

## **Changes to free school meal entitlement - universal credit rollout**

From April 2018 the criteria used to determine which pupils are eligible for free school meals was updated to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit and the phasing out of other income-based benefits.

### **Transitional protection**

To ensure families are not disadvantaged during this rollout, protection arrangements have been put in place.

This means that:

- Any child eligible for free school meals on 31 March 2018 will retain their eligibility until the end of the rollout, March 2022 regardless of whether their circumstances change.
- Any child who becomes eligible during the rollout of universal credit (from 1 April 2018 to March 2022) will retain their eligibility until the end of the rollout, March 2022 regardless of whether their circumstances change.
- Once the rollout of universal credit is complete, no child will lose their entitlement and will continue to be transitionally protected until the end of their current phase of education.

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal when a claim for the meal has been made on their behalf and Nottinghamshire County Council has verified their eligibility. NCC will continue to use the DfE Eligibility Checking System (ECS) to determine eligibility for free school meals.

**Transitional protection is on an individual child basis and not on a family basis. This means that other children in the family will not automatically be entitled to free school meals. Children must meet the eligibility criteria at the time the application for free school meals is made in order to be entitled.**

### **Applying for free school meals**

NCC encourages all eligible families to claim their free school meals. The best way to apply is online through NCC public website or by telephoning 0300 500 80 80.

### **Children moving to/from Nottinghamshire schools**

Children moving to a Nottinghamshire school who are covered by transitional protection will still need to apply to NCC to ensure that their free school meal eligibility is continued. Parents may be required to provide evidence of their transitional protection. For children leaving Nottinghamshire schools who are eligible, NCC will indicate in the stop letter to parents that their entitlement is covered by transitional protection.

### **Reports**

All free school meals reports on the schools portal have been updated to reflect this new status.

## Free school meals eligibility criteria

Children may qualify for free school meals if they attend a Nottinghamshire County Council School and the parent/carer receives one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after the person stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual income of no more than £16,190

Children who receive income support or income related employment support allowance in their own right are also eligible to receive free school meals (this situation often applies to post-16 pupils in special schools).

## Free school milk

The eligibility criteria for free milk entitlement is exactly the same as for FSM. Where LAs or schools provide milk, it must be free to children whose parents are in receipt of the same support payments as for FSM.

**Universal infant meals** - all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools are entitled to receive a school meal.

**Parents receiving one of the above benefits should register for free school meals even if their child is in reception, year 1 or year 2 – this will support schools pupil premium allocation.**

It is important that all parents who receive one of the benefits listed above register for free school meals as this will enable the child's school to claim pupil premium allocation. The pupil premium is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise attainment.

Currently the pupil premium allocations are:

- £1,320 for each eligible primary-aged pupil
- £935 for each eligible secondary-aged pupil

## Registering for free school meals

**Register online by visiting [the public website](#). The information needed to register includes:**

- personal details (including national insurance number and date of birth) for the parent/carer
- child's details in full including their date of birth and the school they attend

If eligible for free school meals and/or milk the start date will normally be within two days of parents contacting us and entitlement being verified. We will also write to confirm the date the child's free school meals and milk will start.

Children transferring between Nottinghamshire schools do not need to reapply. Children will continue to receive free school meals and milk while parents are receiving the qualifying benefit or until the end of transitional protection (31 March 2022).

If parents are unable to apply online they should contact us on 0300 500 80 80.