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Dear Parent/Carer,

**If you register your child for FREE SCHOOL MEALS, it means that you save money ..... and the school gets extra money too.**

**Please register now to make sure we don't both miss out!**

In this booklet we have included some "Frequently Asked Questions" about Free School Meals.

Alternatively go on-line and apply immediately by visiting:

[www.camden.gov.uk/pupilbenefits](http://www.camden.gov.uk/pupilbenefits)

or

telephone the **free schools meals team** on 020 7974 5771

If you would like a paper copy of the free school meals application form, please ask at the school office.

Thank you.



## Frequently asked questions

### **What happens after I make my application?**

We will let you and the school know whether or not your children are entitled to free school meals.

We may also contact you if we need further information to process your application.

### **How long will it take?**

#### **If you apply online**

We will process your application and let the school know whether or not your child is entitled within 3 working days.

If you supply an email address you will normally get an email confirming whether or not you are entitled within 3 working days.

If you do not have an email address we will send you a letter confirming your entitlement.

#### **If you send in a paper form (Copies available from school reception)**

We will process your application and let the school know whether or not your child is entitled within 10 working days of receiving your application. We will also send you a letter confirming your entitlement.

### **Do you need proof of my benefit?**

Under the new scheme you will no longer have to provide proof of the benefit you are receiving as we will be able to check this against information held by our benefits service and the Department for Education.

If our checks indicate that you are not entitled to free school meals we will let you know.

If you think that you should be entitled we may have to ask for proof of the benefit you are receiving so that we can check that the details we hold are correct.

### **What if my circumstances change?**

If you have been refused free school meals and your circumstances change within a year you do not need to reapply - contact the free school meals team and we will check your eligibility again.

If you start work, start to receive Working Tax Credit, stop receiving one of the qualifying benefits, or move, you must notify us as soon as possible.

### **Backdating your claim**

It is important that you apply as soon as possible as we are unable to backdate claims for free school meals to cover unpaid dinner money, or to refund dinner money paid prior to the date of a successful application.

### **What if I want to apply for another child?**

If you have another child starting school in Camden and you want to apply for free school meals for them as well you do not need to complete a new form -contact the free school meals team and give details of the new child. We will then confirm your free school meal eligibility with the school.

### **What if my child changes school?**

#### **If your child is changing schools within Camden**

You do not have to reapply for free school meals, just contact the free school meals team and give details of the new school and we will let the new school know if your child is entitled to free school meals

#### **If your child is moving to a school outside Camden**

Local authorities deal with free school meals in different ways so you should contact the school your child is going to go to and ask them how to apply for free school meals in their local authority.

### **Do I have to renew my claim?**

No, while your child attends a school in Camden you will only have to make one claim for the whole time you are entitled to free school meals.

This is because our benefits service has taken over the administration of free school meals and will check your entitlement against information held by the Department for Education.

We will do this on a regular basis without you having to renew your application every year or having to provide proof of your entitlement.

## **Who gets free school meals?**

Once your child has a full-time school place you can apply for free school meals for them if you receive the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income-based Employment and support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit with a taxable income of no more than £16,190 and not in receipt of Working Tax Credit
- The Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit.
- Support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS)

## **Working Tax Credit (WTC) special circumstances**

If you are receiving Working Tax Credit you will not be entitled to free school meals unless you are still getting WTC because you:

- have stopped work in the last four weeks; or
- reduced your hours to less than 16 hours in the last four weeks

If this applies to you please contact the free school meals team as soon as possible for further advice

## **Young people getting benefits**

Young people in receipt of Income Support and Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA) in their own right are also entitled to free school meals.

If you think you are entitled to free school meals it is very important that you apply for them even if your child eats a packed lunch. This is because the amount of money a school receives from central government is dependent on the number of children entitled to free school meals.

## **Contact**

For more information please [contact the free school meals team](#)