

Free School Meals Covid-19 Update for Head Teachers – 9th December 2020

South Lanarkshire Council are pleased to announce some new financial supports for families who have children or young people in school entitled to Free School Meals. This does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals.

- **Winter Fuel Payment**
- **£100 Winter Payment**
- **Free School Meals Payment for Pupils Self-isolating**
- **Free School Meals Payments During School Holiday Periods**
- **Free School Meals Payment for Pupils Shielding During Tier 4 Lockdown Period**
- **£500 Self-isolation Support Grant**

The [SLC Website](#) provides more detailed information for parents/carers including FAQs.

Below is a short summary of what you need know for your school, including FAQs at the end and supporting appendices. The bits in red text outline any actions required.

Winter Fuel Payment

South Lanarkshire Council has approved a scheme to make a one-off payment of £50 to support with winter fuel costs, for families of pupils entitled to free school meals - this does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals. This payment is per household, not per eligible child. Parents/carers need not apply – the payment will automatically be paid to those eligible by Friday 11th December 2020.

More details including guidance and FAQs for parents/carers can be found on the [SLC Website](#).

Actions for HTs:

- **Signpost families to this through your usual communication channels (Twitter, school app, website, etc) using communication example in Appendix 1**

£100 Winter Payment

A one-off winter payment of £100 will be given to help families of pupils entitled to free school meals with winter costs such as Christmas presents, food, fuel and other essentials. This payment is per child, not per household; if a family entitled to free school meals has three children, they will receive £300 in total. This is part of the Scottish Government's [Winter Plan for Social Protection](#). This does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals.

Parents/carers need not apply – the payment will automatically be paid to those eligible by Monday 21st December 2020.

Actions for HTs:

- **Signpost families to this through your usual communication channels (Twitter, school app, website, etc) using communication example in Appendix 1**

Free School Meals Payment for Pupils Self-isolating

South Lanarkshire Council has approved a scheme to make a one-off payment of £30 to parents/carers towards the cost of lunch for pupils eligible for free school meals but unable to attend school due to requiring to self-isolate as part of the Test and Protect Scheme. This does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals.

This will begin for any new cases of pupils self-isolating from Monday 23rd November 2020 onwards. Payments will not be backdated.

The reason for self-isolating will relate to pupils being advised to do so as a result of:

- testing positive for Covid-19
- having been in close contact with someone during school who has tested positive for Covid-19
- having been in close contact with someone from within the household or another social contact who has tested positive for Covid-19

This does not cover short periods of isolation, where pupils are awaiting a test result:

- because they are displaying symptoms
- because another household member is displaying symptoms

Pupils eligible for free-school meals will not be paid the one-off payment for these short periods of absence, however, if the pupil or household member tests positive and requires to isolate for a longer period, the payment will be made.

The one-off payment of £30 will be paid towards the end of the isolation period, provided they are already eligible and in receipt of free school meals. The payment will be made direct into families' bank accounts using bank details SLC already have from making the footwear and clothing grant payments earlier this year. For families, where we do not hold bank details for, an email or a letter will be sent requesting they complete an online form to provide their bank details.

More details including guidance and FAQs for parents/carers can be found on the [SLC Website](#).

Actions for HTs

- **Record absence correctly on Seemis – use one of following codes: COA, CAA, CAB or COB depending on the circumstance (see appendix 2 for details of codes)**
- **Signpost eligible families to this support using communication example in Appendix 1**

Free School Meals Payments During School Holiday Periods

The Scottish Government have provided Local Authorities additional funding for pupils currently in receipt of Free School Meals (this does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals), to receive a free school meal payment for the following school holiday periods:

- Christmas 2020 One-off payment of £30
- February 2021 Mid Term Break One-off payment of £9
- Spring Break 2021 One-off payment of £33

These payments will be made around the following times:

The Christmas 2020 £30 payment will be paid by Tuesday 22nd December 2020.

The February 2021 Mid-Term Break Payment of £9 will be paid by Friday 5th February 2021.

The Spring Break 2021 payment of £33 will be paid by Wednesday 31st March 2021.

