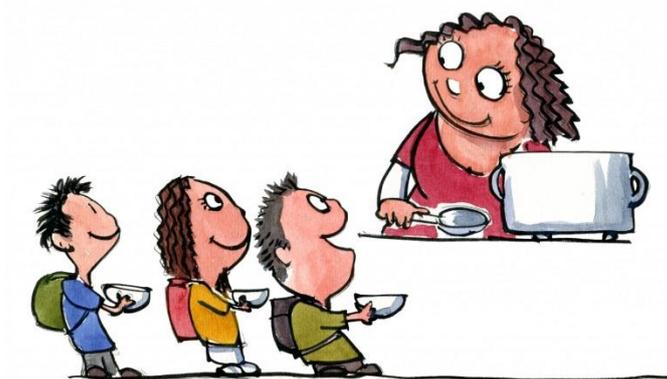


YOUR GUIDE TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The School Food Service
Education & Skills
Children's Services



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1. An Introduction to the Free School Meals Guide

Hello, and welcome to an updated version of Your Guide to Free School Meals (otherwise known as the FSM Toolkit).

This is intended to be a useful document for schools which pulls together everything you need to know about the subject of free school meals (FSM). The update includes a section on 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF).

Since the guide was launched, we have added additional information and clarification in response to queries from schools across the city, and as national or local policy changes have been introduced.

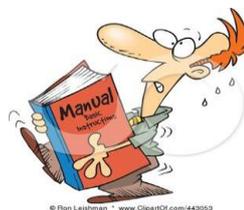
If you have any comments, questions or feedback, please let us know – the easiest route is to email us at schoolfood@sheffield.gov.uk.

We hope that you find the guide useful and informative, and look forward to receiving your feedback in due course.

Regards



Service Manager,
School Food Service



2. Free School Meals (FSM)

2.1 Statutory Duty/Legislation

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on maintained schools and academies to provide free school meals to pupils of all ages that meet the criteria for eligibility and who are attending school during term time. The Act makes clear that a child must be registered at a publicly funded school as a condition of claiming free school meals. Free school meals are not available to those who elect to undertake education from home, nor to pupils of private institutions.

The free school meals provision should be made to eligible pupils either on the school premises or at any other place where education is being provided.

Education Act 1996, Section 512:

Provision of services [512]

[512] [Local authority] functions concerning provision of meals, etc.

(1) A [F1local authority] may provide—

- (a) registered pupils at any school maintained by the authority,
- (b) other persons who receive education at such a school, and
- (c) children who receive [F3relevant funded early years education], with milk, meals and other refreshments.

(2) Where provision is made under subsection (1), it shall be made—

- (a) in a case within paragraph (a) or (b) of that subsection, either on the school premises or at any other place where education is being provided, and
- (b) in a case within paragraph (c) of that subsection, at any place where education is being provided.

(3) A [local authority] shall exercise their power under subsection (1) to provide school lunches for any person within paragraph (a) or (c) of that subsection if—

- (a) any prescribed requirements are met,
- (b) a request for the provision of school lunches has been made by or on behalf of that person to the authority, and
- (c) either—(i) that person is eligible for free lunches (within the meaning of section 512ZB(2)), or (ii) in the case of a person within subsection (1)(a), it would not be unreasonable for the authority to provide the lunches.

The Education Act states that food must be made available for consumption by FSM pupils as their midday meal on a school day and subsequent revisions of the Act have kept this element. Supporting this is the **Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998** which states that school meals must take whatever form as determined by the authority e.g. main course, dessert and access to free drinking water or a selection of items as in the Secondary Sector – but to all intents and purposes must constitute a meal.'

Free Drinking Milk

The Local Authority also has a statutory duty to provide free drinking milk on request to pupils educated in mainstream schools who are in receipt of free schools meals.

In Secondary schools this is supported by the Requirements for School Food (Regulations) 2014.

Further information regarding statutory requirements can be found in **Section 512(zb) of the Education Act 1996:**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

Free school meals are an award in themselves for families that qualify but also give rise to other benefits and impacts:

- Free school meal entitlement (FSM)
- Free milk entitlement
- Pupil Premium (early years and school age)
- School transport provided for some pupils on low income
- Free Early Education for 2 year olds (FEE)
- FSM impact on National Funding Formula
- School Holiday Food Vouchers (Household Support Fund)

2.2 Free School Meals – Why are they important?

“When children eat better, they do better”

Whether families are paying for school meals or are entitled to them for free, the benefits of choosing school meals are numerous. School food has to meet high nutritional standards which guarantee children a healthy balanced menu, and research proves that when students eat better at lunchtime in a decent environment, they do better in the afternoon.

For children and young people, school meals contribute to the development of good food habits and eating a healthy balanced diet from an early age is critical for growth, development and engagement with healthier food.



With pupil premium funding for every child registered for free school meals, there is even more reason for schools to ensure that each child that qualifies is actually signed up. Even if just 10 more children registered for free school meals, your school would receive approximately £14,550 in Pupil Premium funding for you to use to support those children who need it most.

Research shows that children from low-income backgrounds are less likely to do well at school, continue into further education and secure higher paid jobs. We want to reverse this worrying trend and to do that, we need to make sure that all children are given the best start and that includes their right to a healthy balanced diet.

In the Sheffield Group Catering Contract there are approximately 25,395 primary school children on roll, of which 7,134 children are eligible for free school meals (2021-22). Around 28% of those eligible do not take up their entitlement and eat their free meals. This means that approximately 1,995 children are missing out on all the health benefits of a nutritious school lunch every day.

A parent could save around £400 per child per year through claiming their free school meals

Free school meals do matter, and we believe that it is vitally important that schools should do everything they can to ensure:

- a) That all children entitled to free school meals are registered for them
- b) That all registered children claim and eat their free meals

There should be no reason for children entitled to free school meals not to claim them.

2.3 Free School Meals Eligibility Criteria

There are two types of free school meals:

- **Income-based free school meals**
- **Universal Infant free school meals**

To qualify for free school meals a parent must:

- Have a child attending a Sheffield Maintained school or academy or a maintained nursery, accessing education
- Have a school-aged child or nursery- aged child, attending before and after lunch sessions at a nursery school or Local Authority maintained nursery
- Receive any of the following qualifying benefits:

Qualifying Benefits

- Universal Credit (provided they have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of their most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit – with a yearly household income of less than £16,190 (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) and do not get Working Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

Children who get any of the above benefits in their own right (i.e. they get benefits paid directly, instead of through a parent or guardian) can also get free school meals.

Infant Free School Meals If a child attends a state funded infant school and is in Reception/Key Stage 1, they are entitled to 'universal infant free school meals' regardless of their parent/carer's income (see page 32).

2.4 Universal Credit and Free School Meals

The following information has been taken from the Department for Education. The roll out of Universal Credit is a complex and ever-changing process so the information below may change.



2.4.1 Background

Free School Meals (FSM) have been awarded to pupils of parents on qualifying benefits since 1980. The government has introduced a new benefit called Universal Credit and this is being gradually rolled out across the country. Roll out commenced in Sheffield from December 2018.

Universal Credit will replace the following benefits:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

2.4.2 What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a payment for people over 18 but under State Pension age who are on a low income or out of work. It includes support for the cost of housing, children and childcare, and financial support for people with disabilities, Carers and people too ill to work. The national roll out of Universal Credit is expected to be achieved by March 2025 and then all previous benefits will no longer exist.

2.4.3 Key Changes to Eligibility for Free School Meals

Introduction of an Earnings Threshold

Up to now, all families receiving Universal Credit have been eligible for free school meals. However, from 1st April 2018, a new set of criteria has been introduced – an earnings cap or threshold – and this will determine which families on Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals.

- This 'earnings cap' introduces a means tested, net earnings threshold for both free school meals and free early education
- The threshold for free school meals is £7,400 while for free early education the threshold is £15,400. Other benefits that families may be entitled to are on top of

this earnings threshold. The people who will be subject to the means test are new Universal Credit claimants from 1st April 2018.

- The government have recognised that there could be problems with the introduction of a threshold while there is still a long time to go before the full roll out is achieved. So there will be a period of protection.

Transitional Protection for Free School Meals

The following protection is now in place from 1st April 2018:

- All *pre-April* FSM claimants will continue to receive free school meals whilst Universal Credit is rolled out, even if earnings rise above the new threshold
- All *new* FSM claimants gaining free school meals eligibility will be protected against losing free school meals during the Universal Credit rollout.
- Following the full roll out of Universal Credit, where a pupil is no longer eligible for a free school meal they will continue to receive their entitlement until the end of their phase of education i.e. Primary or Secondary.
- Nursery children who are eligible for free school meals will be protected until the end of the Primary phase of education.
- Free milk is tied to free school meal entitlement.

The Department of Education has made clear that any claimant who gained eligibility for free school meals from 1 April 2018 will continue to receive free school meals until the end of the universal credit rollout period, and then until their phase of education ends. This covers until **at least March 2025** and applies even if their circumstances change and they would no longer meet the eligibility criteria. (This is the latest guidance we have had from the DfE as of February 2023)

The DFE have issued guidance and the link is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

2.4.4 Transitional Protection Rules

The DFE have offered protection for Income-Based Free School Meals (FSM) for all valid income-based free school meal claims. Valid claims are:

- Those that already existed on 01/04/18
- Those made between 01/04/18 and until the end of Universal Credit rollout. Those made in England,
- Those made on benefits that will be replaced by Universal Credit (See 2.4.6)

No child who has this free school meal award will lose it during this period regardless of any change to the parent/guardian's financial circumstances, or any change to who cares for the child. However, the DFE systems will only currently show if the

child is still financially eligible on any given day and not reflect any protected status. (See Appendix 1 for FSM Protection Periods).

2.4.5 Free School Meal Authorisation Lists

By having such protection in place, Customer Services will not need to recheck eligibility for free school meals for all current free school meals pupils and will only need to work on new applications. As such, the twice weekly authorisation lists will only list eligible pupils until at least the end of Universal Credit rollout.

2.4.6 Free School Meal End Dates

No pupils will be taken off free school meals during this period – **the only exceptions being:**

- Where a parent has been informed of the free school meal protection and they still indicate that they do not wish the child to be recorded as FSM eligible and receive a free school meal.
- Where a pupil transfers from another UK country – their non-English FSM must have an FSM end date and the parent should make a new claim.

In addition, those claimants who qualify through support under the Immigration & Asylum Seeker Act 1999 or the guarantee Element of Pension Credit, their benefit(s) **will not** be replaced by universal credit and therefore the pupil's FSM entitlement **will not** be protected. They will only be entitled to a free school meal so long as they retain the benefit.

2.4.7 Children Moving Schools

When a child moves schools within Sheffield we will continue to notify you of the child's eligibility for FSM as we will hold a record of their protected status.

However when a child moves into Sheffield from another UK school, we may need to contact the child's previous school or local authority in order to confirm their eligibility for you.

If a child starts at your school who previously attended a UK school outside of Sheffield:

- And the parent believes they previously had a free school meal
- Or a CTF* arrives that states they had a free school meal
- And the child is **NOT** on your Authorisation list

Then please complete a FSM/Pupil Premium Registration form with the parents, and send the data on an Anycomms+ form so that we can confirm their eligibility for you. (See page 22)

*A CTF (Common Transfer File) is a form that should be completed whenever a child moves school. This can be an in-year transfer, or move from primary to secondary. Guidance on the Common Transfer File is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/common-transfer-file>

There are a number of reasons why the LA needs the parent information to add the claim to our systems:

- 1) Protected free school meals do not apply to everyone (see page11). The LA checks on your behalf that the claim falls within the eligibility criteria so the school know they are only awarding a free school meal to those that should have one
- 2) There are many associated benefits to having a free school meal award, such as school milk and school transport, holiday food vouchers. If the LA does not have the claim for free school meals on our system the child may miss out on associated benefits.
- 3) If the LA are verifying the FSM and notifying the school of the award then the risk of a mistaken claim or fraudulent claim is with the LA. If the school are awarding a FSM on the basis of a file from another LA the risk is with the school.
- 4) A FSM award is used across the LA as a deprivation indicator and is used to make decisions about funding for certain areas. If the LA has no record of the free school meal award then the data is incomplete and the funding may not go to the places it is needed most.

(See Appendix 3 for process map)

2.4.8 Siblings

A younger sibling who is not yet of school age will not automatically receive free school meals if their older sibling is protected. The protection is applied for the individual child, not for the family as a whole. The family would have to apply for free school meals for the younger sibling to confirm entitlement.



2.5 Protected Free School Meals FAQ's

We have gathered together a variety of questions from schools about Universal Credit and Free School Meals and have pulled them together in one place here. If you have a different query, then please let us know so we can add it to our list.

Eligibility Criteria	
1	<p>At what point can a parent with a child starting reception make a claim for FSM?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial free school meal eligibility check is usually linked with the schools registration process. This should not change and you can continue to do the initial check as per the timeline you currently employ. For most schools, the initial free school meal check will take place prior to the child starting school in September.
2	<p>Can claims for free school meals be backdated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No, a child is only eligible for free school meals from the date on which their eligibility was confirmed. There is no provision to backdate free school meals.
3	<p>What happens if I find out our school awarded FSM in error before the 1st April 2018?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In circumstances where the child was awarded a free school meal in error, a free school meal application/recheck should be completed. There is no expectation that LAs go back and check all claims retrospectively, however if genuine invalid claims are found/confirmed, then the free school meal and associated protections should end. Schools should remove the protected free school meal and the child should not be recorded as eligible in the next termly census.
4	<p>I have one sibling on my Authorisation List but not the other one – why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The protection follows the child not the guardian, so if the guardian's circumstances change before they apply for another child, then one child will be protected and the other not entitled. You can no longer assume that any children linked to a guardian will be entitled to free school meals just because one child is.
Self-Employed	
5	<p>What result will the ECS return for self-employed UC claimants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently these claimants may initially appear as not eligible. In line with the guidance provided, if a free school meal claimant declares themselves as self-employed or queries the result of an ECS check, a manual income/earnings check will need to be completed by Customer Services.
Threshold Levels	
6	<p>Will the thresholds for legacy benefits stay the same once the new threshold has been introduced for Universal Credit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. The eligibility criteria for free school meals under legacy benefits will stay the same once the new threshold has been introduced for Universal Credit. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income Support Income-related Jobseeker's Allowance Income-based Employment and Support Allowance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Tax Credit (as long as you are not also receiving Working Tax Credit and have an annual income of less than £16,190) ○ Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) ○ The guarantee element of Pension Credit ○ Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Support Act 1999 <p>The £7,400 earnings threshold only applies to claimants in receipt of Universal Credit.</p>
Pupil Premium	
7	<p>Will protected pupils be eligible for the pupil premium?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes. Pupil premium will continue in the same way it does currently. Protected free school meal pupils will continue to attract Ever 6 during Universal Credit rollout.
Transitional Protections	
8	<p>Who does transitional protection apply to and how long do the transitional protections last?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All pupils who are eligible and claiming a free school meal currently will be protected until the end of Universal Credit roll out period. At this point, pupils who are still in the school system will continue to be protected until the end of their current phase of education. ● Transitional protection applies regardless of how a families circumstances might have changed (See page 11 for exceptions)
9	<p>Will a child who is not yet of school age automatically receive free school meals if their older sibling is protected?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No – the protection is applied for the individual child, not for the family as a whole. This also applies for children who move to live with another parent or family member.
10	<p>Will transitional protections also apply to claimants who qualify through support under the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 and Pension Credit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The current free school meals and early years pupil premium criteria for children whose parents receive support provided under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, (and have a NASS number), or the guarantee element of Pension Credit will not change. ● These qualifying benefits are not to be replaced by Universal Credit. Children who are eligible for free school meals or the early years pupil premium through these benefits will therefore remain in receipt of free school meals and the early years pupil premium for as long as they retain the benefit. ● Usually the reason for the NASS claim ending is because the claimant has been transferred onto a national insurance number, in which case a new claim should be made under the new national insurance number.
11	<p>Are re-checks of eligibility required with protected FSM?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No, there is no requirement to re-check a pupil's eligibility during the UC rollout period, with the exceptions noted above.

12	<p>What happens if a child has an existing protected FSM entitlement under a parent/guardian but then moves to live with another family member, who does not meet the eligibility criteria?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The protection is awarded to the individual child. If they move to live with another family member, they will keep their protection, even if this family member does not meet the eligibility criteria. Schools should notify Customer Services to update their records and to transfer the individual child's protected free school meals claim onto the current guardian details.
13	<p>What happens to protected FSM if the child is fostered or taken into care?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The protection is awarded to the individual child. If they are fostered or taken into care, and have an existing FSM claim under birth parent/other guardian, they will keep their protection. Schools should notify Customer Services to update their records and to transfer the individual child's protected free school meals claim onto the current foster carer. Foster allowance is not a qualifying benefit for free school meals if a new claim for free school meals is being made.
14	<p>The child is no longer with the same parent/carer as the original FSM claim – whose details do I collect on the form?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect the new parent/carers information to submit to Customer Services – when the protection period ends the system will then recheck against the new information to determine if the free school meals claim should continue. As always if you notice the free school meals award on your authorisation list appears to be for a parent no longer associated with the child you should notify Customer Services with the correct information as normal.
15	<p>If the child leaves the country during the protection period, then returns later, will they keep the protection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, the child will remain protected until the end of UC roll out, and then until the end of their current phase of education.
16	<p>Are protected pupils recorded differently on the school census?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No - Schools should continue to complete the termly school census as they do now. Protected pupils should be marked as 'FSM eligible' in the census as usual.
17	<p>Should I record my NRPF on my SIMS/MIS system and census?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 01/09/2022 the government has advised that NRPF free school meals will fall in line with existing procedures and therefore no longer be discretionary – schools should record NRPF FSM claims in the same way as all other FSM in their SIMS/MIS system from 01/09/2022, and from their October census going forward.
18	<p>How do we remove a pupil's protected status if they have been recorded as eligible for FSM in error?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school should remove them and the pupil should not be recorded as eligible in the next termly census.
19	<p>What happens if the child is protected but they do not want to take up the meal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents or their child can choose not take up the meal. They will still remain protected and can choose to take up the meals at a later point during the rollout period if they wish. Therefore, it is important to keep good records of free school meal eligibility even if children do not take up the meals.

