

This is your daily email to keep you updated on the government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

National voucher scheme launched for schools providing free school meals

Children eligible for free school meals can benefit from a national voucher scheme whilst they stay at home. This delivers on the Government's commitment to provide ongoing support for the 1.3 million children that would receive benefits-related free school meals at their school.

Schools can now provide every eligible child with a weekly shopping voucher worth £15 to spend at supermarkets while schools are closed due to coronavirus.

Schools can continue to provide meals for collection or delivery themselves, but where this is not possible, the scheme will allow schools to provide vouchers to families electronically, or as a gift card for those without internet access.

Parents will receive the voucher through their child's school, which can then be redeemed online via a code, or sent to their house as a gift card and used at supermarkets across the country.

Today, schools will receive an email from the Department for Education's chosen supplier, Edenred, explaining how to access and administer the voucher scheme locally.

Full details of this scheme can be found [here](#):

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>

Stay up to date with the latest coronavirus information

You can now sign up to receive updates from GOV.UK regarding the Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19). Sign up is quick, free and means you will be alerted when information is published.

Sign up here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?link=/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Follow the Department for Education on Twitter for the latest updates:

- <https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>

Handwashing advice

The most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves is to wash their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Public Health England recommends that in addition to handwashing before eating, and after coughing and sneezing, everyone should also wash hands after using toilets and whenever you return home.

The latest guidance and video on hand washing can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Department for Education coronavirus helpline

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday), 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday)

If you work in a school, please have your unique reference number (URN or UKPRN) available when calling the hotline.