



## ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

All children aged 3 to 18 at Derbyshire nurseries or schools can get a free meal if they qualify.

### Qualifying criteria

- Universal Credit, provided they have an annual net earned income not exceeding £7,400 (£616.67 per month)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State 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) as assessed by HMRC
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

Universal Credit has begun to be rolled out in Derbyshire and will affect all areas of Derbyshire by the end of 2022. Most families will not be affected by the new criteria. Families who are currently claiming free school meals, but fail to meet the new criteria, will continue to receive free school meals until the end of the Universal Credit rollout period, even if they continue to appear as no longer eligible on future reports. The rollout period is currently scheduled to end in March 2022.

Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, pupils will keep their free school meal entitlement until the end of their current phase of education, that is, primary or secondary.

Read more about free school meals guidance for schools and local authorities at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities>

Young people age 16 to 18 who receive the benefits or tax credits in their own right are also entitled to receive free school meals.

Even if you meet any or all of the criteria, families will not be eligible if they are claiming Working Tax Credit.

### Applying for free school meals

You can sign up for free school meals at any time of year. Follow this link to apply for free school meals <https://apps.derbyshire.gov.uk/applications/formBuilder/free-school-meals/7471C40D-CA68-4B81-AA2D-32DCDA60CCC0>

You or your partner can claim for your children, as long as you live at the same address.

You do not have to fill in a separate form for each child, even if they go to different schools. Just name the child and which school they go to.

If another of your children starts school and one of your children already has free school meals, Derbyshire County Council can add them to the application you already have. Just call the free school meals team Tel: 01629 536400 or 01629 536481.

### **After you've applied**

After you've applied for free school meals Derbyshire County Council will email you to let you know if your application has been processed and the outcome of the eligibility check.

### **If your child qualifies for free school meals**

For secondary school children Derbyshire County Council will notify you by email or letter within a week of you filling out the online application to let you know. Your child or children can then get their free school lunch straight away. The system for paying for school meals varies at each secondary school. Some have a cashless system, and if they do, your child will be provided with an account which will be credited daily with a specific amount of money which will be sufficient to buy a main course, pudding and drink. If you are unsure of what your child needs to do at lunchtime please ask your school office and they will be able to help.

Your application will last throughout the entire school life of your children.

If your circumstances change or you stop getting some benefits, you must contact us, Tel: 01629 536481.

Please let Derbyshire County Council know about any changes since you applied, like a change of address or school.

### **If your child does not qualify**

If your child does not qualify for free school meals Derbyshire County Council will notify you by email or letter within 2 weeks of you filling out the online application.

If you believe that you should receive free school meals the notification will explain how you can appeal. This will normally mean you will have to send Derbyshire County Council supporting documents like a letter from the benefits office confirming your benefits or a Child Tax Credit award notice. If you do this Derbyshire County Council will look at your application again.

**If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Jacqui Fischer at Brookfield Community School on 01246 568115**