20	<p>Does transitional protection apply for Early Years also?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EYPP is awarded on a one-off basis, and once awarded there is no requirement for a re-check to be performed.
Nursery Pupils	
21	<p>Are Nursery pupils protected throughout primary school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery pupils have to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for FSM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupil must be receiving education before and after lunch in a maintained setting Their parent must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit An application for the meal must be made <p>When a nursery pupil is eligible for FSM, their protections will continue until the end of primary school.</p>
22	<p>Are nursery pupils who are in receipt of EYPP but not in receipt of FSM (as this is not available in their setting) eligible and protected for FSM when they attend reception?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a child enters reception they would have to be checked for FSM. If they are found to be eligible then they will be awarded a meal and also transitionally protected during the UC rollout period. If the child is not entitled to income-related FSM, then they could qualify for Universal Infant Free School Meals.
23	<p>How will Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) providers gain the evidence from other PVI providers that their children were previously eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils who are registered with a PVI provider are not eligible for free school meals. Nursery pupils must meet the following criteria to be eligible for free school meals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their parent(s) must be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits (these are the same as for Free School Meals) Their parent, or another responsible adult, must have made a claim for the meal The child must be registered in a maintained nursery provision The child must be receiving education both before and after the lunchtime period
Moving Schools	
24	<p>What happens if a protected child moves to a different school or local authority in England during the rollout period – are they still protected?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, the protection is for the child and follows them. They will keep their protected status even if they move school or local authority. (See page 11 – <i>Children Moving Schools</i>)
School Phases	
25	<p>How is the primary phase defined?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary phase is defined as the period from Reception to Year 6. It includes both Infants and Juniors.
26	<p>How is the secondary phase defined?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The secondary phase is defined as the period from Year 7 to Year 11

27	<p>What happens for children who are in Year 12 (School 6th Form) in Academic Year 2023-24?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who are in school 6th forms will be protected until the end of Year 13. Specific arrangements for 19+ continuers and those pupils with EHCPs can be found in the guidance for free meals in Further Education: <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2023-to-2024-academic-year</p>
28	<p>How will end of phase be defined for middle schools?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase for middle schools will be determined by the year group of the children Year groups Nursery to Year 6 will be defined as primary phase and children who receive free school meals will be protected until the end of the primary phase (Year 6) Year groups Y7 to Y11 will be defined as secondary phase and children who receive free school meals will be protected until the end of the secondary phase (Year 11).
29	<p>How is end of phase defined for children who receive FSM in nursery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who receive free school meals will be protected until the end of the primary phase (year 6)
<p>Universal Credit Assessment</p>	
30	<p>Are children eligible for free school meals during the Initial Assessment Period for Universal Credit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When an individual first makes a claim for Universal Credit, they will undergo an initial assessment period, during which time their eligibility for Universal Credit is determined. A child is not eligible for free school meals during this period as their parents' receipt of Universal Credit (and their net earnings) has not yet been confirmed. Schools can provide free meals for pupils at their discretion during this period; however, the pupil should not receive a meal under the income-based rules and must not be recorded as FSM eligible until their eligibility has been verified.
31	<p>Can we have more information about Universal Credit? More information about Universal Credit is available here:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit</p> <p>https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/benefits/universal-credit (this website includes an information sheet which explains what Universal Credit is and how people in Sheffield can get support)</p>

2.6 Funding For Free School Meals



2.6.1 Income/Benefits Based

The funding for income-based free school meals is included in each school's delegated budget, regardless of them being a maintained, academy, or special school. While the funding for free meals isn't identifiable, (any more than schools can identify funding for teachers) schools have the responsibility for funding all income based free school meals regardless of the point in the financial year, that the pupil's eligibility is identified.

For schools in the council's group catering contract the charge for income based free school meals is calculated termly in arrears, **using the actual number of income-based FSM provided during the term.** For schools in the PFI contracts, the number of income-based FSMs provided during the previous financial year is used to calculate their annual charge. All other schools will be charged according to the contract they have negotiated with their own supplier or their internal arrangements if they do their own catering.

2.6.2 Universal Infant Meals

Free school meals for children in the first 3 years of school began on 2 September 2014. It is a separate grant in addition to the schools' delegated budget share discussed above. Universal meals are funded on an academic year which fits nicely for academies but a little bit more challenging for maintained schools. This grant is issued first as an indicative grant in the June preceding the academic year and adjusted in the following year. **The funding is based on the number of pupils taking a meal on the October and January census days** – minus the number of pupils taking benefits based meals. The average of the 2 census dates is used to decide the actual allocation for each school. Two possible sets of information are assessed and the highest of the two is applied. For Reception pupils

- the higher of either the average number of eligible pupils over the two Census days, or
- the number eligible on the January Census day will be used.

The funding is based on a meal cost of £2.53 for 190 days in the academic year. In order to generate sufficient funding to fund these meals, schools are encouraged to maximise the number of pupils taking a meal on each of the census days. If schools don't get their average take up on the dates, their delegated budget will be required to top up the costs of meeting this universal infant meal commitment. **Schools in the catering contract and PFI schools will be able to keep any surplus generated between funding and what they are charged, all other schools will be charged via their own agreed arrangements.**

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Schools

Schools are responsible for:

- Collecting parental consent to check free school meals eligibility
- Encouraging parents to apply for free school meals by completing the FSM/ Pupil Premium Registration form, or via the online application form on the SCC website (see page 22)
- Obtaining updated information where required, when free school meals are discretionary pending further information (such as waiting for a national insurance number to be allocated)
- Checking your FSM authorisation lists twice weekly for any changes (pages 25-6)
- Ensuring that pupil FSM claim(s) showing on your authorisation list are correctly authorised under the named guardian
- Notifying parents if the FSM is about to come to an end. Due to protected free school meals you should have very few instances of this until at least Summer 2025.
- Keeping previous copies of authorisation lists as reference material for a period of time (if required) as they hold information on when FSM claims ended for pupils
- Reporting/amending pupil address and any personal data if you find it has been incorrectly recorded. This is done by updating your MIS System, and responding to the Data Exchange forms that are sent through AnyComms by the MIS Team
- **Keep your MIS System updated with pupil details and ensure files are submitted regularly to MIS Team.** For SIMS Schools you can check on SIMS Services Manager that files are being sent; schools using other MIS Systems need to export a file and send it to the MIS Team using AnyComms+ on a weekly basis.
- Reporting any IT/data problems (e.g. not receiving authorisation lists/spreadsheets via Anycomms+). This can be done by contacting Customer Services.



3.2 Customer Services

Customer Services are responsible for:

- Providing access to the FSM team at Customer Services, 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year for advice and help, including access for parents
- Confirmation of free school meal eligibility, using the DfE ECS system, enabling schools to maximise their Pupil Premium funding
- Twice weekly Authorisation lists on Anycomms+ confirming free school meal entitlement for pupils at individual schools (pages 25-6)
- Batch checking service to allow large quantities of free school meals claims to be processed during key times within the school calendar, e.g. school census and new starters (pages 23-25)
- A full, and speedy free school meals administration system which reduces the possibility of debt building for individual schools
- Up to date knowledge and information regarding changing legislation affecting benefit entitlement (Universal Credits)
- Access to an online system to apply for free school meals for both parents and schools (page 22)

Customer Services Number: 2734567 (Option 4, Option 3)

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/school-meals>



See Appendix 9: Roles and Responsibilities Process Map

3.3 The School Food Service

The School Food Service provide specialist support to schools by acting as your client across a range of duties connected to the statutory duty of school meals and milk:

- **Responsibility for free school meals policy and budget where this is pooled or held centrally**
- **Responsible for the free school meal checking service via the Service Level Agreement with Customer Services**
- **Support and guidance on increasing the take-up of free school meals in your school including maximising Pupil Premium funding for schools**
- Support and advice on food related legislative changes
- Services to Schools Consultancy - Independent advice and guidance on all aspects of school food throughout the school day, and in particular school lunches, in relation to the legislative framework – Food Hygiene, Food Safety, School Food Standards
- Procurement of various contracts according to OJEU legislation that support the catering and satellite functions – School Catering, Milk, and Service & Maintenance,
- Contract management ensuring that the contractors provide the service they are hired to deliver, including a full audit programme, complaints procedures and financial checks
- Management of the internal kitchen environment regarding commercial kitchen health & safety, including maintenance and purchase of equipment as appropriate
- A Faults Helpline for school catering teams to report any issues within the kitchen environment - and keep kitchens running
- Advice regarding planning for expanding schools, new premises and refurbishments, advising planners and architects on kitchen and dining design and catering environments



The School Food Service: 0114 2734767

schoolfood@sheffield.gov.uk

4. Free School Meals Application Process

4.1 Parents/Carers



4.1.1 On-Line Application

Parents can apply online for free school meals at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/form/schools-and-childcare/free-school-meals-start>

4.1.2 Customer Services

Parents can apply for free school meals by contacting Customer Services on 0114 2734567, Option 4, Option3. A Customer Service Advisor will take them through the application process over the phone and will be able to check eligibility immediately.

4.1.3 Free School Meal/Pupil Premium Registration Form

Parents can apply for free school meals by completing a paper Free School Meal/Pupil Premium Registration form and returning it to school, who will transfer the details onto an Anycomms+ list for batch checking by Customer Services.

See Appendix 4 – Free School Meals & Pupil Premium Registration Form

4.2 Schools



4.2.1 On-line Application

Schools can apply online for free school meals on behalf of a parent after collecting written parental consent, at: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/form/schools-and-childcare/free-school-meals-start>

4.2.2 Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Registration Form

We have devised a Free School Meals/ Pupil Premium Registration form to help you capture all relevant information for new starters so that you can collect information in order to check eligibility for free school meals and therefore Pupil Premium. We have amended the form to support the Universal Credit transitional protection and you should replace any paper-based forms that you have used previously with this new one. *See Appendix 4.*

4.3 Batch Checking – Anycomms+ Spreadsheet

Three times a year, December/January, July and September/October, Customer Services provide a batch checking service via a form on Anycomms+. This bulk checking service is available for around 3 weeks three times a year. Batch checking can be used throughout the year for 6 children or more. Using this tool benefits your school by minimising the risk of eligible children not being identified and thus missing out on money they are entitled to for their education.



The successful application for free school meals leads directly to a later award of both the Early Years and School Age Pupil Premium. Both pupil premium awards are funding for economically disadvantaged pupils in your school and this funding helps support your school in the development and learning for these pupils.

4.3.1 Anycomms+ Submission Forms

A notification will go on SchoolPoint shortly before release with instructions and deadline dates. You (the person who receives the twice weekly FSM authorisation list) will then receive an e-mail notification that a form is waiting for you on Anycomms+. You must adhere to the deadline to return the form to us with any additional claims you would like checking. Forms submitted after this date may not be collected by us.

4.3.2 Information you have to provide to Sheffield City Council for them to be able to check a claim

In order to check the eligibility of a claim we only need the claimant's Forename and Surname, NI number or NASS number and Date of Birth. **You must also have obtained consent from the claimant to pass this information to us for the purpose of free school meals checks.** The other information that we ask for on the spreadsheet is to help us match with our records (e.g. current address; relationship to child). Please note that we are unable to perform an eligibility check if we do not have the correct Forename and Surname, NI Number or NASS Number and Date of Birth for the claimant.

4.3.3 Notification that your batch submission has been received

When you submit your Anycomms+ submission form you will receive a notification from the system that it has been sent. You will also receive a Blank Submission form back from Sheffield City Council once we have picked up your submission. This is to allow you to submit any further information that you need to (e.g. additional/late claims or corrections to invalid data sent on the original form). It

can take up to 24 hours for our team to pick up your submission so please wait this long to receive your Blank Submission form before contacting Customer Services. Once the whole process is complete and all claims have been checked you will receive a copy of your submission on Anycomms+ with information about which claims are eligible and which are not.

4.3.4 What happens if new information or new claims come in after you have submitted your information

As noted above, after you submit your first collection form to Sheffield City Council you will receive a Blank Submission form on Anycomms+ shortly after. You can use this form to let us know about any new claims that have come in or to correct any errors with the original form.

4.3.5 Confirmation of eligibility

Once we have processed the information you send to us and run the relevant checks you will receive a copy of your submission on Anycomms+ that tells you which claims were eligible and which were not. The claims will appear on your authorisation lists shortly after, providing you keep your weekly files into the MIS team current to notify us which children attend your school.

4.3.6 Looked After Children and Forces children

This collection exercise is only to gather information on claims made on **Income-based criteria**. The checks that Sheffield City Council perform at this time are only calibrated for this. Children at your school who are eligible due to LAC or other reasons will be picked up at other times of the year via already established processes. You do not need to send us their information as part of the batch collection.

4.3.7 Submitting FSM or Pupil Premium claims outside census time

Claims made outside a batch collection window can be submitted via the online process (for up to 6 children) <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/form/schools-and-childcare/free-school-meals-start>

Please use the batch collection form when applying for 6 or more children.

4.3.8 Delaying submitting your information until census time

If you become aware that a pupil may be entitled to a free school meal you **should not** wait until the next bulk check window. This is because if the parent is only in receipt of a qualifying benefit for a short while the child may miss out on protected free school meals and you may miss out on the pupil premium award which lasts for up to 6 years under the EVER 6 criteria, even if the claimant was only eligible for a short time.

4.3.9 Who do I contact with questions?

Please call the Customer Services team on 0114 2734567, Option 4, Option 3, and tell them your query is about Free School Meals/Pupil Premium.

See Appendix 5: Process Map - FSM Application Process

4.4 Free School Meal Authorisation Lists

Free School Meal Authorisation lists are the tool that Customer Services use to provide you with information about free school meal eligibility for individual children at your school. The lists are usually sent to school via Anycomms+ twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday. There is often a nominated person in school who has access to Anycomms+ who will receive the lists.

During Census week Authorisation Lists are sent daily so that you do not miss out on any funding claims in your census. (See page 18 for more information about free school meal funding)

Because of the high volume of new starters in September - the LA issue a second list to accompany the normal list (still via Anycomms+) called a Transfer Authorisation list. This list details free school meal awards for children who should be starting at your school. This is different to Section C (see below) which only shows in year movement (i.e. after the start of the academic year)



4.4.1 Authorisation List Format

The Authorisation List is split into three parts:

A. Current and Eligible

This section contains all your pupils who should be in your SIMS or other MIS system as entitled to a Free School Meal. Some of these children might be highlighted with a blue diamond or a green square (see below) to draw attention to those claims which are the most likely to not yet be recorded in your system. However you should always carry out regular checks to ensure your data matches the names on the list.

- ◆ Indicates student is new to the school
- Indicates claim start date is within the last 28 days

From September 2022 any existing NRPF claims you had will appear on your authorisation list with a new start date of the new academic year. You should add them to SIMS/MIS system from this start date and do not backdate them. They will be flagged as follows:

- Indicates claim start date is within the last 28 days

Children only appear in the current section once they have started at your school and your weekly data file to the MIS team has been accepted and processed. If the files have stopped coming in the children will be missing from Section A.

B. Due to End/ Recently Ended

Due to free school meal transitional protection there should be minimal children that appear in this section so you may not see this section on your report. Until at least March 2025 the only children who will appear in this section are children;

- Whose parent/carers have insisted we end their claim regardless of transitional protection
- Who are not entitled to protected FSM (see page 11) as their parent/carers were claiming under either asylum seeker status or pension credit status and this entitlement has ended

C. Provisionally allocated to your school

- This section contains children that may or may not yet be at your school, or may never arrive (due to being allocated a place elsewhere).
- This section is to give you advance notification of children being placed at your school during an already up and running academic year who will be entitled to Free School Meals when they start.
- For SIMS users - if you have added the child in your pre admission section you can record the FSM, otherwise you should hold the information securely and add it to your system once the child starts.

For the remainder of the academic year - the information will only leave this section once the child has started at either your school or another Sheffield school – so you do not need to report it to us if it remains in this section, unless it is still showing the following academic year.

4.4.2 Pupil missing from Authorisation list - School recently applied online/by telephone and received email/verbal confirmation that they are eligible:

- School should check that data is regularly being sent to the MIS team (automated process) informing them which pupil(s) have started at the school and/or are in attendance at the school.
- This enables the MIS team to add/change the current registered school base for the pupil(s) on the database. The school authorisation list should then pick up the pupil names, otherwise their name will still be appearing on the school list they have recently moved/transferred from; or will have no registered base. (Contact details for the MIS team can be found on page 60.
- If the above process is being followed, school may want to contact Sheffield City Council on 0114 2734567 (select option 4, option 3) and provide details of the application made.

- The Customer Service advisor should be able to find the application on their system and check the case notes to confirm the claim status.

If necessary, a call back can be raised by the customer service advisor to check that the free school meals application details are showing on the system. A call back will be made to the school with the findings.

