

Free school meals eligibility checking 2020 - 21

Universal Credit is a benefit for people of working age on a low income, which is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It's a single monthly payment which will gradually replace the following benefits with a few exceptions:

- Income support
- Income related job seeker's allowance
- Income related employment support allowance
- Housing benefit
- Working tax credit/Child tax credit

Free school meals eligibility

New claimants earning under the threshold and receiving Universal Credit, will be eligible for free school meals. New claimants earning above the threshold after April 2018, will not be eligible for free school meals.

Threshold amount

Annual net earned income threshold of £7,400 per household

Please see the following link for further information <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

Transitional protection for pupils receiving free school meals

To ensure that existing recipients of free school meals do not lose entitlement. Pupils will be protected until 31 March 2022, because of the change in the qualifying criteria of Universal Credit.

- From April 2018, any pupil eligible for free school meals before 1 April 2018 will keep their entitlement until 31 March 2022, even if their parent's circumstances changes
- In addition, any pupil gaining eligibility for free school meals during the rollout of Universal Credit will keep their eligibility until 31 March 2022
- Once the rollout of Universal Credit has been completed (31 March 2022) any losing pupil will continue to be transitionally protected until the end of their current phase of education eg primary/secondary
- Schools should flag pupils as "protected pupils" in their management information systems as this will be needed for school data collections.

All protected pupils will be identified on schools' free school meals list. Please note due to the transitional protection, eligibility for free school meals will now be pupil based and no longer family based and you may have cases of one sibling entitled to free school meals and the other not.