**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Household Support Fund: support for families around the December 2024** **Holiday** **(2 weeks) and the February 2025 Half Term (1 week)**

**FUNDING AGREEMENT – SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

The Department of Work and Pensions has announced an extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF), aimed at supporting those in most economic need with the costs of food, utilities, and other essentials. The County Council will fund the provision of free school meal equivalent support ahead of the **at the rate of £15 per child per week** for the **December 2024** Holiday (2 weeks) and the **February 2025 Half Term** (1 week). Equivalent arrangements will be put in place for Early Years settings and if your school is also an early-years provider, you will receive separate information to cover those children.

This Funding Agreement sets out the terms and conditions on which funding is provided to schools / further education settings and the basis on which the funding may be used. Funding may not be used for any other expenditure, other than for the purposes as set out below.

Support should be provided to families ahead of each holiday period.

**By accepting the funding, you are deemed to accept these terms and conditions.**

**Funding**

1. Payment will be made to all schools and FE settings ahead of the **December 2024** Holiday and the **February 2025 Half Term** based at the level of **£15** per holiday week per student known to be eligible for benefits related Free School Meals (FSM) within the return made in the most recent available school census, updated with previous information provided to the County Council through the regular data return.
2. Further balancing payments will be made if required based on the return of management information (see below) after the holiday.
3. The funding available is based on a week to week time period and will be £15per eligible child 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, for example for in-service training days.

**Eligibility**

1. All students known to be eligible for benefits related FSM are eligible for the Household Support Fund, regardless of whether they receive FSMs.
2. Parents do not need to apply – all eligible parents should receive support from schools and colleges automatically.
3. Students benefiting from the universal FSM offer for infant-aged children are only eligible if they are also known to be eligible for benefits related FSM provision.
4. All eligible students in Oxfordshire schools and colleges qualify for support, regardless of their home address. (Equivalent arrangements are in place in neighbouring Local Authorities).
5. The County Council recognises that families not currently known to be eligible for FSM may also be at risk of food poverty for a number of reasons. Head teachers and college leaders are therefore asked to use their discretion to ensure that the risk of any student suffering food hardship is minimised. Discretionary support may be for:
	1. Those who may become eligible for FSM during the course of the term following the holiday period;
	2. Those who would be expected to be eligible for FSM had they applied;
	3. Those older students who do not receive FSM support because of the nature of the way benefits are paid to them (for example those living in supported accommodation who receive social service support payments);
	4. Those who have recently arrived in the UK and who have not yet been assessed for benefit eligibility. This would include, for example, families from the Ukraine who have recently joined your school through the family visa or homes for Ukraine schemes;
	5. Any other student considered to be at risk of food hardship during the holiday period.
6. When exercising discretion, schools and colleges should have due regard to the public sector equalities duty and to minimising the risk of fraud.
7. For the avoidance of doubt, any students benefiting from other schemes (included in relevant holiday periods, the Holiday Activity Scheme) are also eligible for support through the Household Support Fund.

**Support options**

1. Schools have the flexibility to make their own arrangements to ensure support is available that meets local circumstances. Support can comprise of:
* The provision of super-market vouchers through on-line schemes;
* The provision of super-market or local food vouchers through direct purchasing;
* The direct provision of food through food boxes or equivalent (food provided should adhere to the national standards for school food set out by the Department for Education);
* Other appropriate arrangements as agreed by the County Council via CSCHouseholdSupport@Oxfordshire.gov.uk. Arrangements agreed ahead of previous holiday periods for earlier rounds of Household Support Fund and the previous Winter Support and COVID Local Support schemes can also continue to be used.

* For those 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. This includes Yr-2, Yr-6 and Yr-11 students moving on at the end of a key-stage, as well as moves made for other reasons.
* Current Year-11 students should be funded where it is practical to do so, given they may no longer be in school.
* 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.

**Record keeping and reporting requirements**

1. Schools and other settings should retain records of which students have been supported and how this support has been provided and retain these records in-line with local retention schedules using the template provided. **This template should be retained by the school or college and should not submitted to the County Council**.
2. When a payment has been made at the discretion of school leaders, the reason for exercising discretion should be recorded. (e.g circumstances known to have changed; parents said they were struggling; recent drop in income due to self-isolation; other reasons – please specify.)