4.4.3 The Authorisation list is showing a sibling who attends the school but not their brother/sister:

- If a pupil starts/attends school with a sibling name showing on the school authorisation list, a free school meals application will need to be made to Sheffield City Council with the sibling name and guardian details in order to check free school meal eligibility for that pupil, and for Sheffield City Council to add the pupil to the existing free school meals claim if they are entitled. (NB: If school applies on behalf of the guardian they need to ensure they have the guardian's consent) Under the new Universal Credit protected FSM rules, a younger sibling is not necessarily entitled to free school meals, even if their older sibling(s) is/are (page 12).

4.4.4 Parent/guardian have informed school that they are eligible for free school meals but the child(ren) are not showing on the Authorisation list:

- Parent/guardian may indicate that they receive the qualifying benefits and are entitled to free school meals but may not have made an application to Sheffield City Council
- If a parent/guardian has made an application by telephone/online or by completing a paper application they should have been given a case reference number over the telephone; received an email confirmation or letter with the decision
- School may want to contact Customer Services on 0114 2734567 (select option 4, option 3) to check if an application has been received from the guardian
- the Customer Service Advisor should be able to trace whether an application has been received by the guardian and if so, check the case notes to confirm if the application has been approved or declined

4.4.5 A child has recently joined your school from another local authority school and guardian has informed you that the child was receiving free school meals but they are not showing on the Authorisation list:

- Out of Sheffield pupil transfers who may be showing as FSM eligible on their CTF pupil file will not transfer, or automatically appear onto your twice weekly FSM authorisation list without a FSM check being made by SCC, to highlight if these pupils were entitled to/receiving protected FSM at their previous school. Please complete the form (*Appendix 4*) and ensure that the previous school and/or local authority is mentioned in the application in order for Customer Services to investigate if transitional protection can be considered/applied.

- These will then appear in Section C on your Authorisation list as soon as they are allocated a place at your school.
- You should then hold this information securely and once they arrive in school you can add the child and their entitlement to your system.



4.5 Backdating Free School Meals

“It must be remembered that a FSM cannot be awarded retrospectively so each meal missed by a child/pupil is irretrievably lost to that child”

(ECS Legal Compliance Guide, DFE, July 2015)

A child is only eligible for free school meals from the date on which their eligibility was confirmed. The Inland Revenue database, ECS only confirms entitlement to eligible benefits on the day that a free school meal application is made, it does not provide historical information - without this information Sheffield City Council cannot authorise backdated free school meals claims.

4.5.1 A parent/guardian refuses to pay for school meals that their child has received as they state they are in receipt of eligible benefits and therefore thought they were automatically entitled to free school meals

- A child is only eligible for free school meals from the date on which their eligibility was confirmed. There is no provision to backdate free school meals.
- You will need to check your authorisation list to see if the pupil(s) name appears on the authorisation list and if not, speak with the parent/guardian as soon as possible to make arrangements for an application to be made (NB: no debt should be allowed to build up)
- School can also contact Customer Services on 0114 2734567 (select option 4, option 3) to check if an application has been made by the guardian.
- The customer service advisor should be able to find if an application has been received by the parent/guardian and if so, check the case notes to confirm if the application has been approved or declined.

4.5.2 Backdating a free school meal claim to write off a school meal debt

- Backdated free school meals cannot automatically be authorised if a parent/guardian contact history cannot be found by Customer Services in their free school meal data system to confirm that any contact was made relating to a free school meals application.
- School can contact Customer Services on 0114 2734567 (select option 4, option 3) to check whether previous contact has been made by the parent/guardian. If previous contact **has** been made the case may be referred to the School Food Service manager who has the discretion to backdate free school meals in exceptional circumstances

- There may be other circumstances where a technical error has occurred with the electronic checking service. Parents will be asked to provide hard copy proof of eligibility in order that legitimate backdated free school meals can be given. Customer Services will ask the advice of the School Food Service if schools are within the Sheffield Schools Catering Contract or PFI contract.

4.5.3 Free School Meal Reimbursement Requests

- As above, a child is only eligible for free school meals from the date on which their eligibility was confirmed. There is no provision to backdate free school meals or to authorise reimbursement of dinner money.
- There is no centrally held fund to reimburse parents who have decided to pay for a meal or give their child a packed lunch while any free school meal claim is in dispute with the DWP.
- Also some parents are unaware that they could have claimed and have only just done so. These requests for reimbursement cannot be authorised. For further advice on any reimbursement requests of this nature please contact Customer Services or the School Food Service.
- For KS3 and KS4 pupils entitled to free school meals who are on off-site placements or work experience, payments for free school meals taken will be paid to the school or the provider. See the process on page 34. This reimbursement process only applies to pupils who are already authorised and who are having a lunch away from their normal school setting.

4.6 Hardship Cases/Exceptional Circumstances

- Schools can provide meals for pupils if they wish at their own discretion but they must be funded by the school. The pupil cannot receive a meal under the income-based rules as no authorisation has been established and therefore must **not** be recorded as FSM eligible until their eligibility has been verified by Customer Services.

Occasionally extreme hardship cases where parents/guardians are experiencing exceptional circumstances may be referred by Customer Services to the School Food Service Manager. There is no centrally held fund for such cases but a discretionary free school meal may be given depending on the circumstances for a short period only. Each case has to be judged on its own merits and these are not carried out routinely.

5. Free School Meals – Early Years

5.1 Two year Olds (FEL)

The Council is under a statutory duty to provide Free School Meals for children who are registered pupils of a state funded nursery or school, who attend early education both before and after lunch and whose parents are in receipt of benefits which meet the eligibility criteria.

Parents are eligible for FEL for two year olds from the term after their second birthday. They must meet **both** the age criteria **and one of either** the economic criteria for the family, or non-economic criteria for the child:

- **Economic** (FSM eligibility criteria – page 9)
- **Non-Economic Criteria:**
 - LAC child
 - If a child has a current statement of SEN or an EHCP
 - The child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance
 - The child has left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangement order or adoption order

For a two year old to be eligible for free school meals they must:

- meet the economic criteria (page 9)
- be attending a school nursery setting, including local authority maintained, academy, or free school nurseries
- attend education sessions both before and after lunch on the same day



Note: Free school meals are not available at private, voluntary or independent nurseries, or other types of early years settings.

The parent must apply for free school meals via Customer Services; alternatively the nursery can apply on their behalf if written parental consent has been collected. (see free school meal application process on page 23)

More information about FEL for 2 year olds can be found at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/childcare-free-early-learning>

5.2 Three and Four Year Olds

For three and four year olds to be eligible for free school meals they must:

- ❖ Meet the qualifying benefits criteria (page 9)
- ❖ Be attending a school nursery setting, including local authority maintained, academy, or free school nurseries
- ❖ Must be receiving education before and after the lunchtime period
- ❖ If a nursery were to change the timing of a session to take them over lunchtime (e.g. 10:00am -1:00pm), the nursery could give them a free meal but this would not be classed as two sessions, the school/nursery would be responsible for funding this themselves
- ❖ You may wish to consider submitting children for free school meal checks even if they currently only attend half day sessions, as if their pattern of attendance suddenly changes you would already have correct information regarding their free school meal eligibility.



5.2.1 Free Drinking Milk

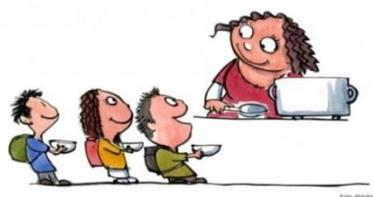
- ❖ All children who are registered pupils of a maintained nursery are entitled to free drinking milk, regardless of parental income.

6. Free School Meals – School Age

6.1 Reception, Y1 to Y2 (KS1) - Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

Any child attending a state funded infant/primary school in Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 or Year 2), is entitled to 'universal infant free school meals' regardless of parental income. Parents are advised to contact their child's school to tell them they would like to have 'universal infant free school meals'. Entitlement is based on school year group and not school age/date of birth.

Section 106 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes provision for free school meals to be provided for all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. This duty took effect from September 2014 and is applicable for maintained schools, academies and free schools.



Advice for schools on fulfilling the duty, including funding information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-infant-free-school-meals-guide-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

Note:

- ❖ If a child of Reception/FS2 age stays back in nursery for another year they will not be entitled to universal infant free school meals. UIFSM are provided based on year group and not date of birth.
- ❖ If a child is 'summer born' and their start date at school is deferred for a year they will still be entitled to a UIFSM in Y2, even if their date of birth suggests they could be in Y3. UIFSM are provided based on year group and not date of birth.

Free Drinking Milk for Children in KS1

- School pupils over the age of 5 who are eligible for income-based free school meals are also eligible for free milk.
- In order to receive free milk the parent/carer must apply for income-based free school meals (see page 23). Entitlement to Universal Infant Free School Meals is not a qualifying criteria for free milk

6.2 Free School Meals - Y3 to Y11 (KS2, KS3, KS4)

6.2.1 Key Stage 2 (Y3-Y6)

Any child attending a state funded primary school is entitled to receive free school meals if they meet the eligibility criteria (page 9).

If parents of children currently in Y2 and in receipt of UIFSM have not already made an application for income-based free school meals their entitlement to free school meals will cease at the end of Y2. An application can be made via the normal free school meal application process (page 23).

The children on your Authorisation List are the children who currently have an income-based award for free school meals and do not need to reapply for Y3.



Drinking Milk for Children in KS2

- School pupils in KS2 who are eligible for free school meals are also eligible for free drinking milk.
- In order to receive free milk the parent/carer must apply for income-based free school meals (See page 23).

6.2.2 Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (Y7-Y11)

Any child/young person attending a state funded secondary school is entitled to receive free school meals if they meet the eligibility criteria outlined on page 9.

6.2.3 Key Stage 5 (Y12 & Y13) – Schools with 6th Forms

Any child/young person attending a state funded secondary school 6th form is entitled to receive free school meals if they meet the eligibility criteria outlined on page 9. To be eligible for a free meal the student must also be aged under 19 at 31st August.

Free School Meals, Work Experience/Off-Site Placements and Alternative Education Providers

Secondary age pupils can still claim their free school meal entitlement when on work experience or attending a placement. The provider should claim FSM reimbursement in the following way:

- The pupil(s) should be provided with a meal by the provider to the value of a secondary school meal (£2.54)

- If the pupils attend a PFI secondary school the provider should complete the Reimbursement template, (*Appendix 8*) and return it to: CYPDbusinesssupport@sheffield.gov.uk
- The list will be checked for FSM entitlement and reimbursement will be paid directly to the provider
- If the pupil attends a non-PFI secondary school the provider should contact the secondary school directly and make arrangements with them to claim back the reimbursement



make

Free School Meals and Y6 Transition Days

Secondary schools can claim free school meal reimbursement for the Y6 pupils on Transition visits in the following way:

- If the pupils attend a PFI primary school you should complete the Reimbursement template (*Appendix 8*) and return it to: CYPDbusinesssupport@sheffield.gov.uk
- The list will be checked for free school meal entitlement and reimbursement will be paid directly into the schools bank account.
- If the pupils attend a non-PFI primary school that manages its own catering provision you should contact the primary school directly and make arrangements with them to claim back the reimbursement

For queries regarding this contact: CYPDbusinesssupport@sheffield.gov.uk

Drinking Milk for Children/Young People in KS3 and KS4

- Children and young people in KS3 and KS4 who are eligible for free school meals are no longer entitled to free drinking milk, however drinking milk can be purchased in all secondary schools - this is supported by the Requirements for School Food (Regulations) 2014.

7. School Leavers/Further Education

7.1 Legislation

The 1996 Education Act requires maintained school and academy sixth forms to provide free meals to disadvantaged students who are over 16. In the 2014 to 2015 academic year this requirement was extended to disadvantaged students following FE courses at the range of FE funded institutions. Funding Agreements have been amended to place a legal duty on institutions to comply with this requirement.

7.2 Student eligibility

In order for a student to be eligible for a free meal they must meet the following criteria:

- A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they or a parent/guardian, have made a successful application on their behalf to the institution where they are enrolled
- A student must meet the free meal eligibility criteria outlined on page 8.
- To be eligible for a free meal the student must also be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible for a free meal if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or
- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)



These 2 groups of students can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues.

The following groups of students are *not* eligible for free meals in further education support:

- students aged between 14 and 16 (these students are already covered by different provision, that is Free School Meals (FSM), (see page 33).
- students aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme, unless they have an EHCP or are a 19+ continuer
- apprentices, including those with an EHCP

7.3 Institution eligibility

Students must be enrolled in further education provision funded via the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to be eligible for a free meal. Eligible institutions are:

- general further education colleges, including specialist colleges
- sixth-form colleges
- commercial and charitable providers
- higher education institutions (HEIs) with 16 to 19 funding from EFA
- specialist post-16 institutions (SPIs)
- local authorities (LAs) and FE institutions directly funded for 16 to 19
- Skills Funding Agency (SFA) only traineeship 16 to 18 providers
- European Social Fund (ESF) only institutions
- 16 to 19 only academies and free schools
- 16 to 19 only maintained schools

For further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2023-to-2024-academic-year>

7.4 Free Meals for 14-16 year olds in further education and sixth form colleges

- General further education colleges and sixth-form colleges are able to enrol and receive funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for students aged 14-16 years old if they meet the programme eligibility criteria.
- The college, must, if requested to do so by a 14-16 year old student or their parent/carer, provide meals for those students unless it would be unreasonable for it to do so.
- Where students are eligible for free meals, these should be provided by the college. The normal free school meal eligibility criteria applies, and is outlined on page 8.
- A student is not eligible to receive a free meal until an application has been made by them or on their behalf.
- College should develop their own process for dealing with free school meal applications. Some may choose to use a paper application form, whilst others may choose to provide an on-line application option.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-time-enrolment-of-14-to-16-year-olds-in-further-education-and-sixth-form-colleges>

7.5 University Students

A university student receiving a student loan may be entitled to free school meals for a dependent child if they are in receipt of Child Tax Credits. For overseas students on student visas please refer to *Appendix 11*.

8. Children Looked After (CLA)

Any pupil who meets the free school meal criteria is eligible for a free school meal, there are no separate criteria for children in care, (residential or foster care).

The criteria for free school meals only requires the parent or pupil to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits to make a request for free school meals (For the eligibility criteria see page 9)



The Education Act 1996, section 576, defines a '**parent**' as including someone who has care of, or legal responsibility for the child. This definition covers, but is not limited to, birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, guardians, special guardians, grandparents, or other family members.

The legislation does not exclude foster parents from applying for the entitlements for their foster children.

The definition of '**parent**' includes a person who has parental rights or care of the child. Therefore, in the case of foster children, either of their natural parents or either of their foster parents can make a claim for free school meals if they are in receipt of an eligible benefit.

There is no specific guidance that sets out the above, but the criteria is set out in section 512 of The Education Act 1996. This states that a pupil or their parent must be in receipt of certain qualifying benefits and must make a claim to the school for free school meals.

- If a child is fostered or taken into care they will continue to receive free school meals if they have an existing claim under the name of the natural parent. Unless the parent informs the local authority that they do not want the child to continue to have a free school meal the child will continue to be eligible, regardless of where and with whom the child lives.
- If a child is fostered or taken into care while in receipt of protected free school meals they will keep their protection – the protection is awarded to the individual child (page 16).

9. Asylum Seekers, Refugees & No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Asylum Seekers

An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking refuge in the UK from another country where they were in danger. They will be allowed to stay in the UK while their claim to stay is decided. They will be given a NASS number (9 digits starting YYMM) which can be used to apply for FSM. Sometimes they may not have a NASS number or the number may not yet be checkable by the LA. In such cases proof of an asylum claim by means of a letter from the home office will be needed. See *Appendix 12 – Asylum Seeker/Refugee Process for Schools*

EU Settlers

EU settlers are people who are applying for residency to stay in the UK who were here pre-Brexit and have applied to permanently remain in the UK after Brexit. They will almost exclusively be from a European country. In the main all these cases should have been decided by now and these applicants will have a national insurance number and can apply in the usual way. There are a few exceptions with people still appealing their EU settlement decision and these may be able to apply under No Recourse to Public Funds.

Refugees

A refugee is someone who has already been granted leave to stay in the UK, this can be for a specific number of years, or can be unlimited, for example people currently arriving from Ukraine. In both circumstances they will have been issued a national insurance number and this can be used to apply for free school meals in the normal way. In some cases the FSM will be declined as the system can only check standard claims and the NINO may not yet have been registered in the system fully as yet – see *Appendix 12* for further information

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

A person who has no recourse to public funds is a person who is temporarily living in the UK (for example people on student visas) but without rights to claim ANY form of public funds, not just universal credit but also things like child benefit. In almost all cases the person will have a visa or a residency card that physically states on it the words: **no recourse to public funds**. The LA will need to see both this card and proof of household income (not just wages for the claimant but any form of money from family or friends for both themselves and any partner) to make a decision on a claim. There are some rare circumstances in which the person will not have the words: no recourse to public funds on their visa/card and these exceptions are covered in *Appendix 13 – NRPF and EEA process for Schools*. Also see *Appendix 14 – Application Form for FSM for Families with NRPF*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities/providing-free-school-meals-to-families-with-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf#eligible-groups>

NOTE: This information has been simplified. For evidence required and the application processes please see *Appendix 11 - A Brief Guide to FSM for Asylum Seekers, Refugees, EEA and NRPF*. This does not constitute legal advice on asylum/refugee status and is for guidance purposes only.

