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To: The Head Teachers of all Schools and Academies with a school meals service provided by Havering Catering Services

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Dear Head Teacher

School Catering Service charges during COVID-19

I am writing to clarify the arrangements for charging schools for the School Catering Service during the period of reduced uptake of free school meals.

From the week commencing 23rd March 2020 schools were open only for the children of key workers and for vulnerable children. Meals were provided in school for the children attending and for staff. For other benefit-eligible pupils not attending school (not non benefit-eligible infant age pupils) lunch packs were provided.

Schools have been invoiced for all of the above for April, May and June except for meals provided to non benefit-eligible vulnerable children/children of key workers, which were funded by HES Catering Services.

Shortly before Easter, the government introduced national free school meals vouchers provided through a company called Edenred. The vouchers are ordered by schools on behalf of parents who use the vouchers at a range of supermarkets to purchase food for their children to the value of £15 per week.

The cost of the vouchers are met by the government, not schools.

The government will allow a limited range of costs to be reclaimed including the following:

support for free school meals (FSM) for eligible children who are not attending school, where those costs are not covered by the FSM national voucher scheme - this covers:

- o costs to schools arising before the introduction of the national voucher scheme
- o costs where schools are providing free meals to children for whom the national voucher scheme is inappropriate (for example, because there are no participating supermarkets locally or schools are providing meals directly)

As more pupils have attended their schools, particularly from 1st June in primary schools, the same arrangements described above apply. Added to this is the return to school of Reception and Year 1 pupils who are eligible for infant free meals.

The government has issued guidance on a Procurement Policy Note which requires schools to continue to meet the costs of existing contracts where contractors are at risk of not being able to continue to provide the service either during or after the epidemic.

The LA is including the School Catering Services as a service at risk due to the scale of the income lost from parental charging for meals and the charging of schools for free school meals. This is in spite of lower supply (food) costs being purchased by the Service and the lower staff costs for those who have been furloughed which is to be included in the Council's claim for consideration by the Government.

Schools will therefore be invoiced based on the following:

The number of free school meals provided in the corresponding months last year (April, May, June and July) adjusted for increases/decreases in eligible pupils from each October census and for infant and primary schools increases/decreases in the numbers used for the Universal Infant Free School Meals grant. The charge for these periods will be at £1.40 for primary (rather than £2.30) and £1.60 for secondary (rather than £2.60). This reduced charge is based on food costs only.

Deducted from these charges will be any provision that has already been invoiced to schools for lunch packs.

An example of the calculation is as follows:

	April	May	June
Actual FSM charges in 2019	£5,000	£5,500	£6,000
October 2018 FSM eligibility (+ UIFSM for Inf & Pri)	50 (+ 200 = 250)		
October 2019 FSM eligibility (+ UIFSM for Inf & Pri)	60 (+ 210 = 270)		
Estimated charge for 2020	£5,400	£5,940	£6,480
Deduction for charges already made	£1,500	£1,000	£500
Balance of estimate to be charged for 2020	£3,900	£4,940	£5,980
Converted to reduced charge	£2,482	£3,144	£3,805

Schools are reminded that their annual funding allocations include funding for the provision of free school meals including, for infant and primary schools, a grant for universal infant free school meals. In spite of the School Catering Service charging for these months, the reduced rate per meal should generate a saving for schools.

It is expected that invoices for the months of April, May, June and July will be sent to schools in late August.

Yours sincerely



David Allen
Strategic Finance Manager