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The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister for Schools

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Mr Harry Catherall
Chief Executive, Oldham Council
By email: harry.catherall@oldham.gov.uk

Your ref: Holiday Activities & Food Sessions

26 January 2023

Dear Mr Catherall,

Thank you for your letter of 4 November, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. I am replying as the Minister for Schools.

The HAF programme is targeted at disadvantaged families on the lowest incomes. These children are less likely to access organised out of school activities. The programme is targeted primarily towards children who receive benefits related free school meals, which can include children from families where parents are working on low incomes and are in receipt of Universal Credit.

Local authorities also have discretion to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of free school meals but who the local authority believe could benefit from the HAF provision. Many local authorities work with partners to bring in additional funding and to broaden the reach of the programme.

Under this Government, eligibility for free school meals has been extended several times and to more groups of children than any other Government over the past half a century. This includes the introduction of universal infant free school meals and further education free school meals.

There are currently 1.9 million pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals, saving families hundreds of pounds each year. Since 2014, a further 1.25 million children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have free meals through the Universal Infant Free School Meal programme. Together, that amounts to more than one third of all children receiving a free lunchtime meal. Free meals are also available to disadvantaged young people in further education.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister for Schools