



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

**Kevin Gordon
Director for Children's Services**

28 June 2021

COVID Local Support Grant – help for families

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to update you on the **COVID Local Support Grant – free school meals holiday support for students attending Oxfordshire schools and colleges.**

On 22 June, the Department for Work and Pensions informed us that the COVID Local Support Grant would be extended for one final time to cover the summer period and that the scheme would then end. This national funding has enabled us to support free school meal equivalent payments over holiday periods from December 2020 onwards. I am therefore asking once again for your help to deliver free school meal equivalent support ahead of the upcoming summer holidays.

Full details are set out in the attached guidance. I would like to highlight some key features:

- The funding available is based on a six-week holiday period and will be a payment of £90 per eligible child (£15 per week) *regardless of the number of additional days that your students will not be in school around the core holiday period.* We do not have the funding to support additional days' funding.
- Current Year-11 students should be funded where it is practical to do so, given they are no longer in school. For those Year-11 students who are moving on to a new setting in September, we are asking the setting that they have attended in the *current academic year* to make the payment, where practical to do so.
- Year-11 students who are not moving on to a setting where they will be eligible for free school meals are likely to be amongst those at most financial risk. Therefore we are asking you to fund these young people, again where practical, in the same way that you will those staying on and those moving to new settings.
- Year-13 leavers who are now off-roll *should not* be funded, except in exceptional circumstances, at your discretion.
- Where you have the facility to do so, you may wish to consider making the £90 payment in two or more separate instalments. This is at your discretion.

- For the avoidance of doubt, students benefiting from schemes funded from the Holiday Activity Scheme, are also eligible for support through the COVID Local Support Grant.
- For settings which have not already established an on-line voucher provider, a range of suppliers are available that schools report they are successfully using to deliver voucher support. Further advice can be obtained from COVIDwintersupport@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

For your information, we will provide you with a pro-forma letter to parents which you may wish to use.

We continue to feedback to government that while additional financial support for our most vulnerable children is very welcome, the uncertainty around this scheme and its separation from mainstream welfare provision makes it unsatisfactory from the perspective of both families and overall value for money. We also emphasise that the current scheme has significant operational impact in its administration, especially at a time when schools are under so many other major pressures.

Finally, once again, I would like to take the opportunity to thank-you for your continuing support with the scheme. Without you and your teams we wouldn't have been able to make this happen.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact myself or the team by emailing COVIDwintersupport@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KSG', is centered on a white rectangular background.

Kevin Gordon
Director for Children's Services