

REGISTERING FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The government will continue to provide schools with additional funding to support or enhance the learning of pupils who are currently or have been entitled to FSM under the standard 'benefit criteria' within the last six years. It is essential that parents/guardians apply, even if the pupil does not wish to receive a free school meal.

Please register to make sure your child does not miss out.

How does it work?

1. First, check if you qualify – it is not just if you are unemployed, so please look at the list below.
2. Registering is really quick and easy – if you think you qualify, contact Luton Borough Council and complete a simple online form to register: www.luton.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals. The Borough Council aims to assess your claim within 5-10 working days.

Do you qualify?

Parents/guardians must be in receipt of one of the following benefits to qualify for Free School Meals (FSM):

- Income Support or Jobseekers allowance
- Income-based Employment and Support allowance
- Child Tax Credit and not receiving a Working Tax Credit and have a household income of less than £16,190
- Guarantee Pension Credit.
- Support from National Asylum Support Service
- Universal Credit.

Claimants in receipt of Working Tax Credit are not eligible for FSM unless these payments are due to end after a four week run on period, usually after becoming unemployed or reducing the number of hours worked.

Please note: only the benefits listed above qualify for FSM.

If you've recently become unemployed but are still receiving Working Tax Credits, you may be entitled to FSM. Please call us on **01582 510346** for advice on the working tax credit run on.

Children aged three and above must attend the nursery before and after lunch to qualify for FSM.

If your child attends a school or Luton Sixth Form College after the age of 16 they'll still be able to have FSM (provided you are still eligible).

No one will know you have registered and it will not affect any other benefits you are claiming.

Universal Credit and transitional protection

From 1st April 2018 the eligibility criteria has changed for customers who receive Universal Credit. Transitional protection has been agreed to protect pupils that would have lost their FSM entitlement as a result of the change in the qualifying criteria.

- Any pupil eligible for FSM at the point an earned income threshold is introduced (i.e. eligible before 1st April 2018) will retain their eligibility until the end of the rollout of Universal Credit (March 2023), regardless of whether their circumstances change.
- Any pupil who becomes eligible under the amended criteria during the rollout of Universal Credit (from 1st April 2018 to March 2023) will retain their eligibility until the end of the Universal Credit rollout, regardless of whether their circumstances change.
- Once the rollout of Universal Credit has been completed, any losing pupil will continue to be transitionally protected until the end of their current phase of education e.g. primary/secondary.

How often do I need to apply?

As soon as you start to receive one of the qualifying benefits you should apply for free school meals. You will not need to reapply every term and your child will continue to receive free meals until you are told otherwise.

I do not live in Luton but my child attends a Luton school, which council do I apply to for free school meals?

You need to apply to us, using the form at www.luton.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals.

What happens once I have completed the online form?

- When Luton Borough Council receives your free school meals application form, your eligibility will be checked online.
- If you qualify for a Free School Meal under the benefit criteria, a letter will be sent to you confirming your Free School Meal Award.
- Your child or children's school will also be informed.
- Free School Meals cannot be granted to any child until Luton Borough Council has received a correctly completed form.
- Entitlement to free school meals cannot be backdated.

Who notifies the school if my child qualifies for free school meals?

Luton Borough Council will check if your child is entitled to free school meals and will tell the school on your behalf.

Will I receive money to pay for the school meal?

No. If your child qualifies for free school meals, the school will be told and will organise provision of the meal by Catering Services.

Can a packed lunch be provided instead of a meal?

Sandwiches and wraps are available as part of your son/daughter's free school meal entitlement. Packed lunches are provided for those children entitled to free school meals when they are off the school premises attending any school excursions or taking part in activities/clubs during the lunch break.

Who will know that my child is receiving a free school meal?

You, the school and Luton Borough Council. Lealands High School wants to ensure children who are entitled to a free school meal can enjoy it without fear of embarrassment.

What if my child goes to college?

If your child leaves school and goes to a college or an independent training provider there are other funds which you may be able to access.

The government has a scheme called the [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) to support young people to stay in education. There are certain groups that will be entitled to the full £1,200 bursary per year.

These are:

- young people in care
- care leavers
- young people in receipt of Income Support
- disabled young people in receipt of ESA who are also in receipt of DLA

Colleges use their discretion to make awards to other young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of their students. Bursary awards will be targeted towards young people facing financial barriers to stay on in education.

You need to discuss this with the college you are going to attend as they hold the bursary and will be able to advise you if you are eligible for help.

If you received FSM at school it is likely you will be able to get money from this fund. You can use this money for meals, but you may receive sufficient funds to cover cost to cover costs of transport, books and equipment.

What happens if my circumstances change?

Please contact Free School Meals at Luton Borough Council on 01582 510346 immediately if you're no longer in receipt of the qualifying benefits listed above.

Also please notify us if:

- there is a change of address
- your child changes school or leaves during the school year

What if I disagree with the outcome of my claim?

If you receive an outcome you are not happy with, for example advising you that your child or children are not entitled to FSM, and you believe the decision needs reviewing, then please contact Free School Meals at Luton Borough Council on 01582 510346 **within one month from the date of our notification letter.**

Please tell us why you think you should be entitled and provide up to date proof of income such as child tax credit or other benefit award letters (documents and letters older than three months are not acceptable).