11. School Milk

- ❖ All primary school children in Sheffield aged between 5 to 11 years old are entitled to subsidised school milk.
- ❖ All children *under the age of 5* who are registered pupils of a maintained nursery, or in Reception/FS1 are entitled to free drinking milk, regardless of parental income.
- ❖ The School Food Service claim the subsidies via the Department of Health, through the Nursery Milk Reimbursement Unit (NMRU) and Rural Payments Agency (RPA) on behalf of schools in the milk contract.
- ❖ School pupils over the age of 5 who are eligible for income-based free school meals are eligible for free milk
- ❖ Schools hold the budget for FSM milk and will be recharged quarterly for the cost of FSM milk
- ❖ In order to receive free milk the parent/carer must apply for income-based free school meals. Entitlement to Universal Infant Free School Meals is not a qualifying criteria for free milk
- ❖ Schools can use the Free School Meal/Pupil Premium Registration form (*Appendix 4*) to collect information to make a free school meal application which would then automatically award free milk.
- ❖ Drinking milk can be purchased in all secondary schools – this is supported by the Requirements for School Food (Regulations) 2014.
- ❖ The School Milk contract is managed by the School Food Service on school's behalf. (Contact 0114 273 5791 for further information)



12. Free Home to School Travel

Children who are entitled to **free school meals** or whose parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit may also be entitled to free home to school travel support if they are:

- **aged 8 to 11** and travel 2 miles or more to their nearest available school
- **aged 11 to 16** and travel between 2 and 6 miles to their school, (as long as there are not 3 or more nearer available schools)
- **aged 11 to 16** and travel between 2 and 15 miles to their nearest available school if the parent chose the school on the grounds of religion, belief
- **aged 13 to 16** and attending a Sheffield-based University Technical College (UTC), if the UTC is two miles or more from their permanent home address

Or

- the child has Special Education Needs (SEN)
- the child has an Education, Healthcare and Care plan (EHC)
- the child is in foster care

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/content/sheffield/home/travel-transport/zero-fare-travel.html>

Enquiries should be made through Customer Services on 0114 274567.

12. Removing the Stigma of Free School Meals

The low take-up of Income-based free school meals continues to be an issue across all local authorities. As an example, in the Sheffield Group Catering Contract there are approximately 25,395 primary school children on roll, of which 7,134 children are eligible for free school meals (2021-22). Around 28% of those eligible do not take up their entitlement and eat their free meals. This means that approximately 1,995 children are missing out on all the health benefits of a nutritious school lunch every day.

There are lots of reasons why this is happening, however one of the major barriers between children and free school meals is the social stigma often attached to receiving one.

The stigma associated with free school meals can effect both a child's and a parent's decision to claim free meals. Children can feel embarrassed about receiving free school meals and may even suffer from bullying about it. Parents may feel anxious about other parents knowing that they claim a benefit.

Completely removing the peer-to-peer discrimination that exists for free school meals recipients in many schools is a challenge. But there are steps you can take to recognise and minimise the negative effect it can have on a child's willingness to eat a free school meal.

We want to ensure that every child entitled to a free school meal can enjoy eating it without fear of embarrassment. Some practical ways to achieve this are as follows:

For Children and Young People:

- If you ask for children's meal choices for the day at registration, stick to register order, rather than having a separate list for free school meal children
- In secondary schools, create meal deals that can be chosen by all pupils and remember that the free school meal allowance should always be set so that it is enough to cover a main meal and dessert. Grab and go meal deals give pupils on free school meals more choice and the opportunity to socialise with friends
- In secondary schools biometric cashless catering anonymises pupils receiving free school meals (Page 61)

For Parents:

- Keep parents informed. Provide all parents with information about free school meals before the new school year starts and remind them each term or half term
- Offer different channels of communication. Provide a name and contact details of someone at the school who can talk to parents about the eligibility criteria and the application process. Whilst some parents may be happy to talk in person, others may feel more comfortable on the phone
- Some may prefer the anonymity of going directly to Customer Services, or completing an online application form
- Always be discreet. Offer a confidential environment for parents to ask questions about free school meals. Similarly, if you ever need to ask a parent about an issue with their child's free school meal entitlement, do this privately and always avoid discussing these issues directly with children

For more information about how you can help parents with the free school meal application process, refer to page 23 of this Guide

We are always looking for new ideas and examples of good practice to share with schools, and if you use methods not covered in this Guide to Free School Meals, we'd really like to hear from you. Contact: The School Food Service - 0114 2734767



13. How to Increase Your Take-Up of Free School Meals

Here are some simple ideas to help maximise the number of pupils in your school who take a free school meal. It will also help to increase the number of pupils who take a universal infant free school meal or a paid school meal.

1. Carry out a survey with pupils and parents/carers to identify barriers to the take-up of free school meals
2. Set up an information stand at school events or parent/carer evenings, provide food tasters if possible
3. Send letters home to parents/carers to remind them that they could be eligible for a free school meal
4. Send text messages home to remind parents/carers that applying for free school meals could save them around £400.00 per year per child
5. Invite parents/carers or grandparents in to try a school meal with their child, e.g. 'Bring your parent/grandparent to school day', or parent/carers of 'new starters'
6. Have a comments box in the dining room for pupils to give feedback on their school lunch
7. Recruit pupils as 'School Food Ambassadors' to represent the voice of their peers and to attend regular meetings with the catering staff to contribute to menu planning. Alternatively this could be one of the roles of school council
8. Ensure you have an effective packed lunch policy or guidance in place that is aligned to the School Food Standards
9. Speak sensitively with individuals who bring a packed lunch to find out why they don't choose to take a school meal
10. Carry out tasting sessions for pupils or offer samples during lunchtime



11. Display a photo and phone number in the school reception of the member of staff families can speak to about school meals or free school meals
12. Deliver an assembly on the benefits of eating a school meal
13. Cook and prepare dishes from the school menu as part of the food technology curriculum
14. Hold exciting and creative school meal theme days. Ask pupils, and talk to your catering provider for ideas for themes. Themes could be linked to the school curriculum or for example to sporting/cultural events, or holidays. Hold Lucky Plate Days with prizes for pupils
15. Make sure your dining environment is sociable, happy, attractive, clean and inviting. For example, use pupil's artwork on the walls to improve the atmosphere
16. Incorporate a popular story book theme into the dining room, for example, The Hungry Caterpillar
17. Implement promotions and incentives such as a day each year when school meals are free or £1, sibling discounts or 'buy four get one free'
18. Make sure you offer food that meets pupils' dietary and cultural needs as well as a range of taste preferences



19. Make sure your queuing times are kept to a minimum. Try a pre order system to reduce waiting time. Secondary schools could try adding extra service points or staggering the lunchtime for different year groups
20. Implement a pre-ordering system where pupils can collect a 'grab-bag' without the need to queue
21. Develop strong partnership working with your catering provider to ensure that menus are of good quality and meet the needs of the school
22. Put UIFSM flyers promoting school meals in KS1 packed lunch boxes

Case Study - Primary school pilot

- **AIM - For all UIFSM children to have a school lunch and sit together at lunchtime**
 - This plan was communicated to the parents of new reception/FS2 children in the summer term prior to them starting school in September
 - Concerned parents could send their child to school with a packed lunch as a 'back-up', but they had to try a school meal
 - Parents had a copy of the school menu at home and could help their child choose which meal they wanted each day
 - The children pre ordered their meal each morning ensuring that they had the meal of their choice

- **OUTCOME**
 - The pilot was very successful - with anecdotal evidence of parents contacting school to say 'thank you', children that were fussy eaters were eating meals with their friends, and trying a variety of different food that they wouldn't have tried at home
 - Parents realised they were wasting food by sending in a packed lunch
 - Children didn't question the change because they were all doing the same thing - it became the norm
 - As reassurance the School Business Manager sent one concerned parent a photograph every day of the lunch her child had eaten
 - Increased take-up of UIFSM

If you have successfully trialled any initiatives for increasing the take-up of school meals and free school meals that you could share with other schools, please contact the School Food Service who can include it in future Guide to FSM updates.

For further support and advice on increasing the take up of free school meals contact the School Food Service on 0114 2734767.

See *Appendix 6* for a Development Plan template that could be adapted to increase the take up of school meals in your school.



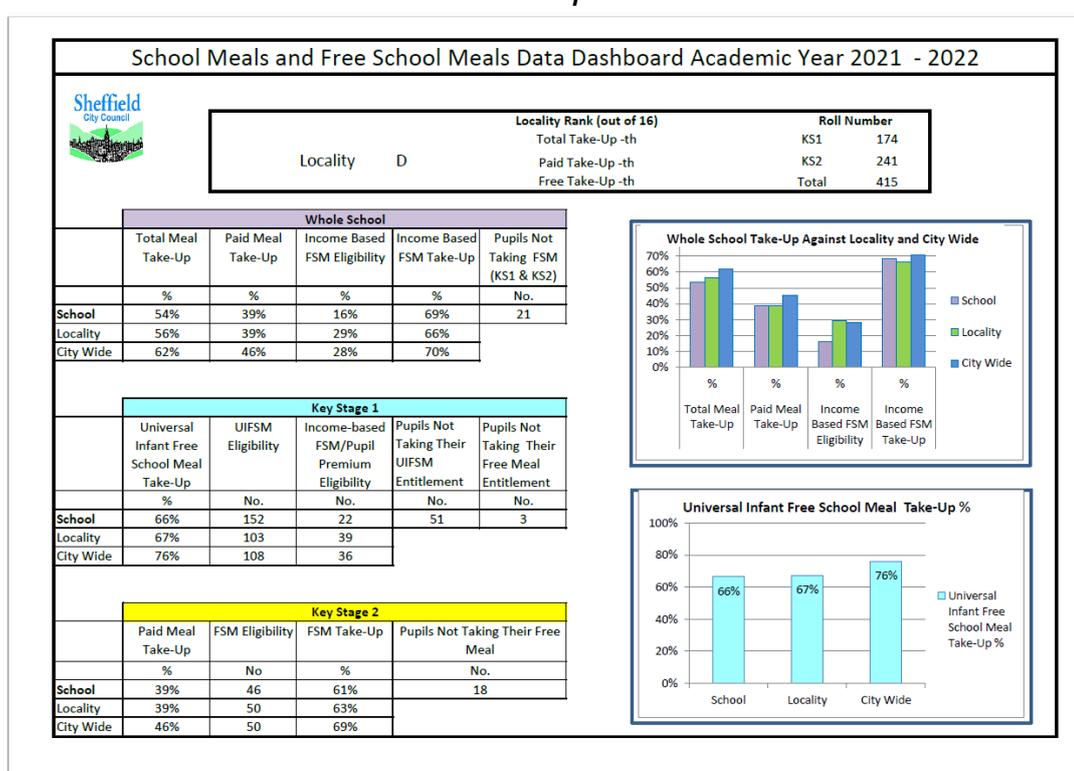
14. Free School Meal Data Dashboard

The Free School Meal Data Dashboard provides meaningful school meal **take-up data** for schools in a locality and city-wide context. This is to enable schools to:

- benchmark their free school meal take-up data against other schools
- to focus on the children not taking up their entitlement for a free school meal
- share best practice with other schools, and
- provide reporting data for governors if required

The individual data dashboards (see below) are emailed to Headteachers and school business managers of Infant, Junior and Primary schools annually, at the beginning of the new academic year.

Example



If your school is a PFI school or is not part of the council's group catering contract we can still provide you with benchmarking data. You will need to complete the Free School Meal Take-up Data template (*Appendix 7*) and return it to the School Food Service.

For more information about the Data Dashboard, contact The School Food Service on 0114 2734767.



School Meals Act 1906

Free school meals were introduced at the start of the 20th Century to ensure that poorer members of the community had at least one 'square meal' a day...

Free school meals being served as part of the School Meals Act 1906.

In 1904, the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration found so many working class families to be malnourished, that it gave advice on better nutrition for families. By 1906 it was decided that children from the poorest families should be allowed free school meals.

In 1906 the Liberal government, with Herbert Henry Asquith as Prime Minister and David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill appointed to the cabinet, sought to identify and help those in society who were in need of help, the young, old, sick and unemployed. The germ of these attitudes can be seen in the School Meals Act 1906.

The School Meals Act 1906, gave local councils the power to provide free school meals.

Labour backbencher, William Wilson put forward the idea of free school meals as a Private Member's Bill because it became obvious that many children were turning up to school hungry. They were often unable to focus on their education as lack of food made them lethargic and unwell. Margaret Macmillan, an educationalist said;



'Feed the stomach, then the mind...'

She was passionate about improving the welfare and education of children and encouraged others to see children as the nation's future who needed to be nurtured, in order to be educated, in order to benefit society

From 1906, many schools served a midday dinner. These were solid, heavy, belly- filling meals with plenty of stodge.

The result of introducing the School Meals Act 1906

- The number of school meals provided rose from 3 million in 1906 to 9 million in 1910 and 14 million in 1914.
- Local authorities were eventually given a grant of 50% from the treasury
- Children who received them were better nourished and their lives improved <http://www.intriguing-history.com/school-meals-act/>



Pupil Premium

15. Pupil Premium



The Purpose of Pupil Premium

15.1.1 Targeted Support

The Pupil Premium is funding allocated to schools for the specific purpose of boosting the attainment of pupils from low-income families. Funding is based on children registered for an income-based free school meal, further reinforcing the importance of making sure all those who qualify are actually registered.

The Pupil Premium is intended to help schools provide targeted support to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. It will help children from low-income families to reach their full potential and progress on to further and higher education, and ultimately lead to improved employment opportunities in the future.

Pupil Premium is paid by the government and is in addition to your schools budget. Eligibility for the Pupil Premium is based on known eligibility for free school meals as recorded on the October School Census for pupils in years from Reception to Y11.

15.1.2 Spending Pupil Premium Funding

Whilst your school is free to spend the Pupil Premium as you see fit, you will be held accountable for how you have used the additional funding to support pupils from low income families. Measures are included in school performance tables that will capture the achievement of those pupils covered by the Pupil Premium, and schools are required to publish information on their website about how they have used the Premium.

15.1.3 Taking Up the Free School Meal

The Pupil Premium will be paid on the basis of registration for free school meals, rather than on take-up. However, the fundamental purpose of a free school meal is to guarantee a child a tasty, nutritious lunch every day, which has proven benefits for their health, their behaviour and their concentration in lessons. As a school working in the best interests of your children, it is important that every qualifying child is encouraged to both register for and take up their right to a free school meal.

15.1.4 A Measure of Deprivation

Eligibility for free school meals is the only pupil-level measure of deprivation available and information on levels of eligibility is collected and updated annually. The link between free school meal eligibility and underachievement is very strong. At every Key Stage, the average level of educational attainment for pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than for pupils not eligible for free school meals. Therefore free school meals eligibility is a good measure of identifying and targeting underachievement.

15.1.5 The Role of Local Authorities

Local authorities are responsible for passing on the Pupil Premium to schools, and for managing its distribution in respect of looked after children and children in non-mainstream settings. There will be some looked-after children that are not in mainstream provision and it will be the role of the local authority to use the Pupil Premium to support these children as per each child’s personal education plan

15.1.6 ‘Ever 6’

Schools receive Pupil Premium funding for each pupil registered for free school meals on October Census day for a period of six years regardless of whether they remain eligible for free school meals. Pupil Premium pupils are therefore often referred to as ‘Ever6’.

15.2 Pupil Premium Funding

Pupil premium funding is available to schools maintained by the local authority, including:

- Special Schools, for children with special educational needs or disabilities
- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), for children who can’t go to a mainstream school
- Academies (<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>) and Free schools (<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/free-schools>), including:
 - Special academies, for children with special educational needs or disabilities
 - Alternative provision (AP) academies, for children who can’t go to mainstream school
 - Voluntary sector AP, with Local Authority agreement
 - Non-maintained special schools (NMSS), for children with special educational needs as approved by the Secretary of State for Education under section 342 of the Education Act 1992

Schools will receive the following pupil premium funding for pupils recorded in the **October school census** who are known to have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years (Ever 6), as well as those first known to be eligible at October census day.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium#funding-rates-for-financial-year-2023-24>

Disadvantaged Pupils	Pupil Premium per pupil 2023-24
Pupils in year groups Reception to Year 6 (Ever 6)	£1,455
Pupils in Years 7 to Year 11 (Ever 6)	£1,035
Looked after children (LAC) and Post-LAC children.	£2,530
Service Children	Services Pupil Premium per pupil
Pupils in year groups Reception to Y11 meeting one of the following criteria below (15.2.2)	£355

15.2.1 LAC Premium

The **LAC Premium** is managed by the Virtual School Head at the Local Authority, and is used for the benefit of the looked after child's educational needs as described in their personal education plan.

15.2.2 Service Pupil Premium

The Department for Education (DfE) introduced the Service pupil premium (SPP) in April 2011 in recognition of the specific challenges children from Service families face and as part of the commitment to delivering the armed forces covenant.

State schools, academies and free schools in England, which have children of Service families in school years reception to year 11, can receive the SPP funding. It is designed to assist the school in providing the additional pastoral support that these children may need and is currently worth £335 per Service child who meets the eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria

Pupils attract SPP if they meet one of the following criteria:

- one of their parents is serving in the regular armed forces (including pupils with a parent who is on full commitment as part of the full-time reserve service)
- they have been registered as a 'Service child' on a school census in the past six years, see note on the **DfE's ever 6 Service child measure**
- one of their parents died whilst serving in the armed forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme
- one of their parents is in the armed forces of another nation and is stationed in England

Children have to be flagged as Service children ahead of the autumn school census deadline. Service parents need to make the school aware of their status by talking to the head teacher or school admin staff.

