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Old Church C.E. (C) Primary School  
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Headteacher: Ms D Clacy



April 4th 2020

Dear Parents

### **Free School Meal Update**

Firstly, I must apologise for sending this on a Sunday but with no football on T.V. (which is probably a blessing in disguise after Bournemouth's season) I have nothing else to do!

There has been a significant U-turn by the Government over Free School Meal. Mr Gove said yesterday that we can issue children with Free School meal vouchers over Easter. Whilst this is brilliant, he hasn't given us much notice! Angie Spittle had already started the process of signing up for vouchers but we thought we had two weeks to do this! We are meeting on Monday to get this all completed as soon as possible.

I will try and keep this as simple as possible to enable everybody to get what they are entitled to:

#### **Who is Entitled?**

#### **To qualify parents will need to be on:**

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance,
- Income Support · income-related Employment and Support Allowance, · Universal Credit and your monthly household earnings are below: £616.67
- The following benefits and assistance also apply for qualifying for free school meals. · The guarantee part of Pension Credit. · Child Tax Credit, as long as you are not getting Working Tax Credit and have an annual income of less than £16,190.
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Working Tax Credit for a run on period of four weeks because you have stopped work or reduced your hours to less than 16 hours a week, or in some cases, less than 24 or 30 hours a week, you may still be able to get free school meals for your children
- Children who get Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance in their own right qualify as well.

To qualify for FSM in these circumstances you need to apply for them.

If you qualify on the above grounds, and you have a claim for Housing Benefit, or Council Tax Support with Walsall Council, we will have automatically processed an application for FSM for you. If you live outside Walsall, and have not already applied separately for FSM, you will need to do so now at:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/forms/Application-for-Free-School-Meals>

If you apply now, and qualify, the team will write to you, and inform your child's school.

#### **So what do you have to do?**

- If you have sent me an email requesting a free school meal food pack. **Nothing** as I already have your email address in the system.
- If you know that you are entitled to a free school meal and have not previously requested one send me an email to [coronaupdates@oldchurch.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:coronaupdates@oldchurch.walsall.sch.uk) requesting vouchers for your child. Then I have your email address, which is important.
- If your circumstances have changed and you now think you are entitled to free school meals apply to: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/forms/Application-for-Free-School-Meals>

**If you are not sure if you are entitled to a free school meal for your child read below.**

### **Frequently asked questions about Free School Meals which may help.**

**My circumstances have recently changed and I am now out of work or on a low income. Will I qualify for FSM?**

Information regarding the eligibility criteria for FSM and our online claim form can be found using the following links to websites: [https://go.walsall.gov.uk/free\\_school\\_meals](https://go.walsall.gov.uk/free_school_meals)  
<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/forms/Application-for-Free-School-Meals>

**I am unable to leave my house due to self-isolation / mobility problems and so cannot access the help available from my child's school.**

The LA are working closely with a number of partner organisations in order to provide support to families. You can contact [Making Connections by emailing: COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk) or by calling 0121 380 6690. They will allocate your case to one of the four locality hubs who will arrange to contact you to discuss your needs. They will also be able to provide practical help with things such as shopping, picking up prescriptions or financial advice.

**Not all of my children are eligible for a FSM, but I have recently lost my job, what do I do?**

Please make a claim for FSM based on your new circumstances and we will check to see if you now qualify for FSM.

**I've been notified that I do not qualify for FSM, but I still need help, what do can I do?**

We are working closely with a number of partner organisations in order to provide support to families. You can contact Making Connections by emailing: [COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk) or by calling 0121 380 6690. They will allocate your case to one of the four locality hubs who will arrange to contact you to discuss your needs. They will also be able to provide practical help with things such as shopping, picking up prescriptions or financial advice.

Please provide a name and contact number and the details of your problem and our team will contact you as soon as possible.

**As a parent can I choose whether my children in receipt of FSM have a lunch bag, hamper or a voucher from their school?**

No, the government guidance asks that schools seek help from their catering company in the first instance. Some catering companies can provide the school with packed lunches or hampers for their children in receipt of Free School Meals. In such circumstances, parents would not normally be entitled to an e-voucher as well.

**My children are in reception, year 1 or year 2, and normally receive free lunches as part of universal meals support. Why are they not on the schools list of children eligible for FSM now?**

Universal free school meals for these children has been suspended.

**What other support is available for families who are struggling to afford to feed their children or who are self-isolating and cannot get out to buy food?**

Walsall Council are working closely with a number of partner organisations in order to provide support to families. You can contact:

Making Connections by emailing: [COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:COVID-19communityhelp@walsall.gov.uk) or by calling 0121 380 6690.

They will allocate your case to one of the four locality hubs who will arrange to contact you to discuss your needs. They will also be able to provide practical help with things such as shopping, picking up prescriptions or financial advice if you are self-isolating.

**Finally**

I hope that the above information is helpful. At school we have been issued with a list of all the children who are entitled to a free school meal and will be working from this list. I can check if your child is on it if you email me. Please avoid telephoning as this slows the process down.

We will send out further information next week.

Enjoy the warm weather.

Kind Regards

Davina Clacy