

2017/2018

Please read and keep these notes for your information

Due to the high volume of forms received during the months of June to September it may take up to 6 weeks to process your claim and telephone calls to the office will only delay this.

Who is eligible to apply for free school meals/uniform/physical education allowance?

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who receive one of the following benefits -

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less;
- Universal Credit and have net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year; **or**

where the parent/guardian is an Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT).

Can I apply if I am a student who receives benefit in my own name?

Yes. Complete a form in your own name. Enter 'Self-Claimant' at "Relationship to Child(ren)" and enter your own name, date of birth and school in the section for child(ren).

Can I apply for free school meals if my child has a statement of Special Educational Needs and requires a special diet?

Yes. Please contact the Meals and Uniform Section for further information.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform allowance if my child attends a Nursery School?

Yes, if your child is in **full-time** nursery school/nursery unit/reception class. He/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance. Children attending **part-time** nursery school/nursery unit/reception class are not eligible for free school meals or a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if I have a fostered child in my care?

No. If you or the foster carer are in receipt of funding you are not eligible to make application for free school meals and uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child is at an EOTAS Learning Centre or Educational Guidance Centre?

Yes. Enter the EOTAS Centre or the Educational Guidance Centre attended along with the registered school on the form. Not all students may be eligible for a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends a full-time course at a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. If eligible your child can be entitled under the above criteria to **free school meals only** if he/she has not reached the age of 18 on or before 31 July and is not attending a paid training course. If the full-time course includes Physical Education an allowance can be paid for PE.

How do I complete the application form if my child is waiting for results and is unsure of what school he/she will attend in September?

Enter 'Waiting for Results' in the school to be attended column and inform the Meals and Uniform Section by phone or in writing when the school is known.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child has reached 16 years of age on or before 1 July and is not attending a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. Free school meals will be processed if entitled. The Meals and Uniform Section will write to the school/college at the beginning of the new school year and when confirmation of your child's return is received the uniform allowance will be paid as soon as possible. **Payments for students over 16 years of age will not be made until September/October.**

Can free school meals entitlement be backdated?

No. The Meals and Uniform section require parents to submit an application for meals and uniform for each school year and meals and uniform will only be awarded after the claim for the relevant school year has been assessed. The Meals and Uniform Section do not accept or process back-dated claims for meals and uniform. Entitlement for eligible claims will be determined from the date the application form is received.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends full-time at an Independent School?

Yes. You can apply for free school meals if your child attends full-time at an Independent School. However, he/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance.

What are my responsibilities as a parent/guardian?

You must:

- Submit to the Meals and Uniform Section a fully completed application form showing or including proof of benefits/tax credit(s). The child(ren) applied for must be in your actual custody, included in the payments for Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit and the name(s) must be entered as they appear on the Birth Certificate unless they have been legally changed;
- Notify the Meals and Uniform Section immediately of any changes in family circumstances **or** benefit entitlement;
- Provide the correct Bank/Building Society details of the person claiming benefit. Uniform grants can only be paid into a bank account stating the claimant's name. If you do not have a bank/building society account then your uniform allowance will be paid by a cheque;
- If paid by cheque, you must provide/obtain the correct ID to cash your cheque at Bank of Ireland (NI), i.e. current full driving licence, valid passport, electoral card, Translink Smart Pass, student ID/registration card or EU/UK National Identity Card; and
- Choose the correct postage method for sending your form/other documents.

What are the current Uniform Allowance rates?

	Total	Uniform	PE
Primary School pupils (born on or before 1 July 2013)	£35.75	-	-
Secondary School and Special School pupils:			
Under 15 years of age on 1 August 2017	£73.00	£51.00	£22.00
15 years of age or over on 1 August 2017	£78.00	£56.00	£22.00
Pupils at Regional Colleges/FE Colleges who are not in receipt of any financial support which includes provision for clothing suitable for Physical Education and where Physical Education is part of their course	£22.00	PE Only	

What do I need to do when I have completed my form?

If you receive Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit your form needs to be stamped by the agency paying your benefit. You do not need to send your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) to the Meals and Uniform Section.

If applying under Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit **all pages** of your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) for the year **6/4/2017 to 5/4/2018** must be submitted with your completed application form. Tax Credits Award Notices (TC602) before these dates cannot be accepted.

If you have not received your **6/4/2017 to 5/4/2018** Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) but have received a Tax Credits Annual Review Notice (TC603R) for the year ended April 2017 which states "**Check now no later than 31/7/2017**" then you can send this with your application form. Tax Credits Annual Review Notices (TC603R) which state "**Reply now no later than 31/7/2017**" cannot be accepted.

Can I apply if I receive Universal Credit?

Yes. If you receive Universal Credit with a net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year you are eligible to apply. Please forward your most recent Universal Credit Statement with your application form.

Can I apply if I am an Asylum Seeker?

Yes. You must attach evidence to show that you are supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT) or that you have applied for support.

When will I receive my uniform allowance?

Payment of uniform allowances will commence in July. If you enter bank details on the form you should keep a check as to when the allowance is paid into your account. If no bank details are entered you will receive a cheque by post.

Will I be notified if my children are entitled to free school meals?

Only parents/guardians who have made a new claim will receive a letter advising them when the meals will start. The school will be informed.

All information will be treated in confidence. The information provided on the Free School Meals/School Uniform application form may be made available to other bodies for the purposes of preventing and detecting crime. The Meals and Uniform Section reserves the right to take whatever steps it considers necessary to verify the information given on the application form. Any person wilfully making a false statement in support of this application will be liable to prosecution.