DfE's ever 6 service child measure

The premium was extended, such that any pupil in reception to year 11, who has been flagged as a Service child in the last six years, will continue to receive the premium (Ever 6 service child). Please see the [ESFA's pupil premium grant guidance](#) for more information.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know>

15.3 Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)



From April 2015, nurseries, schools, childminders and other childcare providers have been able to claim extra funding through the Early Years Pupil Premium to support children's development, learning and care.

Early Years Pupil Premium provides an extra £0.62 per hour (as of 2023/24) for three and four year old children. This means an extra £353 per year for each child taking up the full 570 hours funded entitlement to early education. Children will not need to access the full entitlement to be eligible; EYPP is paid on a pro rata basis.

Which children are eligible?

Three and Four year olds accessing funded early education who:

- Meet the Income criteria for free school meals (see page 8 for the free school meal eligibility criteria)
- Have been looked after by the local authority for at least one day; **OR**
- Have been adopted from care; **OR**
- Are subject of a special guardianship order or child arrangement order.

How do schools/Early Years providers claim the EYPP?

- Schools should make parents aware of the EYPP, highlighting the benefits for their child
- Registration by the parent is voluntary. Parents who might meet the eligibility criteria should be encouraged to register their child by filling in an Early Years registration form. (Available to all providers on the Sheffield Information Directory). ***It is essential that you collect and securely retain parental consent to use their information to check their entitlement***
- Schools are responsible for passing details of eligible children to the local authority via your early years headcount return in the Provider Portal, based on their completed registration form and consent.
- You can enter the parent's details for an EYPP check in any one of the 9 headcount tasks released to you each year – You only need to enter the parents details once onto a headcount for an EYPP check and they will be retained against the child for all your future headcount returns.

When will we receive the EYPP funding?

- You will receive any EYPP funding entitlement as part of your Actuals payment. A 'Statement of Hours Claimed' report can be accessed on the Sheffield Provider Portal and this will notify you which children have EYPP funding applied.

15.4 School Age Pupil Premium

- School-age pupil premium is awarded retrospectively to children who have been identified as eligible for a free school meal at October census day
- October census is the most important collection for school age pupil premium. Pupil premium funding for next year is based on the data submitted for October census each year. **If a school misses the deadline at October census a whole year of pupil premium funding will be lost.**
- A child/young person does not have to be in receipt of free school meals on census day itself to qualify for pupil premium funding, but to have been in receipt of free school meals at some point, even for a short period of time since October census day in the year prior.
- Every child identified will qualify for Ever 6 Pupil Premium funding for the following six years. The Pupil Premium funding follows the child/young person when they move school.
- In order to maximise the Pupil Premium available to your school, we recommend that you regularly engage with parents in order to collect their consent and data for the purpose of checking for free school meals eligibility
- You can use the Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Registration form (*Appendix 4*) to collect information and parent consent to check eligibility for free school meals, and therefore Pupil Premium prior to October Census day. Customer Services provide a batch checking service via a form on Anycomms+. This bulk checking service is available all year round (See page 24 for further information on the Anycomms batch checking process)
- For further information about Pupil Premium funding at your school you can download your pupil file from Key to Success (normally released in July)

Further information about Pupil Premium funding can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2023-to-2024>



15.5 Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) and Pupil Premium

The introduction of UIFSM in 2014 has had a negative impact on Pupil Premium funding for schools. Parents are less likely to fill in a FSM application form and share personal information because they already receive a UIFSM for their child. As a result school staff spend valuable time and resources encouraging parents to fill in free school meal application forms to maximise their Pupil Premium funding.

Key Points:

- The application process for income-based FSM/Pupil Premium needs to be as effortless as possible for parents
- Language barriers when applying either on-line or by paper application can be a barrier
- Parents are often not aware of what Pupil Premium is, and the importance of the funding for schools.
- Parents may not know that they need to apply for income-based free school meals to receive free school milk for their child

Maximising Pupil Premium - Sharing Good Practice

- Schools use the Sheffield City Council online application process for free school meals to apply on behalf of their parents (page 22)
- Many schools successfully use the Free School Meal/ Pupil Premium Registration Form, in conjunction with the Anycomms+ spreadsheet provided by Customer Services, in advance of October Census day to batch check pupil entitlement to free school meals (page 23-5)
- A number of schools have Pupil Premium governors/ Pupil Premium Champions, and promote Pupil Premium in a variety of ways including on the school website, school newsletters, by letter or by text.
- Parent events in schools are used as an opportunity to give out FSM/Pupil Premium Registration forms.
- Transition Packs, home visits for new starters (Reception/Foundation Stage children) and school admissions forms are used to collect parent information and parent consent to check free school meal eligibility
- A number of schools use incentives to encourage KS1 parents to fill in Free School Meal/Pupil Premium Registration forms. For example, parents who are found to be eligible for income- based free school meals are given, a free book bag/ school sweatshirt/ book voucher, or supermarket voucher.

15.6 Maximising Pupil Premium Funding For Schools

All of the following work is covered under your Essential Services Package. This is free to Maintained schools and is covered under the FSM Services element of the Service to Schools subscription

15.6.1 What we're doing in Sheffield to Increase the number of children eligible for Free School Meals, and maximise Pupil Premium funding for schools

Background

The tying together of the FSM and Pupil Premium funding causes issues where families do not understand why they need to claim for a free school meal even if they don't want a meal, or already receive a free meal under another scheme. Since the implementation of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) in 2014, many schools suffered a financial loss in terms of Pupil Premium funding as parents did not feel the need to apply for a free meal based on their household income when one was already provided.

Since 2015-16 the School Food Service have worked collaboratively with other Sheffield City Council services to increase eligibility to free school meals and maximise Pupil Premium funding for academies and maintained schools. We have introduced an Automatic Award process use Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support information to check free school meal eligibility. This had a significant impact on pupil premium funding for schools.

Auto Award Process - Automatic Award of Free School Meals using Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support Information

How does it work?

Essentially, we use information already held by the council to identify families that are missing out on a Free School Meal.

- We use data from Revenues & Benefits to identify families that have claimed Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Support (CTS) but have not applied for free school meals
- We write to parents with children aged 2-19 on matching housing/council tax support benefits with similar eligibility criteria to FSM to advise that in order to ensure they are claiming everything they are entitled to; we will use their name, DOB and NI number from their Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support application to check their eligibility for free school meals.
- We give them 3 weeks to object to the use of their information, and after 3 weeks the data is processed, and successful applications are added for eligible children
- These children are immediately awarded **transitionally protected FSM and Pupil Premium funding** is generated for schools

- This is an annual process that takes place during August/September. Eligibility for the Pupil Premium is based on known eligibility for free school meals as recorded on the October School Census for pupils in years from Reception to Y11.
- This is a hugely successful collaborative effort between cross-portfolio teams

Impact

- **More children having access to healthy Free School Meals.** To date an additional 3,389 primary and secondary aged children have been awarded FSM, and 2,180 Early Years children identified as potentially eligible for FSM when they reach school age. Ensuring that the most disadvantaged children have access to at least one good meal a day while at school is critical to their overall development, both physically, mentally and educationally. A parent could also save around £400 per child per year through claiming their free school meals.
- **Maximum funding for schools** - the work to introduce Auto Award has resulted in significant additional Pupil Premium funding for schools. Between 2016-2023 an additional *£3.9m has been generated for schools to provide targeted support to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. It will help children from low-income families to reach their full potential and progress on to further and higher education, and ultimately lead to improved employment opportunities in the future.

***In reality the total will be greater than £3.9m as this does not include the cumulative, year on year effect of Ever 6. It is estimated that the real total is at least £10m.**

- **Reducing the burden on schools** - schools use valuable time and resources to encourage parents to apply for income-based FSM to secure their rightful entitlement and help maximise Pupil Premium funding. The Auto Award process removes the need for this and secures more stable funding for schools based on the true entitlement to FSM.

Additional strategies in place in Sheffield to increase Free School Meal eligibility and Maximise Pupil Premium funding for schools

We have developed a number of additional data driven processes outside of the normal daily free school meal application process; these are unique to Sheffield and are not part of our statutory duty. For further information, please see *Appendix 10 - Data Driven Processes*

15.6.2 What Next...

Our Auto Award process has gained national recognition after it was promoted by the Local Government Association, and we were asked to deliver a presentation about it at a Food Foundation 'Fix Our Food' webinar in March 2023, an All Party Parliamentary Group on school food and we are supporting the National School Food Review working group, chaired by Myles Bremner. We have been contacted by and met with a number of local authorities and organisations across the country who want to understand and share our good practice, and we are providing them with support.

- ❖ We are continuing to explore ways of securing free meals for children who need them, and to maximise Pupil Premium funding for schools.
- ❖ We are currently looking at the FSM data transfer methods to and from schools and how we can make that easier for you.

If you have successfully trialled any initiatives for maximising Pupil Premium funding that you could share with other schools, please contact the School Food Service who will include it in future Free School Meal Guide updates.

schoolfood@sheffield.gov.uk

16. Systems and Processes

16.1 Capita One (EMS)

Capita One is used by a large number of service teams including Admissions (to allocate school places), Children's University, Children in Employment and Entertainment (to issue licences and track employment), Early Years (to track nursery children and funded hours), Exclusions, Free School Meals, MIS Team (for statutory school census and assessment returns), Personnel, PAS, SEN and case management for other teams (Family Group Conferencing, Attendance Legal, Autism, Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired , Portage, Independent Travel Training).

16.2 Anycomms+

Anycomms + is the system used by the authority for transferring data and files with schools. The system can be used to transfer any type of file to and from schools with services in the authority.

The types of data transferred include:

- EHCP Files
- Free School Meals authorisation lists
- Medical Diet information
- School Admissions information
- Inclusion Panel papers
- School Appeals
- MIS Returns

The system is used by a wide range of staff within schools including headteachers, Sencos, safeguarding officers, assessment co-ordinators, business managers and administrative staff. All users have individual logins to the system which should be requested via the school administrator. School users are assigned roles on Anycomms which determines the types of file they will receive.

When a file is sent by the authority to the school the recipient will receive a notification by e-mail that a file is awaiting collection. The recipient should then log into Anycomms plus to download any file(s) that have been sent for the role(s) they have.

To send a file to the authority schools upload the file and select a file type, this determines the service within the authority who will be able to access the file and minimises the risk of inappropriate.

[Anycomms+ Issues: 0114 2736582](#)



16.3 MIS (Management Information System)

Schools MIS are used to help with the effective management of school information including:

- School Details
- Class Details
- Employee Details
- Pupil Identifiers (name, Dob, Address etc.)
- Pupil Contacts
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Exclusion
- Assessment
- Free School Meal Eligibility

This data is used to complete statutory returns (Pupil Census, Workforce Census, Key Stage Returns) and can be used by schools for a number of different activities including identifying and tracking areas of school improvement, trend analysis, Ofsted readiness and parental reporting.

MIS Schools' Team

The team provides a helpdesk which supports schools with their SIMS system. We are also responsible for ensuring that schools make their statutory returns, and for the quality of data transferred to the Capita ONE (EMS) system.

MIS/SIMs Support Team: 0114 2734517



16.4 SchoolPoint 365

This is an online resource which schools requested, and is used to communicate written information to groups of school staff and allows schools to feed information back to Sheffield City Council. It also has the function of holding themed documents for various services. By using it, schools and the council reduce costs on post. All Sheffield schools have access to the system.

What information do we provide in SchoolPoint 365?

- Postbag Items - these are letters, notices, flyers, etc that would normally be posted out in hard copy on a daily basis
- Calendars - these include training opportunities and headteacher meetings
- Documents produced by SCC to help schools manage their business and meet their legal responsibilities in areas such as Health and Safety, School Food, Human Resources etc
- General advice to schools on the range of services that SCC provides for its schools and how schools can access these services

Information we get from schools

- The system is an excellent way of gathering vital information we need from schools. This is usually done by placing forms on the site which school staff complete and submit online
- Schools register their annual buy-in of services that we offer them on a traded basis

Login to SchoolPoint 365

(Usernames and passwords are required for access and can be requested by emailing cypinfocentre@sheffield.gov.uk)

16.5 Cashless Systems

16.5.1 Cashless Catering System

The majority of secondary schools in Sheffield operate Cashless Catering systems. Cashless systems provide a quick and efficient service by speeding up the lunchtime queues by using quicker identification methods and pre-collecting payments. It also removes the free school meal stigma – each pupil's account is entirely confidential and all pupils use the same biometric or card payment system at the till.

- ***Parents Add Payments***

Parents can use online payments to top up their child's account or if preferred, via revaluation units within the school

- ***Pupil ID Scanning***

Pupils can go to any till point to choose lunch and pay. Another option is to order lunch at a pre-order kiosk, by using biometric recognition to access their account

- ***Lunch Collected***

Once the transaction has been authorised, the pupils account is instantly debited and lunch can be collected

- ***Reporting***

Generating daily, weekly or monthly reports is easy. Schools have access to reports on meals consumed, overdue accounts and food wastage

- ***Alerts to Parent/Guardian***

School can issue e-mail alerts to parents and guardians to alert them of low or overdue balances

17. Useful Contacts for Advice and Information

17.1 Who do I contact if I have a FSM question?

If your question is about Free School Meals process, policy or legislation then please contact:

The School Food Service

Email: schoolfood@sheffield.gov.uk OR

Information & Development Projects at:

IDPT@Sheffield.gov.uk

MIS/SIMs Support Team: 0114 2734517

Anycomms+ issues: 0114 2736582

If your question is about applying for a free school meal or checking the status of an application that has been made then please contact:

Customer Services – 0114 2734567 (Option 4, Option 3)

Sheffield City Council Website:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/school-meals>

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/form/schools-and-childcare/free-school-meals-start>

The Sheffield Directory: www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk

Further information about FEL for 2 year olds can be found at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schools-childcare/childcare-free-early-learning>

FSM entitlement for 14-16 year olds in further education and sixth form colleges:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/full-time-enrolment-of-14-to-16-year-olds-in-further-education-and-sixth-form-colleges>

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide 2023 to 2024 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

FSM and Universal Credit guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

Further information about Universal Credit is available at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/universalcredit> (this website includes an information sheet which explains what Universal Credit is and how people in Sheffield can get support)

FSM and 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities/providing-free-school-meals-to-families-with-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf>

17.2 Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium funding information:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2023-to-2024>

Further information about Pupil Premium funding can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know>

Information about using the Pupil Premium can be found at:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>

19. Appendices

- Appendix 1 FSM Protection Periods
- Appendix 2 Process Map – Protected FSM Awards Process
- Appendix 3 Process Map - FSM for a pupil who had protected FSM in another LA
- Appendix 4 Free School Meal & Pupil Premium Registration Form
- Appendix 5 Process Map – FSM/EYPP Data Application Process
- Appendix 6 Development Plan Template
- Appendix 7 School Meal Take-up Data template
- Appendix 8 FSM Reimbursement Form (Alternative Providers)
- Appendix 9 Process Map - Roles and Responsibilities
- Appendix 10 Data Driven Processes for Increasing FSM Eligibility and PP Funding
- Appendix 11 A Brief Guide to FSM for Asylum Seekers, Refugees, EEA, and NRPF
- Appendix 12 Process Map – Free School Meals for Asylum Seekers/Refugees
- Appendix 13 Process Map – Free School Meals for NRPF and EEA
- Appendix 14 Free School Meal Application Form for Families with NRPF