Parents/carers need not apply – the payment will automatically be paid to those eligible. The payment will be made direct into families' bank accounts using bank details SLC already have from making the footwear and clothing grant payments earlier this year. For families, where we do not hold bank details for, an email or a letter will be sent requesting they complete an online form to provide their bank details.

More details including guidance and FAQs for parents/carers can be found on the [SLC Website](#).

Actions for HTs:

- **Signpost families to this through your usual communication channels (Twitter, school app, website, etc) using communication example in Appendix 1**

Free School Meals Payment for Pupils Shielding During Tier 4 Lockdown Period

Any pupils eligible for free school meals and in receipt of a letter from the Chief Medical Officer advising they should not attend school and should shield for the 3 week period from Monday 23rd November 2020 to Friday 11th December will receive a one-off free school meals payment of £45 if the child shields and does not attend school during this time. This does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals.

Parents/carers need not apply – the payment will automatically be paid to those eligible. It is expected that the payment will be made by 6th December.

More details including guidance and FAQs for parents/carers can be found on the [SLC Website](#).

Actions for HTs

- **Record absence correctly on Seemis using code NIX**
- **Signpost eligible families to this through your usual communication channels (Twitter, school app, website, etc) using communication example in Appendix 1**

£500 Self-isolation Support Grant

From 7th December the Scottish Government is giving a £500 Self Isolation Support grant to families if they are:

- The primary carer or parent of a child who has been asked to self-isolate by Test and Protect or the school AND
 - They receive low income benefits AND
 - Are employed or self-employed and will experience reduced earnings because you have to stay at home to look after your child.

South Lanarkshire parents can apply for the grant by calling the Community Wellbeing Team on 0303 123 1009. Applications for the grant must be made during the 14 day isolation period.

More information, including information on eligibility can be found on the [SLC website](#).

Actions for HTs

- **Signpost eligible families to this through your usual communication channels (Twitter, school app, website, etc) using communication example in Appendix 1**
- **When calling parents to inform them their child is a close contact and is required to self-isolate, please make them aware of this support available to them, stressing they must apply for it during the 14 day isolation period. This information is also included in the NHS letter they will receive.**

FAQs for Head Teachers

Q. What do I need to do if a pupil in my school is shielding and is entitled to means tested Free School Meals?

A. All you need to do is record the absence correctly on SEEMIS using SEEMIS Code NIX. The payments will then be automatically generated from this information on SEEMIS. If you have not done this by close of business on Friday 27th November, please notify John McMahon - john.mcmahon@southlanarkshire.gov.uk.

Q. Do I need to see sight of the shielding letter from the Chief Medical Officer?

A. No, schools are not required to check this - all you need to do is ensure the absence is recorded correctly on SEEMIS using code NIX.

Q. What do I need to do if a pupil in my school is self-isolating and is entitled to means tested Free School Meals?

A. All you need to do is record the absence correctly on SEEMIS using SEEMIS Codes: COA, CAA, CAB or COB depending on the circumstance. The payments will then be automatically generated from this information on SEEMIS after the 4th day of absence.

Q. Do I need to see sight of the NHS text/letter, which instructs the pupil to self-isolate?

A. No, schools are not required to check this - all you need to do is ensure the absence is recorded correctly on SEEMIS using codes COA, CAA, CAB or COB depending on the circumstance.

Q. What are the SEEMIS codes I need?

A. For a child who is self-isolating due to testing positive or being a close contact, use **COA, CAA, CAB or COB**. For a child who is shielding, use **NIX**.

Q. What do I need to do to ensure families receive the Winter Fuel, £100 Winter and holiday Free School Meal payments?

A. Absolutely nothing. These payments will be automatically generated using information already on SEEMIS and/or through the benefits system.

Q. What do I tell a parent who thinks they should have received a payment but hasn't?

A. Refer them to the guidance on the [SLC Website](#) and if they still think they are due a payment, ask them to complete the online enquiry form, which can be accessed on the [SLC Website](#).

