

There are a number of changes to the eligibility of Free School Meals from 1st April 2018.

In brief the changes are as follows:

- From April 2018 an earnings limit for parents receiving Universal Credit will be implemented. Annual net earned income of less than £7,400 (after tax and not including any benefits) will be required to qualify.
*NB However, please refer to Transitional Protection stated below which overrides this - if a child was already receiving free school meals on 1 April 2018.
- All children eligible for free school meals as at 1 April 2018, based on parental income under the old qualifying criteria, will continue to be entitled to free school meals until at least March 2022, irrespectively of changes in parental income after 1 April 2018. This will be referred to as Transitional Protection.
- Transitional Protection does **not** apply to children eligible to free school meals who receive them solely on the basis of Universal Free School Meals (Reception Year, Year 1 and 2, as this eligibility is not based on parental income).
- Any children awarded free school meals after 1 April 2018 will also see their eligibility to free school meals protected (Transitional Protection) until at least March 2022, irrespectively of changes in parental income after that date.
- Transitional Protection is put in place on an individual child basis, not on a family basis. This means that younger children will not become entitled to free school meals simply because their older sibling is in receipt of Transitional Protection. These children will need their parent(s) to apply for them, and their claim will be assessed on the new income criteria below.
- We have revised our application form to reflect these changes, please see attached new application form.
- You will no longer receive cancellation lists from us, however over the next few weeks, during this crossover period, you may still receive a few cancellation emails.

From April 2018 who is eligible for free school meals?

Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents/guardians are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (provided annual net earned income of less than £7,400, after tax and not including any 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 Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're 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

Transitional Protection

In addition, the following pupils will be protected against losing their free school meals as follows::

- From 1 April 2018, all existing free school meals claimants will continue to receive free school meals whilst Universal Credit is rolled out *. This will apply even if their earnings rise above the new threshold during that time.
- Any child gaining eligibility for free school meals after 1 April 2018 will be protected against losing free school meals during the Universal Credit rollout period*.
- Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out*, any protected pupils of existing claims that do not meet the new qualifying criteria will continue to receive free school meals until the end of their current phase of education (i.e. primary or secondary).

*The Universal Credit rollout is currently expected to complete in March 2022