

Claiming for Free School Meals - Information for families

Who can apply?

In order to qualify for free school meals for your children you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- **Income-based** Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, **provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit**, and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment you may receive for a further four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit

You can claim for children attending a state school who are of statutory school age (reception age to 16) and 6th form pupils in schools. If the pupil attends a college you will need to contact the college direct.

How does it work?

You need to complete an application form and return it to the Transport and Benefits Team at the address shown below. Forms can be downloaded from our website www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or you can contact the school your child is attending or the Transport & Benefits Team for a paper copy.

What is Pupil Premium?

This is funding paid to schools based on the number of children that are eligible for free school meals because their families receive the qualifying benefits detailed above. This extra funding amounts to £1300 per child. If you receive the qualifying benefits but do not wish to claim a free meal, or would be entitled to a universal free school meal for a child (as detailed below), the school will still receive the additional funding provided that you submit an application form.

If you submit a form but do not wish your child to have a meal you will need to let the school know this, as their name will be shown on the list of qualifying children that we provide to each school.

What are Universal Infant Free School Meals?

From September 2014, schools are offering a free school meal to all pupils in **Reception, Year 1 and Year 2**. If you have a child in any of these year groups and are receiving the qualifying benefits please complete and return a form to the Transport & Benefits Team in order that we can record whether the school is eligible for pupil premium funding. You will also need to let the school know whether or not your child requires a meal.

You can include children in other year groups on the same form.

How often do I have to apply?

You should apply when you first start to receive a qualifying benefit. Your eligibility will be reviewed periodically. It is essential that you contact the Transport & Benefits Team in writing with any changes of address or other circumstance. If your child transfers school and was receiving free school meals at their previous school you do not need to reapply as entitlement will transfer automatically to their new school if it is still a state school in Gloucestershire. If your financial circumstances change you will be notified if they are no longer entitled.

Will my claim be back-dated?

No, entitlement to free meals will start from the date we receive your application.

What can I expect my child to receive as a meal?

A school meal can be either hot or cold. It depends on what facilities the school has. Your child will receive a main course and a dessert. Drinking water should be provided by all schools, and you will need to pay for any alternative drinks.

How do I apply for free milk?

If your child's primary school provides milk at break-time, this will be free for the time your child is entitled to free school meals. Please contact your child's school to see if free milk is available and how to apply for it. This is not available in secondary schools.

How will the school know my child does not have to pay for school meals?

The schools concerned will be notified directly by the Transport and Benefits Team that your child can have a school meal free of charge. Each school makes its own arrangements for notifying the dinner service staff which children are eligible to receive a school meal free of charge. You can use your letter of entitlement as confirmation.

What if my benefits cease?

You will need to contact the Transport and Benefits Team immediately. Do not continue to receive free school meals unless your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2 and therefore qualifies for universal infant free school meals. If your child is in year 3 or above and they have free school meals after you no longer receive the qualifying benefits you will be asked to pay for the meals your child has received since the time you were no longer entitled to claim.

For further information please contact:

Transport and Benefits Team:

Telephone 01452 425434/ 425390

Email: pupilbenefits@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Or visit our website www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals



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