

Free School Meals Explained

What evidence of benefits should I send with my application?

You do not need to send us proof at the time you apply. We will check your entitlement for your children's free school meals securely via the Government's benefits database. To do this we must have your surname, date of birth and your National Insurance number or National Asylum Seeker reference number. The online check will only identify if you are eligible for free school meals, no other information is revealed.

If the check indicates that you are not eligible, this does not necessarily mean that your children are not entitled to free school meals. The Education Welfare Benefits team will contact you to discuss this.

How often will I need to apply for free school meals?

As long as you remain eligible, this is an ongoing entitlement and you do not have to reapply on a regular basis. This includes children who move schools within Cambridgeshire during the academic year and those pupils moving from year 6 to year 7. However, we will carry out regular audit checks and if at any time we cannot confirm you are eligible, we will ask you to provide evidence of a qualifying benefit.

If I am in receipt of Working Tax Credit (WTC) can I claim free school meals?

Applicants who are receiving Working Tax Credit are not eligible for free school meals. If you are in receipt of Child Tax Credit only, you will be able to apply for the free school meal funding. Information on which Tax Credit you are receiving is stated on your annual Tax Credit Award Notice.

Please note where a parent is 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, their children are entitled to free school meals.

Can I claim for more than one child on one application form?

Yes, you can apply for all your children on one application.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

How will I know if my application has been successful or unsuccessful?

If your online application is successful we will:

- Send you an email to acknowledge receipt of your application
- Write to you to confirm the details of your successful application
- Contact your child's school directly to confirm that your child/children are eligible for free school meals and advise them of the date that this commences
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If your paper application is successful we will:

- Write to you to confirm the details of your successful application
- Contact your child's school directly to confirm that your child/children are eligible for free school meals and advise them of the date that this commences

If your online application or paper application is unsuccessful we will confirm this decision to you in writing.

How are free school meals paid for?

No money exchanges hands between the Council and the claimant. Once your application has been successful we will notify your child's school that they are entitled to free school meals and confirm the date this entitlement commences.

I am worried about my child being identified as on free school meals; can you tell me the process?

Many schools within Cambridgeshire now operate cashless payment systems; please contact your local school to see how they operate the scheme. The Education Welfare Benefit team aims to keep all information confidential between the claimant, school and local authority, all information regarding pupils eligible for free school meals is delivered via a secure system.

If all Key Stage 1 children will be eligible for Universal Free School Meals (UiFSM) - do I need to still apply?

Yes – **We highly recommend that you do still make an application**, otherwise, the school will not know that your child is entitled for additional funding (if your family is on a low income). The school will then be allowed to unlock additional funding for your child / children, which will go towards supporting their development, from the first year of school.

Please see our webpage information on Universal Free School Meals

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/help-with-school-&-learning-costs/universal-infant-free-school-meals/>

Can I still choose to provide a packed lunch? What if I do not want my child to have a free school meal every day?

Once you have applied successfully for free school meals, the entitlement remains as long as you are eligible. The option to have a free school meal will run until your child leaves full time education. Although you may need to notify the school which days you require the free school meal, the service will not be withdrawn until your child leaves education or you become ineligible for the service. Parents are welcome to provide packed lunches or additional food items for their child and can opt to utilise the free school meal provision on days which they require. Please contact your local school for further information on how they operate the scheme.

What if my child has special dietary needs or is a fussy eater?

Schools offer a wide range of menu choices and are confident there will be something that your child will eat and enjoy. Further information on school menus is available

<https://www.myschoollunch.co.uk/cambridgeshire/>

Secondary School Clothing allowance

The secondary school clothing allowance ended on 31 March 2014.

Please contact your school directly to find out if they are part of a local scheme.