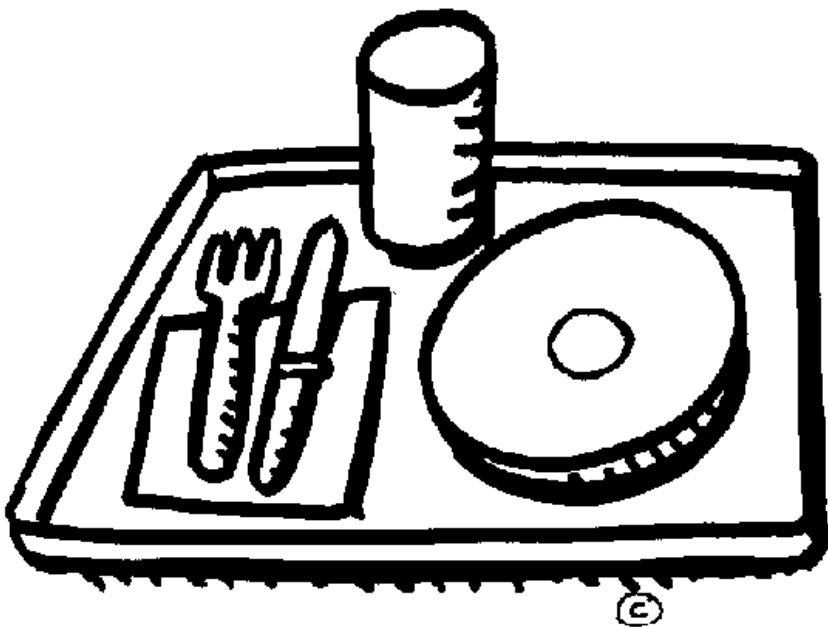


A parent's guide to

Free  
School  
Meals



## **The Benefits of a School Meal**

In Birmingham over 75,000 school meals are served each day!

Did you know that Birmingham school meals service:

- uses prime, fresh ingredients in all our kitchens using healthier cooking methods;
- uses more seasonal fruit and vegetables in menus;
- trains all cooks to cook from scratch using fresh, raw ingredients;
- does not add salt to any dish;

## **Free School Meals**

Parents claiming some benefits can also claim free school meals for any of their children who are registered at a Birmingham school. Free School Meals is a benefit awarded in respect of children under the age of 19 where the parent or guardian is in receipt of certain benefits (listed below)

School meals are a good way to make sure that your child eats well at lunchtime. They are healthy and nutritious, and there is a good selection of hot food for your child to choose from. By claiming free school meals you save yourself time and money. Even if you don't want your children to have the meals, filling in the form to claim them anyway helps the school, as the more eligible parents who claim meals, the more funding the school receives, and this can only benefit your children.

## **Who can get Free School Meals?**

You can claim free school meals for your children if you receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Related Only Employment and Support Allowance.
- Child Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £16,040.
- The 'Guarantee' element of State Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. *(Please see the back page about how to claim in this case)*

## **I receive Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, am I entitled to Free School Meals?**

No. **Anyone receiving Working Tax Credit regardless of income does not qualify.** The money which you receive each week through the Working Tax Credit benefit includes an amount to cover the cost of School Meals. This means that you do not qualify for a free meal if you receive it.

By Law, no other category of support payment or combination of Tax Credits qualify for free school meals. Similarly, there are no other circumstances that can legally justify the provision of a free meal.

## **How do I apply?**

Just ask at school. They should be able to give you a form to fill in. You should complete the form in full, filling in the names of all of the children you want to claim for, and return it to school.

## **Important**

To be able to process your application we need to see proof of which benefit you get. When you send in your form please also send us a copy of one of the following:

- A recent letter from the Benefits Agency giving details of what you receive i.e. Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance or Income Related Only Employment and Support Allowance
- A full copy of the 'statement of benefit' form you will receive if you get child tax credit
- Your Pension Credit Award Notice.

Some people have their benefits paid straight into their bank accounts and may not have a recent letter from the benefits agency. In this case please contact the Benefits Agency for a statement of confirmation or ask the Job Centre to stamp your application form in the place provided. We cannot accept bank statements as proof of entitlement, as they do not detail your benefit awards.

## What happens then?

Bring your completed application form, together with proof of eligibility, into the school office, and we will commence the free school meals as soon as is practical.

Free School Meals cannot be granted to any child until either the school or ourselves have received a correctly completed form together with the correct proof of benefit.

**Entitlement to free school meals can not be backdated**

## What do I do to maintain my claim for Free School Meals?

Your claim will be reviewed on a regular basis. We will ask you to complete a new form and provide up to date proof of eligibility.

## What if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, for example, you start work or your income changes, or if you become entitled to working tax credit, you must inform us straight away. You will be required to pay for your school meals from the date that your circumstances change, so telling us as soon as possible will help to avoid you running up a big debt. It is an offence to claim free school meals if you are not entitled to, and to give false information or to fail to disclose a change in your circumstances

## The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

If you are receiving support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 please come into school or contact us on the number below and we will give you more details of how to claim free meals for your children.

## Further information

If you would like to apply for free school meals or if you have any questions regarding your entitlement, please come into school and see Mrs Watchorn, or call us on 0121 464 8140

