

# Apply for free school meals

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- 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 Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit. Provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run on. Paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit. If you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year. This should be after tax and not including any benefits you get

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

Your child may also get free school meals if you get any of these benefits and your child is both:

- younger than the [compulsory age for starting school](#)
- in full time education

If you do not qualify for most benefits your child may still be eligible for free school meals. This is known as having 'no recourse to public funds'.

Schools do not see any specific information about your income. They are not told about the benefits you receive.

**Apply now**

## Before you start

You will need:

- your National Insurance number
- Asylum Seekers Service number

You may also need to upload your benefit documents to prove your entitlement.

If one or more of your children already receive school meals and you have a younger child starting school, you will need to apply for that child.

We will let you know quickly if you qualify for free school meals. We will send you a confirmation email within 10 working days.

All pupils approved for free school meals will be eligible until at least 31 March 2025. After that they will remain eligible until they finish the school phase they are in (for example, primary or secondary).

## Universal infant free school meals in England

All children automatically get free school meals if they are in:

- reception class
- year 1
- year 2

If you feel you receive any of the qualifying benefits please still apply for free school meals when you enrol your child in school. This will ensure you don't miss out on additional support, such as:

- free holiday activities
- holiday food vouchers

Your child's school can also get extra funding if you are approved. We call this pupil premium.

## Pupil premium

The [pupil premium grant](#) is government funding paid to schools. This happens when a pupil is approved for free school meals. Schools decide the best way to spend this funding. They will look at how to improve educational outcomes for pupils.

If you do not want free school meals for your child but you receive one of the qualifying benefits, you can still [apply for free school meals](#). You do not have to order the meals if you don't want to. This will ensure that your child's school will get the funding to support your child.

## Holiday activities and food

If your child is eligible for benefit related free school meals, they can also join our free holiday activities. The activities run during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. They will also get a free midday meal whilst at the club.

[Sign-up to get your passcode](#) and news about upcoming events and activities.

## Contact us

### Free school meals team

Email: [freeschoolmeals@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:freeschoolmeals@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

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[Full contact details](#)

