

Free School Meals and Universal Infant Free School Meals

The following information is provided by Leicester County Council: School Food Support Service.

Do I qualify to claim free school meals?

The current criteria to qualify for free school meals are:

- A parent or guardian claiming Income Support (IS)
- A parent or guardian claiming Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA)
- A parent or guardian claiming Employment and Support Allowance Income Based
- A parent or guardian claiming Child Tax Credit, provided the annual taxable income, as assessed by the Inland Revenue is not in excess of £16,190. Families who also receive an award of Working Tax Credit do not qualify to claim for free school meals
- A parent or guardian claiming The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- A parent or guardian claiming support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Children who receive Income Support (IS) or Income Based Jobseekers Allowance in their own right are also entitled to receive free school meals.

OR

Temporary qualification for free school meals:

From 1st May 2009 where a parent has been entitled to Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after their employment ceases, or after they start to work less than 16 hours per week, they will be eligible to claim free school meals over that period.

Claimants MUST complete a hard copy application form and send it to us with a copy of their Tax Credit Decision Notice, which will be issued immediately by HMRC to a claimant who has notified them that they have stopped working.

Applications will not be accepted without this document and free school meals authorisation will not be granted prior to the date of application, or extended beyond the end date shown on the Tax Credit Decision Notice. In order to qualify for free school meals after that date the claimant will need to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed in the previous section, and evidence of this provided.

No other benefits qualify for free school meals.

How do I apply?

Information on who can get free school meals and how to apply can be found [here](#).

When you register please inform your school if you consider you may be eligible for free school meals. This will help them to gain the additional pupil premium.

How often do I need to apply?

You only need to apply for free school meals once, your eligibility will then be checked on a 4 weekly basis via the central benefit records database. If after this check of eligibility it is found that you are no longer eligible we will write to you requesting to see proof of the benefits you are receiving.

The types of benefit proof accepted are:

- Recent documentary proof of being in receipt of Income Support (IS), Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (IBJSA) or Employment and Support Allowance – Income Related (ESAIR) from the Department for Work and Pensions
- For those in receipt of Child Tax Credit, most recent Tax Credit Award Notice – Form TC602 from the Inland Revenue
- Recent proof of receiving the Guarantee element of M1000 Pension Credit Award
- Recent proof of NASS letter or IS 96 (if claiming under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999)
- Proof of a Tax Credit Decision Notice (only to be sent if applying for Temporary authorisation).

IMPORTANT

There is no legal requirement for the local authority to backdate entitlement or compensate families for the cost of school meals taken prior to the date an application for free school meals was made.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify us of any changes to their benefit or circumstances during the school year which may affect their entitlement to claim free school meals.

With the introduction of free school meals for infant children in **September 2014** it is still important to confirm eligibility by the methods shown under the “How to Apply” section, this will ensure **your school** will be in a position **to obtain further funding from central government to provide additional support to your child**. This funding is also referred to as **Pupil Premium**. Please check with your local school to see what is available to you. It is really important that you register your eligibility to help make sure Leicestershire schools are as well funded as possible. The easiest and quickest way to check your eligibility would be to ring one of the numbers below and our team will be able to deal with your enquiry straight away.

Universal Infant Free School Meals:

Census Dates:

Funding for providing Universal Infant Free School Meals is based on the number of meals asked for on two separate dates - one in October and one in January. We will let you know the exact dates and menus beforehand.