

Committee(s)	Dated:
Education Board [For Information] Policy & Resources Committee [For Decision] Community & Children's Services Committee [For Information]	19/11/2020 19/11/2020 11/12/2020
Subject: Holiday Meal Support to City of London Sponsored Academies	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 3 & 4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author(s): Anne Bamford, Strategic Director of Education and Skills Daniel McGrady, Lead Policy Officer (Education, Culture and Skills)	

Summary

This report asks Members to consider the provision of food vouchers to the families of pupils attending City of London sponsored academies, pupils attending The Aldgate School and City resident children attending other schools who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) over school holiday periods.

On 8 November 2020, the Department for Work and Pensions released a Press Statement which included a commitment to a "COVID Winter Grant Scheme" up until March 2021 and a "Holiday Activities and Food Programme" covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021. Under the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, Local Authorities will receive funding directly to help the hardest-hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it over the holidays up until the end of March 2021. From April 2021, the Holiday Activities and Food Programme will continue with the same provision. Whilst it is currently unclear how and what will be distributed to families, the announcement is clear that Local Authorities will receive the funding which would include the City of London Corporation (for City resident children) as well the Local Authorities in which City Sponsored academies reside: Islington, Hackney and Southwark. As a Local Authority, the City Corporation will review the allocation and distribution requirements to implement this new programme which is likely to require additional administrative resource to support the approximately 60 children who will benefit.

Members are asked to endorse the recommendation that the City Corporation should await further Government announcements on the COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme before clarifying its position and long-term role in supporting the families of pupils in its community school, residents in the City, and in

its sponsored academies over holiday periods. Members are asked to note that officers conducted financial modelling for the scenario that the City Corporation provides support to pupils in its sponsored academies as an indication of what a package of support from the City Corporation would cost. This modelling is provided for information and to frame future discussions on the role of the City Corporation in regard to its academies following further details on the Government announcements.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Education Board and Policy & Resources Committee are asked to:

- Approve the decision to await further Government announcements on the COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme before clarifying the City Corporation's role in providing food vouchers to pupils in City sponsored academies over holiday periods;
- Note that the City Corporation will review the allocation and distribution requirements to implement the Government Schemes as a Local Authority which is likely to require additional administrative resource to support the children who will benefit;
- Note that financial modelling has been conducted on support to families of pupils in City sponsored academies for information.

Main Report

Background

1. Over the 2020 summer holidays and in response to the unprecedented circumstances brought about by COVID-19, the Government provided the COVID Summer Food Fund which gave food vouchers for families with children eligible for FSM over the summer holidays. The Government then announced that it would not continue this provision into school holidays during the 2020/21 Academic Year. Some Local Authorities subsequently ran schemes for resident children in their local catchment areas to fill this gap. Of the boroughs where the City of London schools reside, the following delivered food voucher schemes over the October half term:

- London Borough of Islington: Established a voucher scheme to help parents whose children are eligible for statutory free school meals during the October half-term holiday¹. The vouchers were for the value of £15 and distributed to parents and carers by the school when they return in November as reimbursement for the additional food costs incurred during the half term.
- London Borough of Southwark: Provided FSM vouchers for eligible pupils over the October half term.²
- London Borough of Hackney: Provided a service for families whose children are eligible for FSM and need emergency support to be able to contact the Council helpline to access vouchers³.

¹ <https://www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/benefits-and-financial-support/free-school-meals-and-uniform-grant>

² <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/schools-and-education/information-for-parents/financial-support/free-school-meals-during-covid-19>

³ <https://education.hackney.gov.uk/content/apply-free-school-meals>

- City of London Corporation: In total, 59 vouchers were given out to City resident children over the week beginning 26th October 2020, which was Autumn half term. Feedback from families was very positive, as from the school/social workers/early help workers who worked with them. Children's services are due review the list and eligibility for vouchers during school holidays before schools break up for the Christmas holiday.
2. On 8 November 2020, the Department for Work and Pensions released a Press Statement which included a commitment to a "COVID Winter Grant Scheme" up until March 2021 and a "Holiday Activities and Food Programme" covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021⁴. The statement includes the following details:
- £170m will be distributed to Local Authorities in December 2020, with 80% earmarked to support with food and bills to cover the period to the end of March 2021.
 - It will allow Local Authorities to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it over the holidays.
 - Schools will not be provided the funding as their role will continue to be to provide meals during term-time.
 - A £220m Holiday Activities and Food programme will also be expanded to cover Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021 which will be available to children in every Local Authority in England, building on previous programmes.

At this stage, it is unknown in what form the COVID Winter Grant will be distributed through Local Authorities to families (e.g. through food vouchers or another means) and also what the value of food support will be per child. However, it seems likely that it will follow the same format as the COVID Summer Food Fund and take the form of £3 per day food vouchers distributed through Local Authorities to resident children eligible for FSM.

