



22nd April 2020

Free school meal voucher update:

Dear Parents and Carers,

I understand the difficulty and frustration that has been caused to some of you when trying to redeem the free school meal vouchers. Whilst many of you have successfully been able to obtain your vouchers, I am aware that several families are still having problems accessing the site. I can reassure you that this is a universal problem being experienced by **everyone** at the moment, including schools who are trying to process these orders. We have been told by Edenred and the Department for Education that this is due to high demand and the website being unable to cope with the volume of visitors. This, I agree, is unhelpful however is completely beyond our control. There are millions of families across the UK trying to download their vouchers each day therefore we will unfortunately have to wait until the website demand can be met by Edenred.

Yesterday I attempted to access the website for testing purposes and was held in a queue for over an hour. You will eventually get access to the page however **you must not close your browser or refresh your web page. Simply leave the web page open and return to it after about an hour.** If it has still not changed you may have to wait a little longer. The average wait time is around 75 minutes.

Some parents have expressed confusion around the procedure for downloading vouchers. Please follow the instructions in the email you have received which contains your e-code. Your email should contain a section that looks like this:

The image is a screenshot of an email with a blue border. At the top, a red box highlights the text 'Redemption eCode: 4726455676988936'. A red arrow points from this box to the 'Step 2' instruction. Below this, the text 'Follow these steps:' is followed by a numbered list of four steps. A yellow highlight covers the 'Step 2' instruction: 'Enter this code once you have gained access to the website.' Below the list, a note states that supermarket vouchers cannot be used for age-restricted products. Further down, it says 'If you have any questions, please refer to these useful FAQs.' Below that, it provides a URL: 'http://www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk'. At the bottom, it says 'Please do not reply to this email as this inbox is not monitored. Please refer to the FAQs for help.' A red arrow points from a blue button labeled 'Redeem your eCode' to the 'Step 1' instruction: 'Click here to access the website. You will then be asked to enter your e-code (step 2).'

With regard to the codes and vouchers themselves, please note that you will have received **4 separate emails**. Each of these emails contains a different code that can be redeemed for a voucher. These vouchers have been ordered to cover a period of 4 weeks. After 4 weeks, a new set of vouchers will be ordered for you. You have **1 month to redeem the code** however all vouchers are valid for up to **12 months**.

I hope that this update has answered some of your questions. If you are having difficulty getting your vouchers and are unable to access enough food for your family, there are some support services that have been offered by Croydon Local Authority that we may be able to access for families in extreme circumstances. Please let us know if you feel you will need to access these services by emailing the Senior Leadership Team on howardprimaryslt@gmail.com. We will then be happy to make the necessary enquiries on your behalf.

I hope that you all receive your vouchers as soon as possible. Please continue to let me know if you are experiencing any difficulties. I will do my best to feed this information back to the Department for Education and Edenred.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Govinden

Howard Primary School