**Free School Meals Information**

This information is for you if your child or children are currently eligible, or may be eligible, for free school meals under the benefit criteria.

**Who can get free school meals**

If your child attends a state school, and you get one or more of the following you can get free school meals:

* Universal Credit, and your annual household income is £7,400 per annum (£616 per month) or less after tax, and not including any benefits.
* Income Support
* Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
* Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999
* Child Tax Credit, provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and your annual income is less than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC
* Guaranteed Pension Credit
* Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
* Working Tax Credit run-on paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

**What do you need to do**

Worcestershire Children First are inviting you to use the self-service process to manage free school meals applications and keep you up to date with any changes.

The system uses the same portal you used to apply for your child’s school place. You should use your admission application login details on the Citizen Portal to apply for Free School Meals.

If you do not currently have a Citizen Portal account, please follow the on-screen instructions to register an account.

**You can access the Citizen Portal to apply online using this link:** <https://emsi.worcestershire.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en>

**After you have completed your application**

* Once you have applied, you will receive a confirmation message that your application has been received and is being processed. You will then receive further notifications via the Citizen Portal as your application progresses.
* Your eligibility for free school meals will be checked using the Government’s automated Eligibility Checking System (ECS) checker the application is processed by the Free School Meal team
* If you qualify for a free school meal a message will be sent to you confirming your free school meal award and your child or children's school will be contacted

**Please note -** free school meals cannot be granted to any child until we have received a correctly completed application and entitlement to free school meals cannot be backdated

**Question? - My circumstances have changed, does my child continue to get free school meals**

If your child has free school meals, and you no longer receive benefits or there is a change in your immigration status, your child can still have a free school meal until the end of the Universal Credit Roll Out.

The Government has said this will be no earlier than July 2025 for the protection period to end. This could be longer and will depend on when your child moves up to the next stage of education. After July 2025 or your child moving up to the next stage of education whichever is later, your free school meals should continue unless your finances change.

We are unable to add any further siblings when you are no longer eligible under of the above criteria, however all children in Key Stage 1 children (those in reception, year 1 and year 2) will receive a Universal Infant Free School Meal regardless of any change of circumstances including economic or immigration status.

For claims made on our portal, we use the Eligibility Checking System provided by the Department for Education to reconfirm your economic entitlement. We will send you messages if there are any changes to your child's status.

Please note the online checking system only confirms or denies your eligibility to claim free school meals: it does not give us any other information. If we cannot confirm your entitlement through this process, we will contact you to ask you to provide up-to-date evidence of the benefit you receive

**Any questions or concerns**

If you have any questions or comments about the process, please contact the Free School Meal team via [freeschoolmeals@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:freeschoolmeals@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk)