



2021-0008102VFPO

Vicky Ford MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Stephanie Slater
Founder/Chief Executive,
School Food Matters and co-Chair School Food Plan Alliance
By email: stephanie@schoolfoodmatters.org

15 February 2021

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for your letter of 7 January, addressed to the Secretary of State, about free school meals (FSM) and supplier relief during the period of national lockdown. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area and I would be grateful if could share a copy of my reply with your co-signatories.

May I begin by wishing you and your co-signatories well in these challenging times. We are grateful to you for all that you do to support children and young people to eat healthily.

For more than a century, FSM provision has supported children with a healthy, nutritious meal to enable them to learn, concentrate and achieve while they are at school. It is an integral part of everyday school life.

The government remains committed to ensuring that the most disadvantaged children continue to receive this support. That is why this government has expanded eligibility for FSM to more children than any other in decades, by extending the scheme to families with no recourse to public funds and to eligible students who attend further education providers as well as through universal infant free school meals.

As you have outlined, during the period of national lockdown, schools have a number of options for arranging FSM for eligible pupils while schools are closed to the majority of children. They can provide lunch parcels, locally arranged supermarket vouchers, or they can use the department's national voucher scheme, which reopened on Monday 18 January.

On Thursday 4 February, we published an update to our guidance, to offer more information about supporting school food suppliers during the national lockdown. If they consider their supplier to be at risk, schools may consider working in partnership with their supplier to agree relief payments that will help maintain the delivery of critical services. For further information, the update is available at: tinyurl.com/1c9lY3el.

Thank you for writing about this important matter. I hope this reply is useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicky Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families