July 2020



Thank you for contacting me about free school meals over the summer holidays.

I understand that parents across the country are going through particularly difficult and stressful times. We have never had a period of disruption like this and I know parents and children alike will be longing for a return to normality.

During this period it is right that the Government has encouraged schools to continue providing meals and introduced the free school meal (FSM) voucher scheme, to ensure that those normally eligible for FSM still receive them, even if they are not attending school.

As you will know, provision for free school meals is ordinarily term time only, being aimed at providing healthy meals for children in school. However, during the Easter and half term holidays the Department for Education met the costs of the national voucher scheme to provide free school meals for eligible pupils. I very much welcome that in recognition of the unprecedented situation facing parents and children this summer, a new Covid Summer Food Fund has been announced.

The Fund will provide food vouchers covering the six-week summer holiday period. The scheme will not continue beyond the summer, and those eligible will be those who already qualify for free school meals. A one-off six-week voucher will be given to eligible families at the end of term to use in supermarkets.

Significant wider support has also been made available for children and families. On the 10th June, the Prime Minister confirmed an additional £63 million to be distributed to local authorities in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19. In addition, Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit have been uplifted by around £1,000 a year for the next 12 months as part of an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system.

The Department for Education’s Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will also be running this summer at a cost of £9 million, through which will benefit thousands of disadvantaged children. The HAF scheme arranges provision in a range of local settings, including school premises.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**