

Free School Meals

The government have made changes to the entitlement criteria for new free school meal applications from 1 April 2018.



The entitlement criteria from 1 April 2018 is -

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- eligible for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and the household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) is not more than £16,190. Please note: anyone eligible for Working Tax Credit, or if you have a partner and they receive it, regardless of Income, you will not qualify
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the 4 week run on of working tax credit (this is where someone becomes unemployed or reduces their hours and so is no longer entitled to working tax credit but will continue to receive it for a further 4 weeks and is entitled to free meals during that time)
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned household income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods). Your net earned income is your household income after taxes and deductions and does not include income from Universal Credit or any other benefits you may receive.

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If a child is already registered for and receiving free school meals, you do not need to make a new claim as a result of this change. In fact, any pupil who has a live free school meal as at 1 April 2018 under the old criteria, or makes a successful new claim after 1 April 2018 under the new criteria will keep their free school meals until the government have completed their roll out of free school meals (expected to be March 2022), even if you no longer meet the entitlement criteria. At March 2022 if the pupil is still a school they will then keep their free school meals until they move to the next phase of education. We will write to parents at that time to advise them what to do.

However, because of the changes it does mean that whilst one child may be entitled under the old criteria and their free school are being protected, an application for another child after the 1 April may be refused. This could mean that one child will receive free school meals and the other won't. If you are unsure, please contact the free school meals team.

To prevent a delay in your claim, please don't apply before either:

- Your eligibility to working tax credit has ended but you are still receiving child tax credit and have a household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) of less than £16,190, or receive one of the qualifying benefits listed above or;
- Your claim for a qualifying benefit has been accepted and the start date for the benefit has passed or;
- You have received your benefit or tax award notice showing that you meet the eligibility criteria
- your entitlement to Universal Credit has been confirmed

Please note we are unable to backdate a claim for entitlement to free school meals to cover unpaid money or refund money paid prior to the start date of a successful application.

Landau Forte Charitable Trust
A company limited by guarantee

Registered in England No. 2387916

Registered Office:
Landau Forte College
Fox Street
Derby
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Please note that children being fostered are not normally eligible to claim free school meals as the fostering allowance paid is intended to cover the cost of the provision of meals for the child.

If your child has a finalised Education, Health and Care Plan and is registered as a pupil at a special school they can receive free school meals at nursery age - if you are not sure if have a finalised plan or if they are registered at the school (and not at some other nursery provision on site) please check with the school before making your application for free school meals.

Infant age pupils

From September 2014, if you have an infant age child (those in Reception, year 1 or year 2) they can receive free school meals even if you don't meet the entitlement criteria listed above and without completing our application form. However, for every pupil registered with the council as eligible under the entitlement criteria, the school will receive additional funding called Pupil Premium which is used to help raise achievement levels. Each school will decide how to spend the funding and are required to publish how they spent it and what impact it has had. So that schools (and pupils) can continue to benefit from this extra funding it is important that parents who do meet the criteria continue to register a claim with the council if they meet the entitlement criteria above.

Apply online

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/educational-awards-benefits/FreeSchoolMeals/Apply-Online.aspx

Please note: You can only apply online if you meet the low income criteria. Remember, you can only claim free school meals if your child is going to be in Reception year or above when the meals begin.

You can still apply for free meals for reception, year 1 and 2 children if you do not meet the low income criteria, but you need to contact your child's school directly to apply.

If the school you wish to apply for is not listed, please contact school directly.

After completing an application, you can print a copy of the confirmation page to give to the school for meals to start immediately. If you are unable to print you can still make your application online, but will need to wait for us to advise the school before you can start to receive the free school meals.

Your data

Any personal data collected through your online application will be treated as confidential under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Staffordshire County Council will use the information submitted to determine initial and ongoing entitlement to free school meals and make an application for free school meals for the child(ren) named on the application form, and may be used for any other siblings who join Staffordshire schools at a later date.

Confirmation of entitlement to a free school meal will be advised to the school and may then be used for the purpose of determining entitlement to free school transport.

The County Council uses personal information about children and families to enable it to provide relevant services to them and to carry out specific functions for which it is responsible.

We will not use the data for any other purpose, nor will we share your data with any third parties other than the Department for Education.