



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**

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The Rt Rev. the Lord Bishop of Sheffield

By email: wilcoxp@parliament.uk

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Dear Lord Bishop,

During the debate on vocational education on 9 December, you mentioned that you did not think that 14-to-16-year-olds who attend further education colleges had the same access to free school meals and home to school travel as their counterparts in schools. I committed to come back to you on this point.

Such children are eligible for free school meals in the usual way. The free school meal eligibility criteria are set out in [the guidance for schools and local authorities on free school meals](#). If a student is eligible for free meals, these should be provided by the college. The disadvantage element of 14 to 16 programme funding in part reflects the need for colleges to meet the cost of this provision.

These children do not, however, have a statutory entitlement to free home to school travel. This is because further education colleges are not qualifying schools for the purposes of the home to school travel legislation. Local authorities may choose to arrange free transport for such students but are not obliged to do so. In addition, 14-to-16-year-olds in further education colleges attract pupil premium funding in the same way as their counterparts. Colleges have flexibility to use the pupil premium in any way that will improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. This may include support with home to school travel. Further information about the pupil premium is available here: [Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK](#).

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**