

Free School Meals Voucher Update

March 2026

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 2026. The Free School Meals funding body have announced they intend to extend this to the end of August 2026.

This means that benefit related free school meals vouchers will be made available to parents of eligible children during the school holidays that fall between the period **01/04/2026 to 31/08/2026**. Although the funding body have made the announcement, we have not yet received any funds for the voucher scheme. Until we receive the funds, we will not be able to distribute the funds to schools to issue the vouchers to parents. The Easter break is fast approaching and we are not going to be able to issue the vouchers in time for the start of the holiday period, therefore the vouchers for the Easter school holiday period will be issued retrospectively, meaning that if your child was deemed eligible for benefit related free school meals before the start of the Easter school break you will receive the benefit related free school meals vouchers after the school holiday.

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 any of the school holiday periods. The amount of funding that we will be allocated may not be enough for us to be able to offer £15 per child per week for each of the holidays. A decision will need to be made closer to each holiday period of the amount of vouchers that can be offered. This may mean that vouchers offered maybe less than £15 per child per week, we will always endeavour to ensure that the maximum amount is always offered to parents.

Due to funding constraints, we will not be offering any vouchers to 6th formers for any of the school holidays

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 circumstances.

Yours sincerely

FSM Administration