

FREE SCHOOL MEALS



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1. Eligibility Criteria

Free school meals are granted to students of statutory school age, and also to Post 16 students studying at school (but not at an FE college). Nursery age children qualify for assistance if they are in a Local Authority funded place and attend both a morning and afternoon session.

Families qualify for free school meals if they are in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit only (with no Working Tax Credit **and** an annual income not exceeding £16,190)
- Guarantee element of pension credit
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- Pupils who receive income support in their own right are also entitled to receive free school meals.

2. Application Process

The application for free school meals is made through the school. The parent will be asked to complete a form (example attached).

The school then provide us with the information we require to complete an online check with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). This is the National Insurance Number, parent's date of birth and their last name.

The information is uploaded to the DWP and we receive a return to say whether or not the claimant has been found on the database. If the claimant is found, we notify the school within 24 hours that the pupil is eligible. Should the claimant be 'not found' on the DWP system the parent is asked to provide paper based proof of entitlement to benefit to support their claim. School administrators can authorise a claim for free meals when they have verified the evidence, so the child can receive a free meal on that day.

The application form is also available on the PCC website.

Renewals are undertaken on an annual basis using the parent's details that are held on the PCC database. A parent will only be asked to submit further paper evidence if they are shown as 'not found' on the DWP system.

3. Publicity

The Education Catering Service produce menus twice yearly and these have information on the back informing parents how to apply for free school meals.

Information is also available on the PCC website:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/education/schools/schoolmeals/freemeals.htm>

4. Numbers Entitled

There are currently 6,313 children eligible for free school meals attending Plymouth Schools. This number will increase over the next few weeks as new primary school starters will make their applications. (This number excludes pupils attending Plymstock School, Coombe Dean School and Oreston Primary School, who have purchased the checking service through a different authority).

A summary list is attached showing the breakdown between schools.

Julie Roantree

Principal Transport & Allowances Officer

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