

My ref: CHVS – February 2026
Your ref: Holiday Voucher Scheme

Date: 30 January 2026

Contact: Holiday Voucher Scheme
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Children, Education & Families
Executive Director: Martin Purbrick

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

Education Directorate

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme – February Half Term

Cambridgeshire County Council is continuing to run its holiday voucher scheme for February Half Term, however, the Household Support Fund that has been used to fund the holiday voucher scheme, ends on 31 March 2026. This means that, at the moment, we cannot confirm whether vouchers will be available after this date.

We want to reassure you that we remain committed to supporting children and families across Cambridgeshire and are actively looking at other ways to offer help once the national funding ends. This includes exploring alternative funding options, such as the Crisis and Resilience Fund, although we aren't yet able to say exactly what future support might look like. We will of course provide you with more information as soon as we are able to.

For February Half Term, will be issued to those families meeting the low-income criteria for the following support:

- 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.
- Funded childcare for 2 year olds
- Early Years Pupil Premium
- Students in Sixth Form eligible for Free School Meals (young people aged 16-19)

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 £1,500 additional funding for your child's school.

For the February Half Term, our scheme will operate as follows –

We will issue each eligible child/young person with a £15 voucher via email and/or text. The voucher will be sent on **Saturday 14 February**. You will be able to choose from a number of different supermarkets.

- Vouchers may take until 9pm on Saturday 14 February to be delivered. If you haven't received your voucher by Sunday 15 February, please [contact us](#). **Please include your child/ren's name and their school/ setting in your email.**
- Any children who become eligible up until Sunday 22 February will also receive a voucher. This 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 midday on Friday 13 March 2026**. We are **unable to reinstate unclaimed vouchers** after this date.
- 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.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Callaghan
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

To be eligible for a free school meal, students must be enrolled in Further Education provision funded by the Department for Education, aged over 16 but under 19 on 31 August 2025 and be in receipt of, or have 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: academic year 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Other Eligibility

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

Students aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025 and accessing the bursary scheme.

Students aged 19-25 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan and access the bursary scheme or free school meals at 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 \(Healthy Start\)](#) 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>