



January 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about Free School Meals (FSM) for disabled children.

Due to my ministerial duties, I was unable to attend the Westminster Hall debate on access to free school meals for children with special educational needs and disabilities. However, please be assured that I believe it is imperative that all children have regular healthy and balanced meals throughout the day to ensure they are able to thrive in education.

Schools have a duty to provide nutritious, free meals to pupils that meet the eligibility criteria, including being a registered pupil of a state funded school. FSM provision should be made to eligible pupils either on the school premises or at any other place where education is being provided.

The Department for Education expects schools to act reasonably in ensuring that their food provision accounts for medical, dietary and cultural needs. The Department has published statutory guidance, which describes steps a school may take, including the establishment of individual healthcare plans which may include special diets.

Local authorities are funded to support children with special educational needs, including those who are unable to attend school on a long-term basis. The Department has published guidance to provide more information, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

The Department continues to keep its guidance under review to ensure that free school meal eligibility supports those who most need them.

More generally, the Department spends over £1 billion each year on free school meals, including through the Holiday Activities and Food programme and school breakfast clubs.



Chris Heaton-Harris
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Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY