

Important Information

Government sets out plans to support pupils eligible for free school meals

Following guidance received from the Department of Education, students eligible for free school meals should be offered meals or vouchers as an alternative if they can no longer attend school due to coronavirus measures.

The Government has also confirmed that *“the total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate it pays to schools for free school meals, recognising that families will not be buying food in bulk and may therefore incur higher costs.”* As this edition of Weekly News goes to print, it has not yet been confirmed how much that will be.

So, in the interim, we have liaised with Bexley Council and they have asked all schools to be consistent across the school system, as this would be more helpful to families. For maintained schools, Bexley has purchased vouchers from Morrisons as the mechanism to provide families with support.

As an Academy, we have been asked to *“check which students are eligible and currently in receipt of free school meals, and vouchers should be made available to the parent or the adult with caring responsibility for that child.”* Currently, we receive £2.50 per day to provide a meal at lunch time and we provide students with £2.70 per day to spend in Café Columba. So, bearing in mind the above guidance, as a school we have decided to provide £4.00 per day, per student, in vouchers initially for 2 weeks. This is a 60% increase on the funding currently received from the Government.

On Monday 23 March, we ordered sufficient vouchers for all our eligible families for the two weeks 23 March to 3 April, which takes us to the end of our Spring Term. These were received in school on Tuesday and then posted, first class, to parents/carers the same day.

The Government are currently developing a national approach to providing support through supermarket and shop vouchers. They will provide further details including the total amounts to be issued shortly.

In the meantime, we hope these interim vouchers go some way to help support our eligible families and we will update you on the process and values set for next term, as soon as possible.

Mrs S Goddard

School Business Manager

Information current as at 26 March 2020

