucher scheme until the February 2024 half term using the Household Support Fund from the Department for Work and Pensions and the additional funding provided by the Council following its budget meeting in February 2023.

Appendix 1 of this letter outlines the different income related eligibility criteria based upon children's age. For eligible young people attending Sixth Form Colleges / Further Education establishments, information on how support will be offered will be sent directly by the college.

Details of how to apply for income related Free School Meals can be found [here](#) – there is a [simple application form](#) which only requires a few details for an instant eligibility check. Each successful application will also bring up to £2,000 additional funding for your child's school.

For the Christmas holiday, our scheme will operate as follows –

- We will issue each eligible child/young person with a £30 voucher via email and/or text. This will be sent on **Saturday 16th December**. You will be able to choose from ten different supermarkets.
- Vouchers may take until 9pm on Saturday 16th December to arrive but please [contact us](#) on the following day if you haven't received your voucher. Please include details of your child and their school / setting.
- Any children who become eligible up until the 3rd January 2024 will also receive vouchers. These will be sent when we are notified of newly eligible children by our Education Welfare Benefits Team.
- Details of the supermarkets which will accept the vouchers and how the voucher scheme works can be found in the frequently asked questions document sent with this letter.
- All vouchers must be claimed by the 2nd February 2024. If unclaimed, we are unable to reinstate them.
- If you **do not** wish to receive the food vouchers, please let your school or setting know as soon as possible so that we can reallocate them.

If you would like information and ideas on how to eat more healthily as a family, NHS Change4life has lots of useful information - <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes>.

In addition to the Holiday Voucher Scheme, there is further support available in response to the cost of living which can be found here ([Support with the cost of living - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)). Here you can find our dedicated Household Advice and Support Team, available to support families with information, advice and direct financial support.

On behalf of everyone at the County Council, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Bryony Goodliffe
Chair, Children and Young People Committee



Jonathan Lewis
Service Director – Education

Appendix 1 – Eligibility for Direct Voucher Scheme

Parents eligible for Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income-based criteria (children aged 2)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- Tax credits, and your household income is £16,190 a year or less before tax
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

Parents eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium under the income-based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- [Income Support](#)
- Income-based [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- Income-related [Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- Support under [part six of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#)
- The guaranteed element of [State Pension Credit](#)
- [Child Tax Credit](#) (provided you are not also entitled to [Working Tax Credit](#)) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- [Working Tax Credit](#) run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

- Universal Credit - your household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax not including any benefits you get

<https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding>

Parents eligible for Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- 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 applied 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)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get Free School Meals.

If your child receives Universal Infant Free School Meals (in Reception, Y1 and Y2) but you do not meet the criteria for Income-Related Free School Meals, you will not be eligible for a supermarket voucher during the holiday period.

If you wish to apply for a free school meal, please apply online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Eligible for 16-19 Free School Meals

Students must be in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide 2022 to 2023 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year)

Other Eligibility

Children in care are not covered by the scheme as the costs of meals in the holidays are covered by fostering allowances.

The definition of a child is any person:

- who is under the age of 19 as at the 16th December 2023 or
- a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or Free School Meals are provided.
- Any young person aged 19 to 25 who has an EHCP and accesses the bursary scheme or free school meals in their college.

How to Claim Free School Meals

We understand that families continue to live in uncertain times, and many are facing changes to their financial circumstances as a result. If you have not previously applied for Free School Meals, or your name has recently changed, and feel you now meet the criteria below, please visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals to apply online;

- Income Support.
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Child Tax Credit - but no element of Working Tax Credit - and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)) that does not exceed £16,190.
- If you are supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.
- Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after your employment finishes or after you start to work fewer hours per week.
- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400.

Healthy Start Scheme

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, the Healthy Start scheme can help you buy healthy foods and get free vitamins. Visit [Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/healthy-start) to find out if you are eligible and how to apply.

Website for the Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/help-with-school-learning-costs/cambridgeshire-holiday-voucher-scheme>