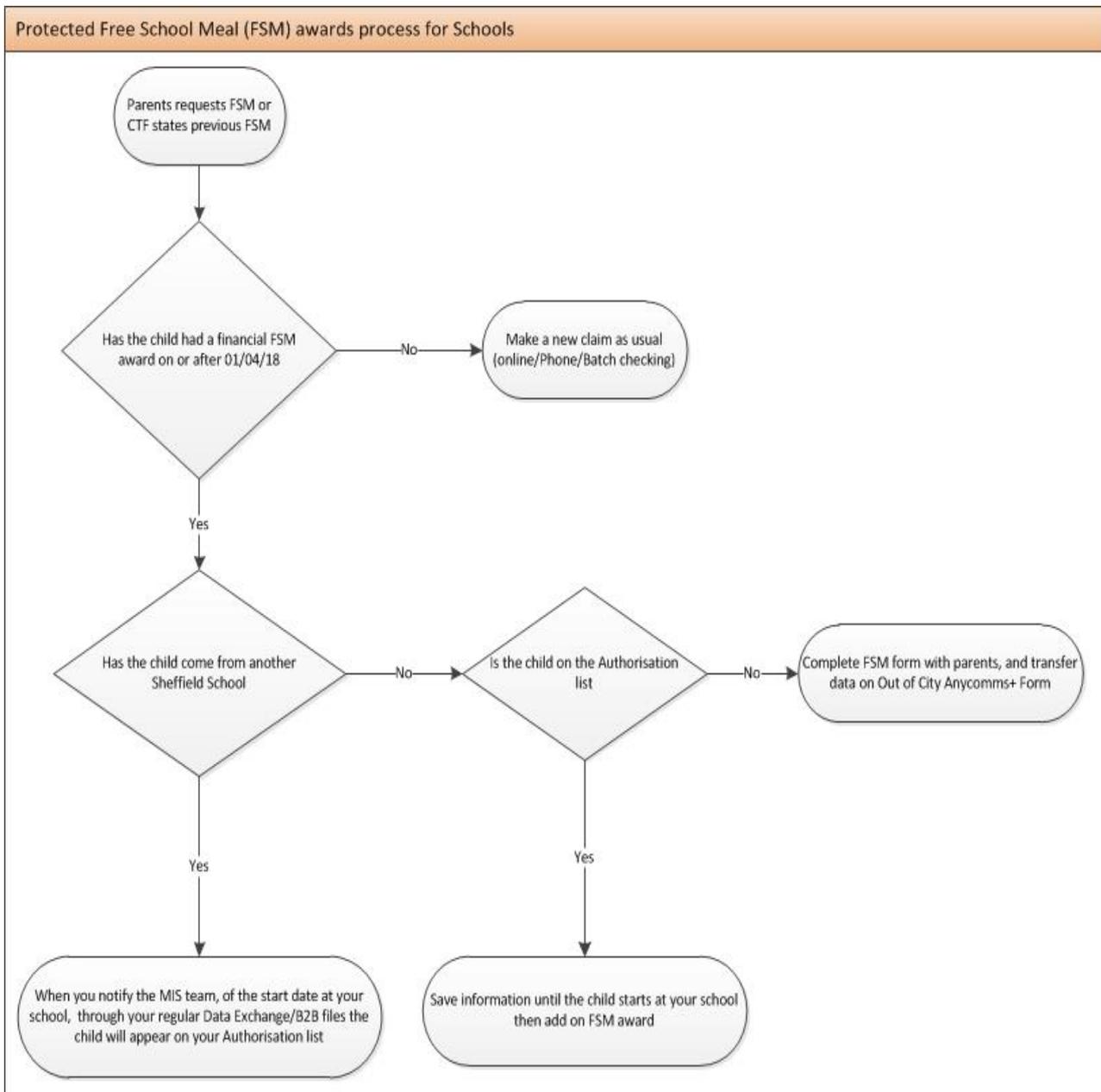


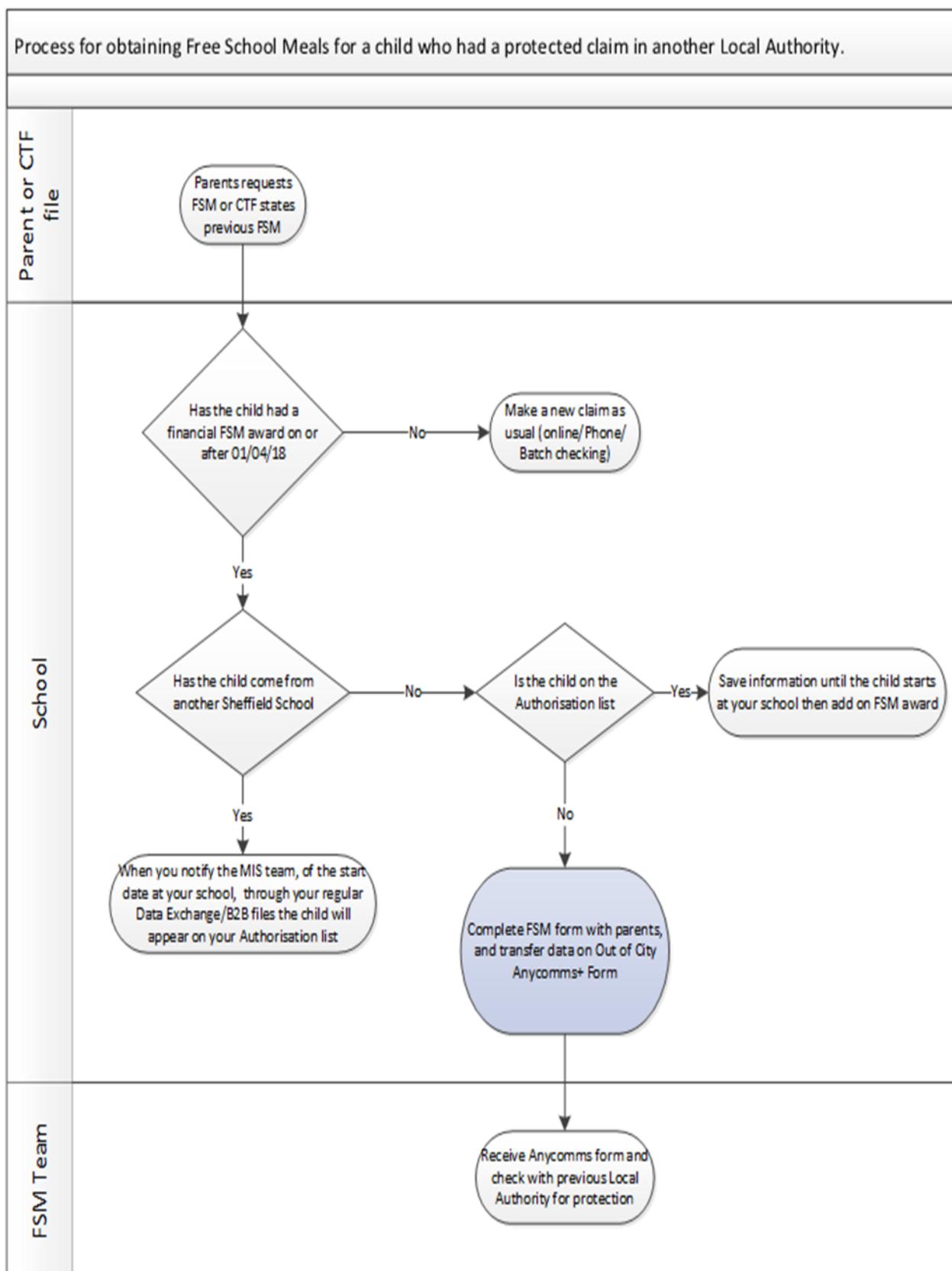
Appendices

Appendix 1

FSM Protection Periods																
UC Protection to end of rollout Currently March 2025										Protected from April 2025						
Universal Infant FSM = Green										Protected = blue						
September -	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
							E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
						E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7
					E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8
			E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10
	E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	
E2	N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11		
N1	N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11			
N2	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11				
Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11					
Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11						
Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11							
Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11								
Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11									
Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11										
Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11											
Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11												
Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11													
Y9	Y10	Y11														
Y10	Y11															
Y11																

Example a child in Y6 in March 2025 (sept 2024 school year) will need to be rechecked by the time they become Y7 in September 2025
 A child in Y5 however will be protected until they finish Y6
 A child in Y7 in March 2025 (school year sept 2024) will be protected up to Y11 with no rechecks.





Free School Meals and Pupil Premium Registration Form

Each Free School Meal Means More Money for your school.

Sheffield City Council wants to make sure that every child who qualifies for a free school meal can have one. Also, we want to make sure that each Sheffield school gets the right amount of money from the Government to support all of their pupils. Put simply, the more free school meals that schools have, the more money schools get. You can help us to get the right money for schools by filling in this form. It helps the council decide which families can get free school meals and therefore special funding called Pupil Premium. There is more information about Pupil Premium over the page and why it's so important for children, young people and schools.

Also, if you qualify for free school meals, you could save around £400 per child per year by not having to pay for a packed lunch.



Do I Qualify for Free School Meals?

Your child could have a free school meal, if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (you need to have an annual net earned income of £7,400 or below, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and support Allowance
- Support from NASS (National Asylum Support Service) under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit with a yearly household income of less than £16,190 (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) and do not get Working Tax Credit run-on (paid 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

Note: This application form is for income-based free school meals only, if you need to apply for another reason (e.g. NRPF) please contact Customer Services on the telephone number below.

How Do I Apply for Free School Meals



You can do this online at: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/school-meals>

Or you can ask your school to help you.



You can complete the form overleaf and return it to your child's current school.



For further information please contact Sheffield City Council Customer Services on 0114 2734567 (option 4, then option 3)

What is Pupil Premium?

The Government gives schools money over and above their usual budget to support any children who may need individual support. This money is called Pupil Premium and the amount a school gets is based on the number of free school meals they have in school. Each free school meal could raise an extra **£1,455 per year for Primary pupils and £1,035 for Secondary pupils**. This amount is then paid to schools for a further five years. It is used to boost pupils' learning and pay for valuable support like extra teaching sessions, more teaching staff or after school activities. Below are some examples of how schools use their Pupil Premium money:

- Extra one-to-one or small group sessions for children within the classroom.
- Employing extra teaching assistants to work with classes.
- Running catch-up sessions for children who need extra help with maths or reading.
- Running a school breakfast club which encourages pupils to get to schools early and have something to eat before they start their school day.
- Paying for educational trips and visits that all pupils can join in with.
- Putting more money into schools that help improve children's learning, such as laptops or tablets.

(Source – <https://www.theschoolrun.com/pupil-premium-explained>)

You can find out from your school's website how they spend their pupil premium.



How the information on this form will be used

The information you give the council on this form will only be used to confirm whether a free school meal has been awarded and therefore whether Pupil Premium will be given.

You only need to complete this form once and it will last all the way through your child's education in Sheffield. If your child moves to another state funded school in Sheffield they will be told that you qualify for a free school meal. If you move out of city, we may be contacted by your child's new school or local authority to confirm if you have Free School Meal status.

We are committed to ensuring that the personal and sensitive information that we hold about you is protected and kept safe and secure, and we have measures in place to prevent the loss, misuse or alteration of your personal information. For further information please ask your school for a copy of their Privacy Notice.

If your school is helping you to claim for free school meals, this agreement will be kept by the school for their records.

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/footer-links/privacy-notice>

Pupil Premium and Free School Meals Registration Form

About You and Your Child/Children

Child's Last Name	Child's First Name	Date of Birth Day/Month/Year			Current School Attending	FSM on or after 01/04/18	Previous school name (if outside Sheffield only)	Previous school location (town/city)

Note: If your child has had an Income Based Free School Meal (FSM) on or after 01/04/18 **outside of Sheffield** please state "Yes" to the FSM award box and add the child's previous school name and location so we can confirm their eligibility, otherwise **please leave the last three fields highlighted blank**

Parent / Guardian Details	PARENT/GUARDIAN 1			PARENT/GUARDIAN 2		
Title: i.e. Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mx						
Last Name:						
First Name:						
Date of Birth: (DD/MM/YYYY)						
National Insurance No. or NASS No:						
Daytime Telephone Number:						
Mobile Number:						
Email Address: If you prefer to receive the decision via email then please provide this here						
Address:						
	Postcode:			Postcode:		
Your relationship to the child:						

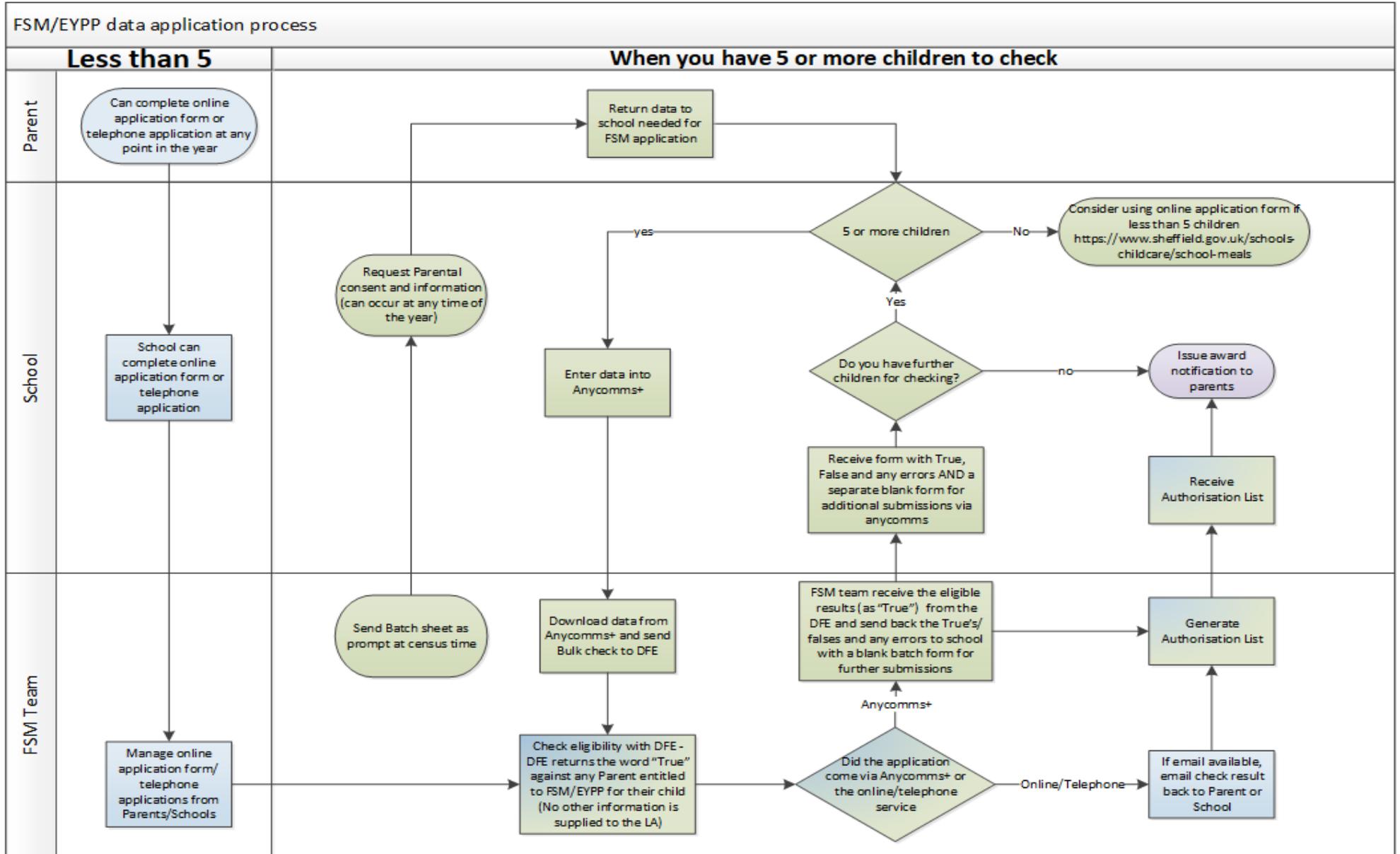
Declaration

- The information I have given on this form is complete and accurate.
- I understand that my personal information is held securely and agree to the Local Authority using this information to process my application for free school meals and pupil premium.
- I understand that if eligible, my child's eligibility will be shared with the current and future educational settings they attend, and if I make a claim for Free School Meals in a new area, that Sheffield may confirm my child's eligibility for Free School Meals.
- I agree to notify the Local authority in writing if the person claiming the appropriate benefit no longer has responsibility for the child.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for filling in this form. Please return it to your child's current school



Development Plan Template - Increasing School Meal Take-Up

Aim: To improve the lunchtime experience for children with the aim of increasing school meal and Free School Meal take-up

Action	Impact	Lead	Timescale
<p>Lunchtime Review</p> <p>Meet with key stakeholders (school staff, parents, pupils) to identify improvements that could be made quickly to make lunchtime more efficient and enjoyable. Evaluate the times that pupils enter the dining room and the queuing system/capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Quick wins’ can be identified – immediate impact • Medium and longer term plans can be made in consultation with the catering provider, and involving the school community 		
<p>Improve Lunchtime Experience</p>			
<p>Review Menus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the menu appropriate for the school community? • Is there too much choice/not enough choice? • Introduce new options – sandwiches/jacket potatoes/ vegetarian dishes/ street food/ • Involve children in menu consultation • School Council involved in gathering feedback from their classmates and representing their views about the school menu at a school council meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More children having a school meal that might have had a packed lunch from home previously • Ensures that the school menu is always appropriate for the school community • By involving school council or children in consultation it provides an opportunity to explain to them why they can’t have everything they want on the menu because of the School Food Standards 		
<p>Introduce a pre order system for school meals</p> <p>This can be done in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a band ordering system, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Carer knows that their child will get the meal of their choice every day • Children know that it doesn’t matter what sitting they’re on, they will still get the meal of their choice 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some on-line payment providers include classroom ordering as part of their package • Talk to your catering provider to find out how they can help with this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved behaviour in the dinner queue and a calmer dining room • The cook knows how many of each meal is required – less food wastage and no chance of running out of food at lunchtime and having disappointed children • Parents are more likely to book and pay for school meals in advance if their child is going to have the meal of their choice • Parent can have more influence over what their child chooses for lunch if they are involved in the pre ordering each day • More children eating a full meal with all components • Increased school meal and free school meal take up • Parents feel they are getting good value for money 		
<p>Introduce a photographic menu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display photographs of the daily menu. This could be on a daily menu board, a weekly display in the dining room, on the school website or in other ways appropriate for your school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more likely to choose something different if they know what it looks like first • New and unfamiliar dishes can be added to the menu • Issues with language barriers and cultural differences in food preferences are reduced 		
<p>Seat the packed lunch children and the school meal children together in the dining room but giving the school meal children priority in the dining room</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends can sit together • Packed lunch children see what a school dinner looks like and might be encouraged to try one • Having a packed lunch is no longer any quicker than having a school meal • Increase in school meal take up 		
<p>Introduce plates and bowls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more social way of dining 		