3. The role of the City Corporation in relation to its academies is not that of the Local Education Authority. The City Corporation is an academy sponsor which is a role defined by the Department for Education (DfE). The City Corporation supports its sponsored academies in several ways, including through the provision of grants. Over 2020/21 Financial Year, the City Corporation has provided the following in grant payments to its sponsored academies:
- £1,644,123 provided as City Premium Grant funding from the Education Board's budget for 2020/21 Academic Year, plus £85,000 to be distributed in January 2021.
 - £330,000 provided as one-off supplementary City Premium Grant funding from the Policy Initiative Fund distributed to academies to address educational gaps exacerbated by school closures during COVID-19.
 - £50,000 from the Education Board's budget provided to City of London Academies Trust (CoLAT) to support central services costs.
 - £70,000 from the COVID-19 Contingency Fund to City of London Academies Trust to deliver a Summer School over August 2020 to address educational gaps as a result of school closures during COVID-19.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-winter-package-to-provide-further-support-for-children-and-families>

Current Position

4. The City Corporation is awaiting further details on the COVID Winter Grant Scheme (Dec 2020 to Mar 2021) and Holiday Activities and Food Programme (Apr 2021 to Aug 2021). It is expected that the details will include the means by which Local Authorities will support vulnerable families with food over holiday periods as well as the financial value per family and eligibility criteria.
5. There are 18 pupils in The Aldgate School eligible for FSM and 32 City-resident children attending other schools (excluding The Aldgate School and City sponsored academies).
6. Officers have conducted financial modelling on what a City Corporation package of support to low-income families of pupils attending its sponsored academies would look like. This will provide contextual information for the City's long-term view of food support over the holiday periods once the Government's programme has been clarified.
7. Based on the latest available census data for schools, there are 1,847⁵ pupils in City of London sponsored academies (excluding post-16) eligible for FSM. There is a total of 27 weekdays in the 2020/21 Academic Year school holidays:
 - a. Christmas holidays (Monday 21 December 2020 – Friday 1 January 2021) – 10 days
 - b. Spring half term (Monday 15 February 2021 – Friday 19 February 2021) – 5 days
 - c. Easter holidays (Thursday 1 April 2021 – Friday 16 April 2021) – 12 daysThe benchmark for food voucher provision is £3 per day, set by the Government's COVID Summer Food Fund which provided food vouchers over the summer holidays.

Proposals

8. It would cost an estimated £149,607 to provide food vouchers for all eligible pupils in City sponsored academies for each day of the remaining school holidays until the end of the Easter holidays at a rate of £3 per pupil per day. This has been rounded to £150,000 to allow for variances in the 2021/22 Academic Year data on pupils eligible for FSM and actual pupils in schools.
9. It will cost an estimated £20K to implement the scheme to City-resident children as a Local Authority which will include children eligible for FSM and wider vulnerability criteria such as whether the child is in social care and if the family are using the childcare affordability scheme.
10. It is proposed that Members await further Government announcements on the COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme before clarifying the City Corporation's role in providing food vouchers to pupils in City sponsored academies over holiday periods and approving the implementation of funding as a Local Authority.
11. Should Members endorse a role for the City Corporation in providing food vouchers for pupils in City sponsored academies, Members should consider the funding options outlined in Paragraph 12.

Options

12. Members should consider the following options for the role of the City Corporation in providing food vouchers for pupils in City sponsored academies:

⁵ Based on latest available school census data (2019).

- i. To leave the provision of food support to the discretion of the Local Authorities where the academies are based (Southwark, Hackney and Islington) in light of funding due to be distributed to Local Authorities from the Department for Work and Pensions' COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme;
- ii. To provide financial support to low-income families of pupils in City sponsored academies at a value of £150,000 for food vouchers. This could be funded in one of the following two ways:
 - a) Allow academies to use their City Premium Grant funding to provide food vouchers for eligible pupils over the holiday periods at their discretion.
 - b) Recommend to Policy & Resources Committee to approve the release of £150,000 from the Policy Initiative Fund to resource the initiative

13. The recommended course of action is to await further Government announcements on the COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme before clarifying the City Corporation's role in providing food vouchers to pupils in City sponsored academies over holiday periods.

Key Data

14. The calculations in this report for pupils in City sponsored academies are based on the latest school census data provided by the Department for Education (DfE) correct in 2019. *Table 1* below provides a summary of the number of pupils eligible for FSM in each sponsored academy, as well as the number of pupils Ever6 for reference.

Table 1

School	Number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)	Number of pupils eligible for FSM any time in last 6 years (Ever 6)
City of London Primary Academy Islington	7	8
Galleywall Primary School	69	77
Redriff Primary School	72	140
City of London Academy Islington	348	514
The City Academy, Hackney	412	547
City of London Academy Southwark	389	751
City of London Academy Highbury Grove	315	633
City of London Academy Highgate Hill	127	266
City of London Academy Shoreditch Park	108	204
Total	1,847	3,140

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

15. The City Corporation has a different relationship with pupils in its sponsored academies than with resident children in the City of London. The City Corporation is an academy Sponsor in its Corporate capacity and not as a Local Authority. In

this case, Members should consider the proposals in the strategic capacity as an academy Sponsor.

Financial implications

16. There are no provisions in the 2020/21 Education Board budget to fund a City package of support and therefore the initiative would require the approval of Policy & Resources Committee to release £150,000 from the Policy Initiatives Fund.

Resource implications

17. The purchase and distribution of food vouchers to families of pupils in City sponsored academies would require resource to administrate the activities. This could be quite significant if CoLAT or the academies decide to run a 'helpline' model such as that provided by the London Borough of Hackney where vouchers are distributed as they are requested.

Risk implications

18. The following risks should be considered:

- Risk of double funding if the Local Authorities in which the academies reside (Islington, Hackney and Southwark) deliver holiday meal schemes with the COVID Winter Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme.
- Risk that there will not be demand from families which will cause CoLAT and/or the academies to underspend on the grant from the City Corporation.
- Risk that the administration of the food voucher scheme will be costly to CoLAT and/or the academies.
- Risk that it creates a precedent and funding will be sought for holidays beyond the Easter holiday break requiring an ongoing commitment of funds.

Conclusion

This report asks Members of the Education Board and Policy & Resources Committee to consider the provision of food vouchers to families of pupils attending City of London sponsored academies who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) over school holiday periods.

Report author(s)

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