

**Children, Education and Families PDS Committee  
26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**Agenda Item 4b– Questions to the Portfolio Holder**

**Questions from Emma Martin, Chair, Bromley Brighter Beginnings**

1. How many supermarket vouchers, funded by the Covid Winter Fund, were distributed by schools to eligible children before the start of the Christmas holidays, and how many eligible children did not receive a voucher?
2. Can the Council please confirm whether there are any surplus funds from the £600,000 that was allocated, after taking into account the February half-term, and what will happen with any such surplus funds?

**Reply:**

***More than 27,000 supermarket vouchers have already been distributed by schools to children eligible under the Covid Winter Fund grant. We are grateful to schools for distributing the vouchers to all eligible families. To our knowledge, all eligible children received a voucher.***

***All of the Covid Winter Fund grant allocated to the department will be used in line with the grant conditions by 31 March 2021.***

**Questions from Alisa Igoe**

*Reference: Portfolio Holder's reply to Alisa Igoe's question (number 19) at Full Council 7 December: "Reply: The guidance does not stipulate that the Council should contact families directly. The Council is working with schools to provide support for vulnerable children, including all those eligible for Pupil Premium in time for the Christmas holiday period."*

1. Could you kindly state on which date in December Bromley wrote to all schools offering holiday free school meal vouchers, if a reply was received from every school, if not, exactly how many schools, split into numbers of primary/secondary, did not reply and therefore did not receive vouchers before Christmas?
2. On 12 January Department of Education and Marcus Rashford were speaking urgently with suppliers of food parcels after concerns about inadequate content. Could you please confirm if any Bromley free school meal eligible families are receiving parcels in place of vouchers and, if so, do they contain enough food and would vouchers not be best?"

**Reply:**

***The department wrote to all schools on 30 November and again on 10 December. All schools responded and were able to order vouchers before Christmas.***

***The Government relaunched the national free school meals voucher scheme on 18 January and the vast majority of Bromley schools are utilising this system. Schools were asked to inform the department of any concerns with food parcels this term. No issues have been expressed to the department about the quality of food parcels provided this term by Bromley schools.***

#### **Questions from Laura Vogel**

1. Considering the recent revelations regarding FSM catering, and Government school meal guidance from 8th January 2021, will Bromley Council commit to providing local vouchers to parents so they can shop near-by for nutritional, economical, fresh food to prepare for their children?
2. Has the council been in touch with the Department for Education regarding procurement of hardware for children to access remote learning?

**Reply:**

***This has been superseded by the reintroduction of the national voucher system by the DfE, which has been welcomed by Bromley schools.***

***Yes. The department has issued children with approximately 700 devices through schools and Children's Social Care. We have supported schools with accessing devices through the DfE scheme, through which schools can order additional devices as needed.***