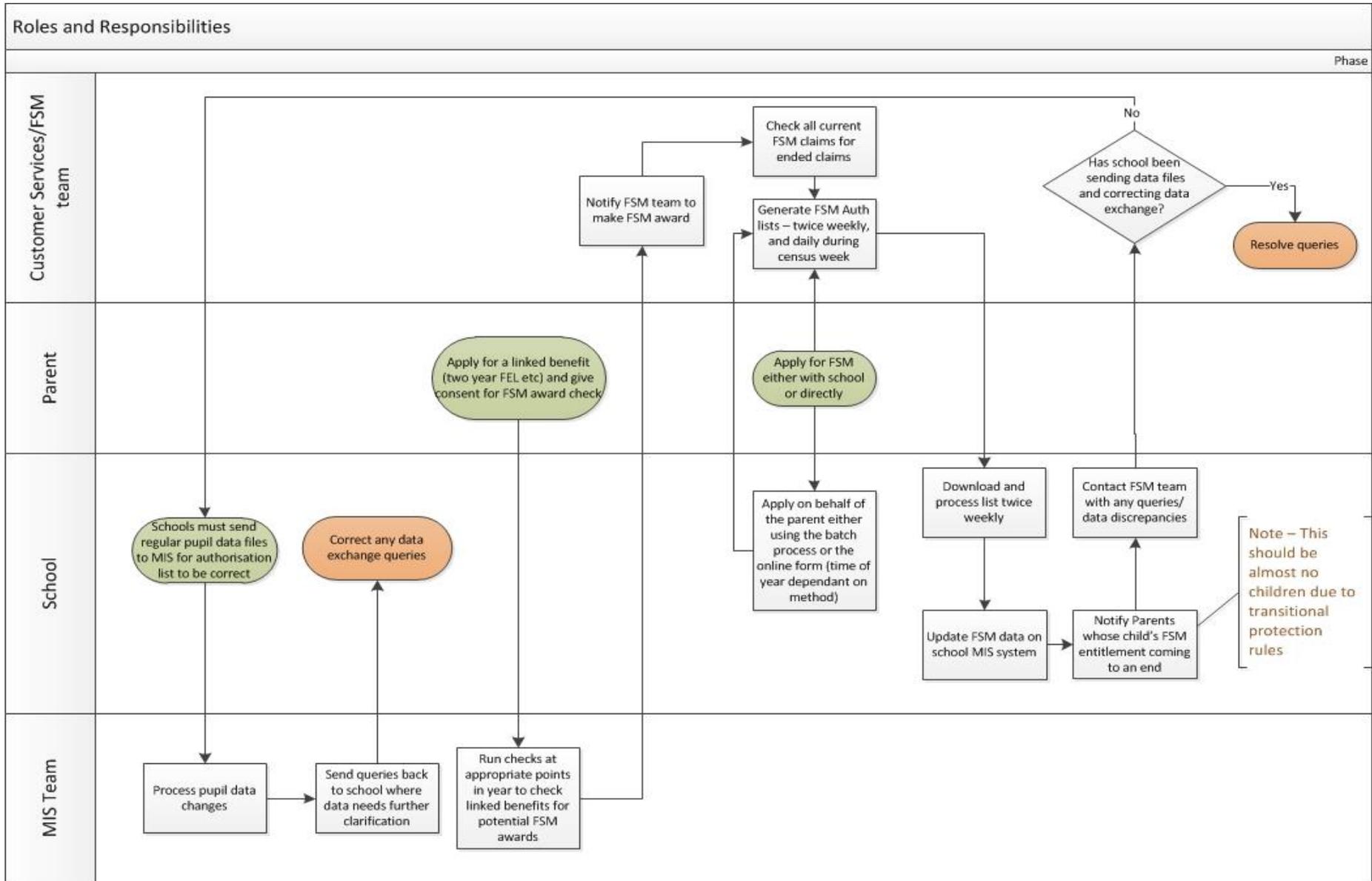
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two systems: • Plates and bowls on a tray – children collect both courses at once, or • Children collect and eat their main course first then return for their dessert • Both systems work, but are dependent on school dining room space/logistics of queuing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can enjoy their main course then chose a dessert without over-facing themselves • Ensures that children eat their main course first and that their pudding is still warm or hasn't melted (e.g. ice cream) 		
<p>Improve the Dining Room Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing dining room furniture • Maximise seating capacity • Increase serving capacity by introducing an additional serving point in the dining room • Explore the possibility of an outdoor eating area • Explore the possibility of a breakfast bar eating area for those children that would benefit from a quieter, less intimidating environment at lunchtime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in noise levels • Reduction in queuing times • More pleasant environment • More time efficient 		
<p>Introduce a self-service Salad Bar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children that don't like vegetables are likely to have salad instead • The catering team can try different salads according to what the children like, e.g. beetroot, lettuce, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, grated carrot, cous cous, mixed peppers, rice or pasta salad etc • Children like the idea of helping themselves to the salad – this increases the chance of them having a healthy balanced meal • possible increase in school meal take-up 		

<p>Replace the current clearing area with a brightly coloured clearing trolley that children can be encouraged to put their food waste in independently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children encouraged to take more responsibility for clearing their flight trays/plates and bowls • More time for the LTA's to help the children who are still eating 		
<p>Promotion</p>			
<p>Continue to promote the take-up of school meals and free school meals, examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce theme days that link in with the school curriculum • Food tasting sessions for parents and carers • Bring your mum/dad/grandparents to school day • Food samples and promotional information at Parent evenings • Promotional information in school newsletter/ book bags • Recipe cards for popular dishes on the school menu • Lucky plate day, Smoothy Bike initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in take-up of school meals • More children having a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime 		
<p>Engaging the parents of 'New Starters'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an opportunity to share information with parents about school meals, free school meal entitlement, Pupil Premium, medical diets, and menus as well as inviting them along to food tasting sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents complete Free School Meal /Pupil Premium Registration forms to apply for income-based FSM, resulting in an increase in Pupil Premium and Ever 6 funding for schools • Increase in take-up of school meals • More children having a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime 		
<p>Set up a School Food Action/Focus Group</p> <p>Set up a group with pupil representatives, school governors, parents, the school lead on lunchtimes to work on ideas to improve lunchtime, suggestions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Name the dining room' competition • Pupil artwork in the dining room linked to the curriculum/healthy focus/ a popular story book theme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of these initiatives encourage good behaviour and pupils' ownership of their school dining room 		

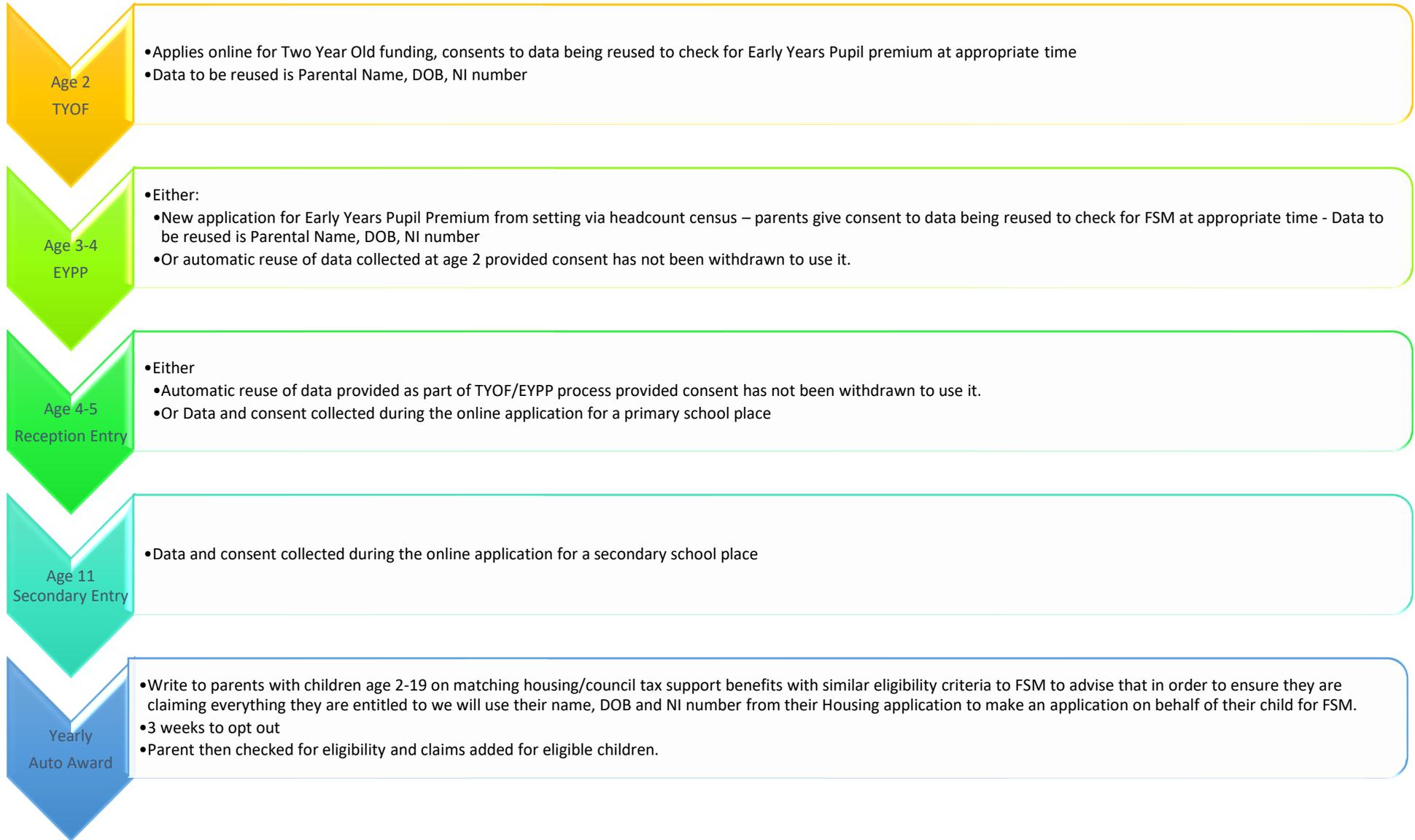
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dining room rules designed by pupils and displayed on posters/table talkers around the dining room 			
<p>Customer Feedback Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure an accessible customer feedback process which incorporates pupil and staff comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering provider can use the feedback to develop/improve the service 'You Said We Did' - children/staff feel listened to 		
<p>Parent and Community Engagement</p>			
<p>Put food at the heart of the school. Use the kitchen/dining room for school events in order to engage with parents and the community, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christmas/Summer Fayres, Open evenings, parent evenings Specially arranged occasions for elderly residents from the local community, such as afternoon tea or Christmas lunch, with the children helping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds a positive relationship with parents and the local community Children are proud their school Opportunity for children to be involved 		
<p>Application Process/Administration</p>			
<p>Improve access to FSM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote on line application process and contact details for Customer Services (SCC) Apply online on behalf of parents Ensure the application process in school is simple and discreet Use the Anycomms+ batch checking process to check entitlement for free school meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in take up of FSM Increase in the number of disadvantaged children having a hot nutritious school meal Increase in pupil premium and Ever 6 funding for school 		

SCHOOL MEAL TAKE-UP DATA TEMPLATE - 2023/24

School: Primary					
	Number of Trading Days	Number of UIFSM	Number of KS1 (Income based Free Meals)	Number of KS2 Paid Meals	Number of KS2 Free Meals
Sep-23					
Oct-23					
Nov-23					
Dec-23					
Jan-24					
Feb-24					
Mar-24					
Apr-24					
May-24					
Jun-24					
Jul-24					



Data Driven Processes Outside of Normal Daily FSM Applications



A brief guide to Free School Meals for asylum seekers, European Economic Area applicants(EEA) and NRPF visa holders (No recourse to public funds)

Please note this is a guide produced for schools and does not constitute legal guidance on matters of Asylum/remaining in the UK.

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Asylum seeker and Refugee definition and evidence

An asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in the UK and asked to remain here as a refugee. Until they receive a decision they are known as an asylum seeker and will be given a NASS number reference (National Asylum Support Service).

Once submitted to the home office, an asylum request will have one of three outcomes but a decision can take a significant amount of time:

- Full refugee status (indefinite leave to remain).
- Temporary leave to remain for between 1-5 years or until the age of 17½.
- A refusal, applicants may appeal against a refusal and can remain in the UK whilst appealing.

Asylum seekers can be on different sections of support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act. Proof of what section of support they have (which will be provided on a letter from the home office to the parent) will be needed to apply for Free School Meals if the NASS number is unavailable or is declined by the FSM checking system:

- Section 98 is provision of temporary support for certain groups who appear to be destitute. Support may be provided under this section until it can be determined whether support should be provided under section 95.
- Section 95 is provision of support for certain groups of asylum seekers who appear to be destitute or likely to become destitute within a prescribed period of time.
- Section 4 is provision of accommodation for certain groups of asylum seekers dependent on their circumstances.

Some of the main countries that asylum seeker and refugee children have most recently come from, along with the language(s) they are most likely to know include:

Country	Main language(s)	Country	Main language(s)
Syria	Arabic	Sudan	Arabic
Kosovo	Albanian	Nigeria	Yoruba
Pakistan	Urdu	Albania	Albanian
Eritrea	Tigrinya	Somalia	Somali
Afghanistan	Pashto/Dari	Ukraine	Ukrainian
Sri Lanka	Sinhalese/Tamil		

Free school meal applications for Refugees and Asylum seekers

Refugee pupils (those whose asylum has been granted so they are no longer asylum seekers) may be eligible for free school meals (FSM) if they meet the benefit-related criteria for free schools meals. These families will have been awarded a NASS or more usually a National Insurance number (if full refugee status granted) and they should be applied for via the usual/normal FSM route that you use for the majority of pupils

Asylum Seeker pupils are eligible for FSM if they are claiming asylum under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 as per section 1. These can be claimed for via the usual/normal FSM route, using the NASS number.

However if the NASS number is declined OR no NASS number available then you must provide one of the evidence listed below and this must be submitted via the anycomss Batch process, and the supporting evidence must be sent **securely via anycomms** not by email.

For **Section 95** they must provide proof of an asylum claim such as their NASS number (NASS numbers are usually 9 digits and in the format of 'YY/MM/12345'. These numbers can be followed by /001, /002, /003 etc which identifies each individual member in the family.) Individuals may also provide their Application Registration Card (ARC), this is proof of an on-going asylum application (if valid, see date in 'valid until' section).

If the family are **on section 98**, they may not have a NASS number but should have a Home Office letter which states their port reference number to provide as evidence of asylum seeking status.

Or in the case of families who are claiming for FSM **under Part VI** of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, applicants should provide a letter from the National Asylum Support Service (Home Office) (NASS) stating that they are receiving support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Letters that the family may be able to provide are their Asylum Support letter or accommodation/tenancy letter.

Schools should seek termly updates from asylum seeker families about their status until refugee status is awarded and notify the Local Authority of the new National Insurance number or NASS number. If their status changes, free school meal eligibility may change as they don't receive the same protection to their FSM claims as benefit applicant claims.

See also section on UKVI accounts as if you have provided the Local Authority with the share code we can check for status changes for up to 90 days.

EU Settlement scheme for EEA applicants & Right to Reside definition

Due to Brexit there are people who were living in the UK who then had to apply to remain in the UK after the UK left the union (EU settlement scheme). These applicants should have been resident in the UK prior to Brexit on 31/12/20 so most of them should have had a decision by this point.

They should all have a National Insurance number (NINO) as National Insurance numbers are issued to all non-UK nationals aged 16 or over working, planning to work legally or claim benefits in the UK, regardless of how long individuals intend to stay.

People applying to stay via the EU settlement scheme are usually from the following European Economic Area (EEA) countries

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, Switzerland.

People who were resident in the UK from these countries prior to Brexit will have applied for a right to reside and will be classed as Settled, Pre settled, or appealing the decision. If they are unable to provide their national insurance number or ECS declines their claim then they must prove which EU settlement status they currently hold with the home office, by giving us the share code - see section on UKVI account.

The EU Settlement Scheme is digital by default, meaning that applicants can only prove their status on-line. No other correspondence is sent out by the Home Office

Some people from outside of these countries (Non EEA) can also apply for a family permit to come to the UK and then apply to the EU settlement scheme. They must be the family member of someone from one of those listed countries or a family member of a British citizen. A family permit allows them to work or study for up to 6 months while applying to the EU settlement scheme but not claim means tested benefits. Their Visa/BRC card should say something along the lines of family permit/family member. Zambrano carers from non EEA areas with a residence card can also apply to the EU settlement scheme.

Once they have applied to the EU settlement scheme they will be given an application certificate first, and then one of three outcomes:

1. **Settled status:** This means that they can stay in the UK for as long as they wish. They have the same rights to work and claim benefits as a person born in the UK. They will therefore have a national insurance number and will need to be assessed for Free School meals via the ECS/normal route.
2. **Pre Settled Status:** Pre-settled status is a **grant of limited leave to remain for five years**. With pre settled status you can continue to live, work and study in the UK. They will therefore have a national insurance number and will first need to be assessed for Free School meals via the ECS/normal route.

At the point that pre-settled status is granted the applicant will usually also have a qualifying condition called a **“right to reside”** (see notes at end) and will be able to claim Universal Credit.

However this qualifying “right to reside” condition can be lost during the 5 year period if their circumstances change meaning their right to means tested benefits, like Universal Credit can also be lost (though they can continue to work, and claim non means tested benefits) If they have lost their right to reside provided we have proof of both pre settled status and **must also have the condition** “No right to reside” then we can treat the applicant as an NRPF and you should follow the NRPF application form route stating this as the reason.

Pre-settled status is digital only. The applicant does not have a stamp in their passport or a separate document from the Home Office. The status can be checked electronically using the UKVI (see appendix section). The applicant must have their mobile phone, access to email, and proof of identity. When the status is granted, the Home Office sends a confirmation email which can be printed out. No letters are sent to the applicant.

3. **Appealing/Awaiting EEA status:** Applicants can either appeal their EEA status decision if they have new evidence or they can ask for an administrative review if they have no different evidence but think the home office made an admin error.

Anyone who is awaiting a decision or an appeal for pre settled/settled status will have received a certificate of application to the EU Settlement Scheme, and their rights to work and claim benefits are protected. This protection will last until they get a decision on their application or the outcome of an administrative review or appeal. They can use their certificate of application to prove their rights in the UK, for example the right to work, rent, claim benefits, or use NHS services.

