

# Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment – Notes for Guidance from April 2018

School meals are a great way to ensure your child is eating a healthy and well-balanced meal during the school day.

School meals meet the Government's rigorous nutritional standards, which have been put in place to make meals healthier and give children what they need to develop, grow and lead a healthy and active lifestyle.

From September 2014 there has been legal duty on state-funded schools in England to offer a free school meal to Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. However in order for your child's school to benefit from the additional Pupil Premium funding it is still necessary for parents in receipt of one or more of the qualifying benefits listed below to complete either an online or paper Free School Meal/Pupil Premium Payment application.

Free School Meal/Pupil Premium entitlement for pupils attending Bromley schools is processed by Pupil Benefits at Bromley Civic Centre, unless the school/academy has elected to administer their own claims. Please check with your child's school.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Am I Eligible?

Your child is entitled to Free School Meals if you or your partner (living at the same address) receive one or more of the following:

- > Universal Credit – with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods
- > Income Support
- > Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- > Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- > Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit
- > Support from the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- > Child Tax Credit provided you are NOT also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- > Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

**You can also receive Free School Meals if you are a pupil receiving a qualifying benefit.**

### Can I still claim Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment if I receive Working Tax Credits?

You are only eligible to apply for Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment if you receive one of the qualifying benefits. Where a parent/carer is entitled to Working Tax Credits during a 4-week period immediately after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit, they are eligible to claim Free School Meals for that 4-week period only. In this circumstance we will be unable to confirm eligibility using the Eligibility Checking service, so it will be your responsibility to provide a copy of your Tax Credit Decision Notice.

## How do I Apply?

Apply online at [www.bromley.gov.uk](http://www.bromley.gov.uk) – Apply for it – Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment

Or

Complete a paper form available from your child's school/academy or from Pupil Benefits at Bromley Council.

## Do I need to provide proof of my claim?

When you apply we are able to directly check your entitlement using the Eligibility Checking Service (provided by the Department for Education). You will only be asked to provide paper proof of the benefit you currently receive if your eligibility is not confirmed.

## Renewing a claim for Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment

From April 2018 the Government has updated the criteria for determining free school meals to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit and the phasing out of other income-based benefits.

As a result, from April 2018 all existing free school meal claimants will continue to receive free school meals during the Universal Credit roll out period (expected to be completed by March 2022) and therefore will not need to submit claims on an annual basis.

Claims will need to be made for new pupils even if there is current sibling entitlement which may result in younger children not being entitled whilst older siblings are protected by the transitional arrangements.

## How soon will my child receive a Free School Meal?

For all applications received prior to the start of the academic year, we are committed to processing and advising you and the appropriate school/Academy of your child(ren)'s entitlement to Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment as quickly as possible so there is no delay in the meals starting. Applications received by us after the start of the academic year will, where possible, be processed within 5 school days.

## What happens once my claim has been processed?

We will send you a letter when your application has been processed confirming your child is eligible for Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Payment. Confirmation of eligibility will also be sent to your child(ren)'s current school/s.

## Can my claim be back dated?

This policy is at the discretion of the school or Academy that your child(ren) attends.

**NB:** Please note that your claim will be processed via the Eligibility Checking Service and will commence from the date that this service is accessed. If this date is after the start of the academic year it will be your responsibility to provide paper evidence that your benefits commenced on or before the start of the school year before any backdated Free School Meals/Pupil Premium claim can be considered.

## Can I appeal against the Free School Meals/Pupil Premium decision?

Local Authorities do not set the qualifying criteria for Free School Meals/Pupil Premium. Any change to the criteria is a matter for central, not local Government.