

Free School Meals Factsheet For Parents

Eligibility to Free School Meals (FSM)

Q. Am I Entitled to Free School Meals?

A. You may be entitled to Free School Meals if you receive one of the following benefits:

- Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Income Related Employment & Support Allowance
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Child Tax Credit where
 - Working Tax Credit is not in payment **AND**
 - Annual Income does not exceed £16,190 as determined by HMRC
- The Working Tax Credit "run on" (4 weeks only)
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Q. I am still not sure if I meet the above criteria, what can I do?

A. You can contact us on 01432 260333 and we can confirm an entitlement over the phone immediately. We will require your National Insurance number and Date of Birth. If you are entitled, we will then ask you to submit an application form. You can also complete an application form at the school and they will send it on to us.

Claiming Free School Meals

Q. How can I claim FSM?

A. Applications must be made on the designated claim form. This form can be found on our website at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals, collected from the school or collected from one of our Info Offices. We no longer require paper proof of your income with the application unless we request it.

Q. When will my claim start?

A. If you are eligible for FSM this can be awarded immediately upon receipt of a completed application form.

Q. Can my claim be backdated?

A. No. FSM can only be awarded with immediate effect (upon receiving an application form).

Q. My child is receiving Free School Meals and their sibling will be starting at the same school, will Free School Meals automatically be awarded?

A. No. We require new application forms for all new school starters.

Q. Will you automatically transfer Free School Meals over if my child changes school?

A. No. Once again, we will require new applications for all starters at new schools, this includes when your child changes schools.

Q. What happens if my circumstances change?

A. You should notify us of any change in your circumstance immediately; this includes a change of school, name change, change of address and a change of income.

Q. Are my Foster Children entitled to FSM?

A. If your income meets the eligible criteria listed overleaf then yes, all children in your care will qualify for Free School Meals.

Q. My child attends nursery, can they get FSM if I meet the eligible criteria?

A. If your child is attending a Herefordshire Council maintained nursery (not a private one) AND attends nursery for a morning session AND an afternoon session on the same day they will be entitled to FSM.

Q. My child attends 6th form, will they be eligible?

A. Yes, providing the 6th form is attached to a school, you meet the eligible criteria and you have submitted an application form.

Q. My child is automatically entitled to free meals as in Key Stage 1; do I still need to complete a form if I meet the eligible criteria?

A. Yes. The Government introduced a new scheme in September 2014 where all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 can have free meals irrespective of parent's income; however, if you meet the eligible criteria, the school receives valuable funding so please complete an application form to ensure the school is receiving this funding.

Q. Can you accept electronic applications?

A. Yes, providing the application has been completed and signed correctly, these can be forwarded to our email address which is detailed below.

Notifications to Parents and Schools

Q. How soon do you notify the school of my award and/or cancellation?

A. As soon as we have processed your application, we instantly notify the school of your entitlement. If we receive information that you no longer qualify for Free School Meals, we will also instantly notify the school that you are no longer entitled.

Q. How soon will I hear if I am entitled to Free School Meals?

A. As soon as your claim has been processed we will send a letter to you to notify you of your award.

Contacting Us

Q. What is the best way to get in touch with you about FSM?

A. You can telephone us on our main benefit helpline number - 01432 260333.

You can also email us directly at benexsupport@herefordshire.gov.uk

You can contact us in writing. Our address is: Revenues and Benefits, Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane, Hereford. HR4 0LE

Complaints

Q. What do I do if I am unhappy about the level of service provided?

A. If you have any issues or complaints over the handling of FSM you can direct your concerns to the Revenues & Development Manager. She can be contacted directly on benexsupport@herefordshire.gov.uk or on 01432 261505.