**Bradford Council**

**Education Settings – School Meals and Hungry Families Updated Guidance Frequently Asked Questions**

This document aims to answer some frequently asked questions about providing school meals and food for hungry families. It is based on the updated DfE Guidance for schools, colleges and local authorities on maintaining childcare provision published June 2020.

Bradford Council has compiled a list of common questions relating to the provision of meals and food for children who are accessing Schools and Childcare Provision.

**1. Should schools be offering meal options to children to all year groups where children attend school provision?**

Yes, all children who access school provision, should have access to a school meal when they are at school. Parents may choose to provide a packed lunch for their child.

**2. Should all children who are attending school in Year 1 and Reception receive a free school meal?**

Yes, all children in Reception and Year 1 who receive universal free school meals should be provided with a meal as part of accessing school provision as part of the re-opening of schools.

**3. Should all children who are in Year 6 receive a free school meal?**

The charging for school meals has now reverted to the provision that was in place prior to schools closing. Children in Year 6 should pay for their school meal when accessing school provision unless they are eligible for Benefits Related Free School Meals (FSM).

**4. Should schools and settings still be funding meals for children who are accessing childcare?**

Schools can decide if they wish to provide meals for children who access childcare. The DFE guidance does not reference this topic specifically. Schools therefore, are free to determine whether they wish to provide meals at a cost or free of charge. We would ask that schools notify parents of any changes relating to charging for meals that each school wishes to put in place.

**5. Should schools be offering food parcels to children who are entitled to Free School Meals but who may not be attending school currently?**

The DFE guidance gives preference to providing food parcels to children who require food and who are entitled to Free School Meals. Schools are best placed to decide how these are delivered. The guidance also states a preference for providing children with food parcels rather than food vouchers.

**6. How do we support children who have to stay at home where they are eligible for Free School Meals?**

Under normal circumstances, schools do not provide free school meals to eligible children who are not attending school. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we would ask that schools continue supporting children eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are at home using mechanisms they have used since the beginning of lockdown.

**7. Should we still use Vouchers to support children who access Free School Meals?**

If a school has been using vouchers then, the DFE guidance states that this model of providing food for children can continue. However, the DFE has stated that their preference for children who have been receiving vouchers is for them to receive food parcels. The DFE is undergoing checks to review the use of the voucher scheme in regards to schools’ usage.

Schools may be contacted by the DFE in regards to the use of vouchers and will need to ensure that the relevant eligibility checks have been completed as per normal guidelines.

**8. Has guidance changed for 16+ age children?**

Updated guidance has been issued for 16+ age children. The separate guidance covers the key queries relating to young people in the FE Sector.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-for-2019-to-2020>