



## Free School Meals



### **Who qualifies for free school meals**

Your child may qualify for free school meals if you receive any of these benefits:

- 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; this is as long as you're not entitled to Working Tax Credit and your annual gross income is no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' payment (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit: this is as long as your household income is less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

The school doesn't see any specific information about your income or the benefits you receive. Children who are paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

### **Apply for free school meals**

The application should only take a few minutes to complete. Dorset Council will need your National Insurance number or Asylum Seekers Service number so they can make automated checks to confirm your entitlement. You may still have to upload your benefit documents to prove your entitlement. Dorset Council will let you know straight away if you qualify for free school meals and will send you a confirmation email shortly after. You can access the Dorset For You website using the following link: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/education-and-training/schools-and-learning/at-school/free-school-meals>

If one of your children has just started school and their siblings already get free school meals, you will need to reapply, so that they can add them to the award.

From 31 March 2022, any child receiving free school meals will remain eligible until they have finished that school phase, for example, a child in reception on 31 March 2022 would remain eligible until they finish primary school in 2028. This protection has been put in place while the government rolls out Universal Credits nationally.

### **Universal infant free school meals**

Your child can get free school meals if they're in:

- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 2

However, if you receive any qualifying benefits, you should complete a free school meal application anyway, even if your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2. This has no effect on your entitlement, but it could provide extra funding for your school. This extra funding is called pupil premium, please see our Pupil Premium Information Document for further information.