

# Free School Meals

## Frequently Asked Questions

You may be aware that some families are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals.

We are mindful that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant financial impact on families. Therefore, some families may now be considering making an application who previously hadn't. We would like to take this opportunity to remind all parents and carers of the eligibility criteria, and answer some common questions around both types of Free School Meals.

### What does 'Universal Infant Free School Meals' mean?

**Every child**, regardless of their family financial situation, is eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals whilst they are in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. This means a meal will be provided for your child every day, free of charge, unless you tell us you do not want this (opt out). If you opt out of this scheme or choose to only have the meals on selected days, you would need to provide a packed lunch for your child on the days you opt out.

In addition to Universal Infant Free School Meals, some families may also be eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals.

### What does 'Benefits-related Free School Meals' mean?

Benefits-related Free School Meals are available to any pupil in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- *Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)*
- *Income Support*
- *Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance*
- *Income-related Employment and Support Allowance*
- *Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*
- *The guaranteed element of state Pension Credit*
- *Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more £16,190)*
- *Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.*

### What is 'Pupil Premium Grant'?

If you are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals, the school can claim 'Pupil Premium' funding for your child. This grant is **£1,385** per year for every child who claims benefits-related Free School Meals, which we can then invest in providing extra support for your child in school.

If your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2, we encourage you to apply for benefits-related Free School Meals if you think you meet the criteria, as this enables us to claim the Pupil Premium Grant for your child (as we cannot claim Pupil Premium for Universal Infant Free School Meals).

The main message is that even if your child does not want to have hot lunches in school, the fact that they are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals means we can claim the Pupil Premium Grant, but we can only do this if you make a formal benefits-related Free School Meals application.

### **What if I am eligible but my child does not want to have hot dinners?**

If your child is eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals, **they do not have to eat hot dinners**. It is your choice whether you opt to have the meals for your child. Your child may want to have hot meals on certain days, this is completely fine too. However, please note that if you are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals and you choose not to take the hot meals on any given day, you would need to provide a packed lunch for your child on those days.

### **How can I apply?**

The application is quick and easy. Use the link below to make an application. You will then be notified if your child is eligible, and we will receive notification also.

[WSCC Free School Meals Application](#)

A paper form is also available on request from the school office.

### **Will I need to reapply?**

If your child is eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals, they will remain eligible until they finish the phase of schooling (primary or secondary) they are in on 31 March 2023. You will need to re-apply when your child moves from primary to secondary school.

### **If I apply, will this impact my existing benefits?**

Eligibility for benefits-related Free School Meals **is in addition to** any existing benefits and will not affect any benefits you may already be entitled to.

### **Free Jumper or Cardigan if you are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals:**

We offer one free school jumper or cardigan per year to any child entitled to benefits-related Free School Meals. A voucher will be issued to you which can be redeemed at JW Sports in Bognor Regis.

Eligibility for benefits-related Free School Meals may also mean you are eligible for other discounts and offers.

If you have any questions please do contact the school office.