They can also claim UC provided they meet the right to reside criteria, and this will be paid until a decision is made.

Free school meal applications for European Area applicants

Almost all application for EU settlers should now have been resolved and they should have a National Insurance number and FSM should be applied for as normal.

If the applicant is appealing their EEA status or their circumstances change under Pre-Settled status then they should also have a National Insurance number to try and apply first using that, however in some cases they will have their right to reside in the UK withdrawn as part of the process, which will mean our system will decline the application. They may at this point meet the criteria to apply via the NRPF (No recourse to public funds) route. See section on NRPF.

No Recourse to Public Funds definition

Families in the UK with the immigration status of no recourse to public funds are not usually Asylum seekers (some exceptions see below) so we require a different set of proof for Free School meal claims for the following categories:

- Zambrano carers (A 'Zambrano' carer is a person from a **non-EEA state** whose residence is required in order to enable a child, who is British, to live in the UK)
- families who have no recourse to public funds who ALSO have a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights
- families receiving support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 who are ALSO subject to a no recourse to public funds restriction
- a subset of failed asylum seekers supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Chen carers
- families holding a BN(O) passport
- spousal visa holders
- work visa holders
- student visa holders
- those with no immigration status (for example – list not exhaustive
 - loss of right to reside
 - Maintenance undertaking - An adult dependent relative of a British citizen or person with settled status will have indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK with a prohibition on claiming public funds for a period of five years, although they may apply for non-means tested benefits during this period
 - Visa overstayer: A person who had leave to enter or remain in the UK for a limited period and has no current immigration permission because they did not make an application to extend their leave before their previous leave expired, or made an application which was refused after their previous leave expired)

A person is not usually classed as no recourse to public funds if they fall into the following categories (list not exhaustive): Indefinite leave to enter or remain, Right of abode, Exempt from immigration control, Refugee status, Humanitarian protection, Leave granted to a person who has received a conclusive grounds decision that they are a victim of trafficking or modern slavery.

Free school meal application for No Recourse to Public Funds families

For these families as well as proof of their immigration status stating No Recourse to Public Funds the government also requires that they prove household income (income of any kind not just earnings) of less than £22,700 for one child or £26,300 for 2 or more children. In addition to these thresholds, families must hold no more than £16,000 in capital and savings.

Due to the level of evidence required by the government for these categories applications for NRPF **must only be done** on the application form and must be supported by the evidence for the NRPF category which **must be uploaded securely by Anycomms**:

(Appendix 14)

The family may not wish to provide the financial evidence to you as a school and they can provide it directly to the local authority if they prefer. They can do this by post to:

Sheffield City Council
Fulfilment Team
Free School Meals
Floor 2 Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield
S1 2SH

or by email to customerservices@sheffield.gov.uk, clearly marked for the attention of Free School Meals

If they do provide the information to you - you **must use anycomms** to transfer the evidence to us securely.

Required evidence for NRPF category

Zambrano or Chen carers

In many (but not all) cases, the family will be able to show a derivative residence card. If they do not hold this, they must be able to show that:

- the carer or parent is not a British citizen
- the child is a British citizen
- the carer is a direct relative or legal guardian of the child, and they have the primary responsibility for the child
- there are no other members of the carers' family in the UK or the EEA who could look after the child

If the child is a UK citizen, a parent or parents with sole care of the child also have a right to reside and work in the UK

Article 8 of the ECHR

Families will be able to provide a letter from the Home Office granting them leave to remain in the UK or a biometric residence card.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989

Proof of NRPF on their visa card/UKVI account AND a section 17 letter from the Local Authority (we can check section17 internally if not available, but it will speed up the claim if it can be provided)

Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Families will be able to provide a letter from the Home Office or local authority confirming Section 4 support or an ASPEN card.

BN(O) passport holders

Families will be able to show either a BN(O) passport or visa.

Spouse, work or student visa holders

Families will be able to show their visa.

Those with no immigration status

This category is the category who are most likely to not be able to show something that states “No Recourse to Public Funds”. We will require a home office reference number as a minimum to investigate these with the home office.

Examples of evidence for Earnings and Savings

- Bank accounts for parents/guardians linked to this claim (including partner account if applicable). 3 Months statements if available. These must be formal printouts/statements from the bank.
(If there are large transactions on your statements, please provide explanation)
- Savings accounts statements
- Wage slips
- Letter from employer, with employer’s contact details/signature
- P60
- Certificate of sponsorship letter from their Country’s employer/university or Government

UKVI accounts

Certain asylum seekers or people here on immigration visas who have applied electronically have a digital immigration account called a UKVI account that they can use to keep a check on their immigration status for example while waiting for a section 95 or 98 to become a refugee status.

They'll have a UKVI account if they:

- applied to the EU Settlement Scheme
- applied for a visa and used the UK Immigration: ID Check app

They will not have a UKVI account if they went to a Visa Application Centre (VAC) or Service Support Centre (SSC) to prove their identity when applying for a visa.

– If they do they can log in and view/prove their asylum/NRPF status online via the following link

[View and prove your immigration status: get a share code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/view-and-prove-your-immigration-status-get-a-share-code)

Once in here they can create what's called a SHARE CODE – if they give you or the Local Authority that share code (it lasts for 90 days then expires and they have to reissue it) then we can also check their status online via the link below

[Check someone's immigration status: use their share code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/check-someone-s-immigration-status-use-their-share-code)

The status screen will show you if they are No Recourse to Public Funds or have been granted leave to remain in this country

Notes on eligibility to Right to Reside

The following EU residence rights will satisfy the right to reside test for all benefits:

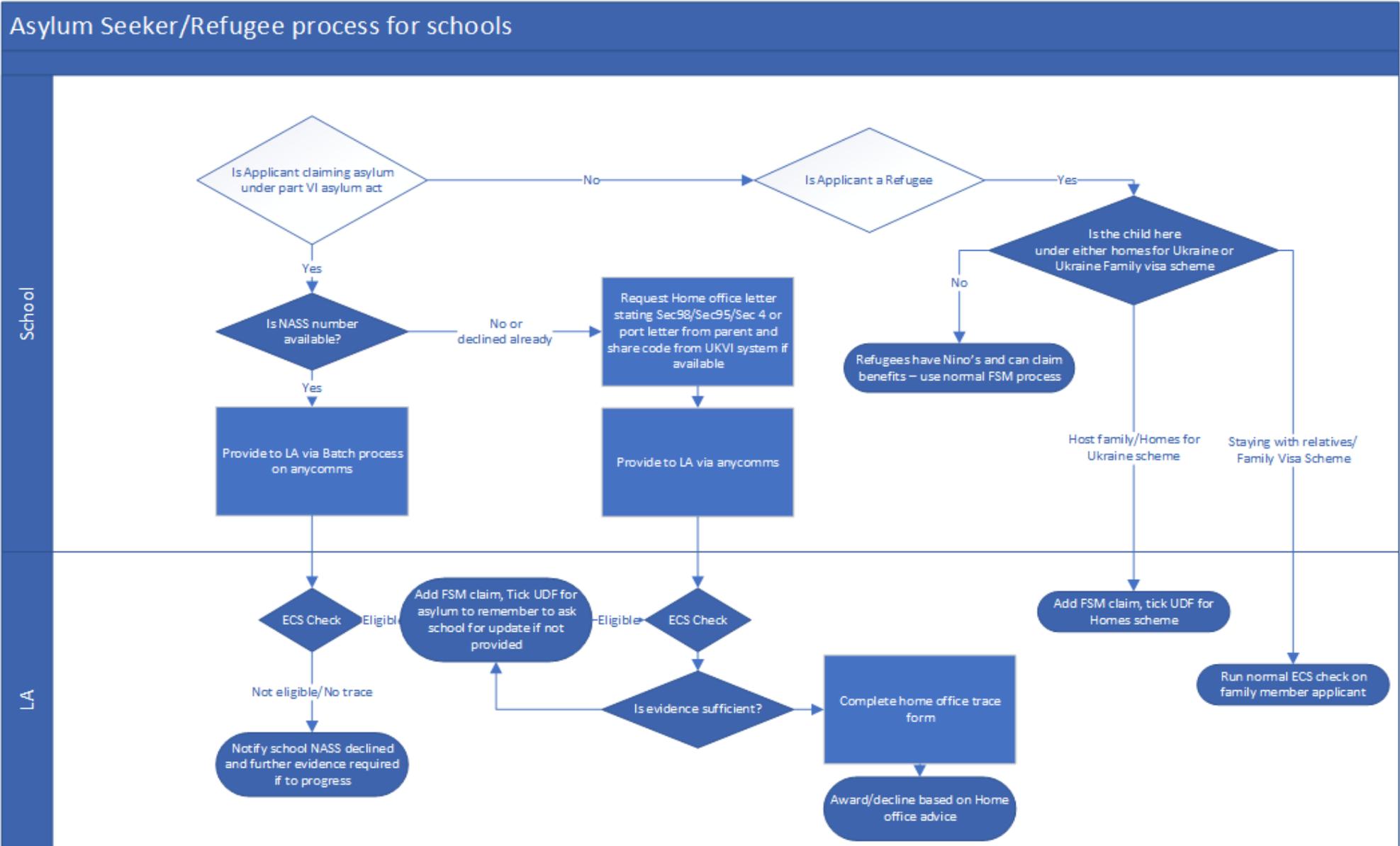
- Worker
- Self-employed person
- Retained status as a worker or self-employed person
- A student or self-sufficient person*
- Someone with a permanent right to reside after five years' residence*
- Someone with a permanent right to reside after less than five years due to retirement from work
- A family member of any of the above
- A person with a derivative right to reside, to protect the rights of children to stay in the UK, if they are not a Zambrano carer.

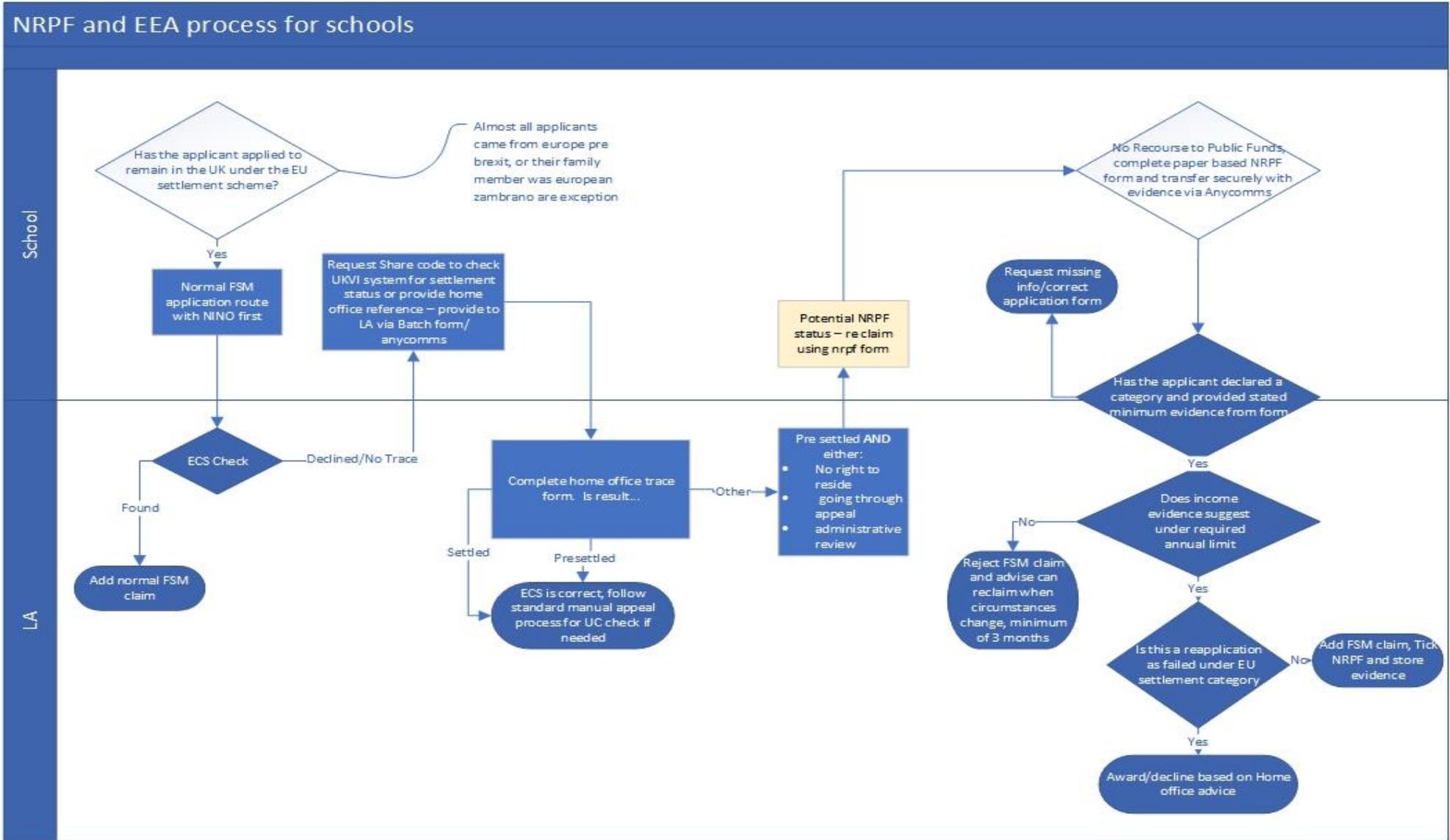
Please note: People in the groups with a * must also satisfy the habitual residence in fact test. Where the EEA national is required to satisfy the habitual residence test, so must their family member in cases where the family member is the benefit claimant or joint claimant.

The following EEA residence rights continue to satisfy the 'right to reside' test for some benefits but not Universal Credit:

- Jobseeker – someone who is entering the job market and has not yet found their first job. This does not satisfy the right to reside test for any benefits other than Child Benefit.
- A 'derivative' right to reside, to protect the rights of children to stay in the UK, if they are a Zambrano carer.

Asylum Seeker/Refugee process for schools





Appendix 14: Application form for free school meals from families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Please complete this application form if you are a family with NRPF and would like to apply for free school meals.

To complete this form, applicants **must** complete all sections and provide the evidence stated to support this application. **Forms received without the required evidence will be declined.**

When completed, please ensure the declaration at the end of the application is also signed. Further information relating to this extension can be found in the [free school meals guidance for schools and local authorities](#).

Free school meals can only be claimed by children who would normally be attending a Sheffield school, academy or full days at a Sheffield school nursery. Free school meals cannot be claimed for children attending childminders or private nurseries.

1. Child's details

Child's Last Name	Child's First Name	Date of Birth			Nationality	Address

2. Parent/carer's details

Parent / Guardian Details	PARENT/GUARDIAN 1			PARENT/GUARDIAN 2		
Last Name						
First Name						
Date of Birth						
Nationality						
Address						
National Insurance or NASS number if available						
Contact details if further evidence required						



3. Please tick the immigration category you are applying under.

- Zambrano
- Article 8 of the ECHR
- Section 4 of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
- Chen
- BN(O) Passport holder
- Spousal visa holder
- Work visa holder
- Student visa holder * **See next box**
- Section 17 AND additional proof of NRPF
- Other/ No Immigration Status ** **See next box**

<p>*If you ticked Student please explain on what grounds or exemptions you do not have funds to support your family as per your visa – https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/money</p> <p>**If you ticked “other” in the above section, please explain further here:</p>	
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3a. Please state what evidence you are attaching to this application for the category you selected in Question 3.

<p>Evidence provided for category in Q.3 (some examples (photocopy/scanned): Residence Card, BN(O) Visa, Student visa, UKVI Share code, Letter from Home Office.</p>	
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4. Evidence of earnings

To be eligible for free school meals, your families’ annual **household** income must be no higher than the following:

- £22,700 for families with one child
- £26,300 for families with two or more children

In addition to these thresholds, families must hold no more than £16,000 in capital and savings. Your household income includes any support from friends or family you may be receiving in addition to any earnings from employment.

You will need to evidence that your household has less income than the amounts stated above. We will use an average to estimate how much income you will have in a year from what you provide.

Please see the checklist on the next page for types of evidence we may need to see, please provide as much as you can to support your claim

Evidence checklist – examples that should be provided if they apply to your family

- Bank accounts for parents/guardians linked to this claim (including partner account if applicable). 3 Months statements if available. These must be formal printouts/statements from the bank

(If there are large transactions on your statements, please provide explanation)
- Savings accounts statements
- Wage slips
- Letter from employer, with employer’s contact details/signature
- Certificate of sponsorship letter from your Country’s employer/university or Govt

Are you employed?	
If you have a partner, are they employed	
Is your annual household income, including earnings from employment and any wider support you may be receiving, less than the maximum income thresholds listed above?	
Evidence of financials provided: Please list what you are sending in with this form. See list below declaration. It should be evident how you are supporting your family, for example food/rent/housing	

Declaration of applicant

Declaration – please tick each statement as correct before signing.

- The information I have given on this form is complete and accurate.
- I have submitted a full picture of my household income, and there are no additional bank/savings accounts for myself/a partner that I have not provided.
- I understand that my personal information is held securely and agree to the Local Authority using this information to process my application for free school meals.
- I agree to notify the Local authority in writing if the person claiming for this child/children no longer has responsibility for the child.
- I understand further details about how the council process my data can be found here <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/utilities/footer-links/privacy-notice>

Print name

Signature of parent/guardian:

Date:



