

Dear Parent/Guardian

Free School Meals during Christmas Holidays 2021

As you may be aware, over the last 12 months Bath and North East Somerset Council has provided funding to support households with children who receive benefit related free school meals during school holiday periods by issuing vouchers to parents. The Local Authority is looking to provide similar support during the holiday weeks through the winter period 2021-22.

The Local Authority has been provided with Hardship Funding by the government to support families in need and we have decided to utilise part of this funding to support vouchers for Free School Meals entitled pupils during the Christmas and February half term holiday periods.

The voucher scheme for these holiday periods will have a value of £20 per pupil per week.

For this holiday period the process of distribution of the vouchers has changed a little as we have had to use a different organisation to distribute the vouchers, due to some administrative and technical issues.

The new voucher system allows more freedom for families to choose where to spend their vouchers, and the process of obtaining vouchers will be slightly different. Households will receive Select codes with links to the council's new supplier, Hawk Incentives, which will take them to a landing page where they will be presented with a selection of supermarkets to choose from, and a reward total which may be split by different supermarkets. Select codes may be added for each qualifying child to increase the reward total, and these will be issued as £40 per child for the Christmas half term period on the council's original email.

Once parents have selected their supermarket they may checkout via their shopping basket, and after having entered their name and email address vouchers will be dispatched to their email address within 24-72 hours.

Households who received voucher links at the previous half term period will not need to make a new application, however anyone who did miss out will need to reapply using the web-form on the council's public website

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/help-parents-and-carers>

The select codes will only be valid for 3 months once issued, however once a chosen supermarket is selected the normal terms and conditions of that store apply, which range from 12 months to two years.

Those parents / guardians who received a voucher during the October Half Term holiday period will automatically be sent an e-mail that will ask if they wish to receive a voucher for their eligible children by clicking a hyperlink. This will generate a further e-mail which will contain the codes to the landing site described above. Parents/ Guardians will not need to reapply.

Parents and Guardians should receive an e-mail on 17th December. If you have not received this e-mail by the end of that day, please check in your Spam folder before contacting the Benefits team on 01225 477777.

The Voucher value will be for £20 per child per week.

For parents / guardians who are eligible for free school meals but did not claim a voucher previously, you can make a claim through the council's web portal which will open approximately on 17th December.

The web link below will request you to submit an e-mail address and some details about yourself and your child /children including your National Insurance number. From this information we will cross check with the entitled to benefit related free school meals register and issue a code back to your e-mail address. This may take a few days to complete.

Web Link

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/help-parents-and-carers>

Please ensure you are happy with your choice of supermarket **before** you checkout , as this **cannot be changed** once it has been picked. **It is also very important that upon receiving your voucher for your chosen supermarket that you download and save it to your smartphone or computer, as replacements will not be issued.** Full terms and conditions are displayed on the voucher.

If you do not have electronic means of contacting us, then please phone the Benefits team on 01225 477777. where you will be asked to provide the same data and a voucher will be made available to you via alternative means depending on your circumstances.

Yours sincerely
Bath and North East Somerset Council