Q. What about a child who is absent due to family worry/concern about COVID-19 but who has not been instructed to self-isolate from NHS Test and Protect?

A. This child is not eligible to any Free School Meal payment but may still receive payments for holidays and fuel if they meet the criteria.

Q. What should I do for a family who doesn't meet the threshold for Free School Meals but I feel will struggle to feed their family during the holidays?

A. You should do what you would normally do in these circumstances: contact Money Matters; utilise Equity funding; use local charities/churches; contact Food Banks; etc. Please ensure you have the family's consent if approaching outside agencies. You can also refer families to the SLC Community Wellbeing line (0303 123 1009), who provide families with further help and support.

Any further questions/queries please contact **Laura Mitchell** or **Maureen Farr**.

Appendix 1: Sample Communication for Parents

Sample Text for Newsletter/Website/Other communication channels:

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Any pupils eligible for free school meals and in receipt of a letter from the Chief Medical Officer advising they should not attend school and should shield for the 3 week period from Monday 23rd November 2020 to Friday 11th December will receive a one-off free school meals payment of £45 if they actually shield and do not attend school. This does not include those entitled to universal provision of P1-3 meals.

- **£500 Self-isolation Support Grant**

From 7th December the Scottish Government is giving a £500 Self Isolation Support grant to families if they are:

- The primary carer or parent of a child who has been asked to self-isolate by Test and Protect or the school AND
 - They receive low income benefits AND
 - Are employed or self-employed and will experience reduced earnings because you have to stay at home to look after your child.

More information, including information on eligibility and how you can apply for this self-isolation grant can be found on the [SLC website](#).

The [SLC Website](#) contains more detailed information for parents/carers including information on eligibility, how this will be paid and a Frequently Asked Questions section. Please refer to this information in the first instance.

Sample Text for Twitter Post:

SLC are pleased to announce some new financial supports for families who have pupils entitled to means tested Free School Meals. More info can be found on the [SLC Website](#).

Appendix 2: Seemis Codes

SEEMiS			Circumstances that this may be used in	ScotXed	
Short	Full	Description		Code	Attendance/Absence Reason
	NIX	Should not attend (Notifiable illness) (only to be used for pupils who are shielding)	Where a pupil is absent from school because they are shielding	--	Not used in any attendance or absence calculation
>	COA	Attendance – Self Isolation – Coronavirus	Where a pupil is scheduled to be in school but cannot attend because of self-isolation related to COVID-19 and can undertake learning at home.	15	Attendance
A	CAA	Auth. Abs. – Self Isolation Coronavirus	Where a pupil is scheduled to be in school but cannot attend because of self-isolation related to COVID-19 and is unable to undertake learning at home.	28	Other Authorised Absence
F	CAB	Sickness unable to home In Coronavirus (use when a pupil is known to have tested positive for Covid-19)	Where a pupil is scheduled to be in school but cannot attend because of COVID-19 related sickness and is unable to undertake learning at home.	27	Other Authorised Absence
B	COB	Sickness able to home In Coronavirus (use when a pupil is known to have tested positive for Covid-19)	Where a pupil is scheduled to be in school but cannot attend because of COVID-19 related sickness and can undertake learning at home.	14	Attendance
>	COH	Home Learning – Attendance (only to be used when if blended learning is in place)	Where a pupil is scheduled to be undertaking home learning and is not known to be absent from this.	50	Attendance
A	CAH	Home Learning - Absence (Any Reported) (only to be used when if blended learning is in place)	Where a pupil is scheduled to be undertaking home learning but is unable to undertake this. Covers all reasons for absence including sickness, family holidays etc.	51	Other Authorised Absence
N	CPI	Parent isolating against advice C. virus	Where a parent has chosen to keep their children away from school as a precautionary measure where there is no advice to take such measures	33	Other Unauthorised Absence
	CLO	Should not attend school closure – Coronavirus USE EXISTING SCHOOL CLOSURE CODE VIA Application > Management > Calendar> School >Enter Holidays	Where a decision has been taken at National or Local Authority level to close a school to limit the spread of the virus	–	Not sent to ScotXed

