Parent View

Mother in Waltham Forest

On the voucher scheme:
Parent of two children phoned SFM office as some confusion over the voucher scheme. Had successfully used one set of vouchers, but had had problems with the second batch. She had received her code and entered it onto the FSM website, but no vouchers had been returned. Parent had therefore decided that the system must have changed and tried to use the code at her local Tesco store, but without success. Parent wanted to know what to do next, but was concerned about bothering the school. SFM suggested that she look in junk mail and if no vouchers were found, wait for another 24 hours as many vouchers were delayed due to system being overwhelmed.

Schools

Primary School in LB Richmond
Head reported that system for ordering vouchers for parents to collect from school had been complicated, but vouchers have now arrived and parents have collected their first weeks’ worth.

Re vouchers to be delivered direct to parents, these were quite easy to order last week, but they have not yet arrived. Head received acknowledgement to say that the order had been fulfilled so assumed order had been received. Head attempted to look on the website on Wednesday to find out if there were any updates, but could not access it. Eventually managed to access the site on Thursday (23 April) and saw that the vouchers were now down for delivery on 20 May. Head phoned the telephone line to query this, but a recorded message said that all enquiries regarding FSM vouchers should now be directed via email. Head emailed but got no response.

As head was unsure what to tell parents she looked for alternative sources of information and noted that @govuk had referred another teacher enquiring about the voucher scheme to the DfE Corona Helpdesk. Head phoned the helpdesk, but was disappointed to be told that helpdesk could not help.

Head therefore contacted local authority. She was unable to help, but phoned the Edenred helpline and waited for an hour and 45 minutes before getting through and linking head into the conversation.

During the conversation with Edenred, head told that emails were now being responded to within 48 hours. Head commented that she had sent three emails and none had been answered within this time frame. Edenred then looked into specific vouchers for head’s school and acknowledged that the vouchers hadn’t been sent. Head was told that system had now been improved and that vouchers would be sorted out by Friday (24 April) but still no vouchers have been received.
Head felt compelled to write to parents to apologise for the delay and refer parents to some emergency vouchers held by the school and also to the Kingston Food Hub in cases of extreme need.

Secondary School in LB Richmond
Finance officer reported problems with the voucher scheme. Some vouchers (ordered prior to those of primary school above) have been received by parents. Other parents are still waiting.

Secondary School in LB Southwark
School reports that they have had lots of issues with the voucher system. A large percentage of its families have not been able to download them and some have had to forward the vouchers to their children's devices in order to download them. Managing this has been quite tricky for the school. School also reports a large increase in the number of families needing support. Once identified the school has found it relatively easy to process families and add them to its FSM list, but making sure that they self-identify has been much more tricky. School reports that its FSM list has increased significantly over the last couple of weeks.

London Boroughs
LB Islington
Mixed offer in the borough. Ten schools are offering fortnightly food parcels (700 delivered last week). Other schools are issuing vouchers.

In other news ...

A webinar chaired by School Food Matters in partnership with Children’s Food Campaign, Food for Life, Food Foundation and Chefs in Schools attracted over 300 registrations including 90 representatives from local government, 26 caterers, 29 schools and 102 NGOs. Presentations made by two caterers, a nutritionist and Department for Education. (short report attached)