Parents of pupils in special schools entitled to free school meals

Dear Parent

Free School Meals (FSM) Provision 22 February – 5 March 2021

You will have been in receipt of a direct payment for the period 25 January to 12 February.

You will appreciate that this was a temporary measure to enable the Education Authority (EA) catering service to resolve the supply and delivery challenges of providing food parcels for a higher than anticipated number of pupils. The EA has now put arrangements in place to ensure that the provision of food parcels for pupils entitled to FSM in special schools who are unable to attend for Covid-19 related reasons can resume after the half term break.

In addition and separate to this, you will receive a School Holiday Food Payment for the period 15 – 19 February for midterm break.

The purpose of this communication is to inform you of the arrangements for the provision of Free School Meals on return from midterm break.

· Direct payments in lieu of FSM will cease to be made to the parents of pupils entitled to FSM in special schools from 12 February

· School meals service will continue in special schools as normal between 22 February and 5 March and entitled pupils in attendance will receive a FSM at school,

· Parents of pupils entitled to FSM who are unable to attend special school due to Covid-19 (eligibility specified below) may request a food parcel to the equivalent value of FSMs for the period 22 February – 5 March.

Who can get a Food Parcel?

The Education Authority will provide a food parcel for pupils entitled to Free School Meals who are unable to attend school for the period 22 February to 5 March due to Covid-19 restrictions and wish such provision.

This relates to pupils who are in one or more of the categories below:

· diagnosed with a medical condition or illness that makes them very vulnerable and have been advised by their medical practitioner not to attend school because of the risk of Covid-19

· self-isolating due to a positive test for Covid-19

· self-isolating due to a positive test for Covid-19  of a member of their household

· required by the school, on the advice of the Public Health Agency, not to attend school

· parent, in agreement with the Principal, has chosen to keep their child at home because of their perceived heightened risk to their child of Covid-19.

How to request a Food Parcel

Food parcel will be available for order from 9am 22 February 2021.

Parents of pupils in the above categories should contact the Education Authority Helpline on 02838368186 if they wish to order a food parcel.

Parents will need to provide the Education Authority with the following details:

· Name of their child

· Home address to which the food parcel should be delivered

· Date of Birth of their child

· Name of child’s school

· Special dietary requirements already notified to the school eg medical conditions or allergies

The food parcel will be made up of food to the equivalent value of FSMs for the 2 week period, will meet the department’s nutritional standards for school lunches and will contain a meal planner and recipe cards.