

Guidance on Free School Meals

Reading Borough Council has a legal duty to ensure that funds are not misappropriated. It is the duty of the school (where the Electronic Checking Service is not being used) to check the eligibility of children for whom FSM are being claimed.

Eligibility Criteria

As of 6th April 2011

Free school meals are available to children whose parents are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- An income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190 (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
- or
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

will be entitled to receive free school meals.

In addition to the above

- Proof of **Parent / Legal Carer status** if making a claim under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999,

Receipt of Working Tax Credit does not meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals with the exception of:

- *where a parent is entitled to Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after their employment ceases, or after they start to work less than 16 hours per week, their children are entitled to free school lunches.*

Eligibility must be checked each term

Process

1. An **application** form is to be completed and must include the name of each child who is eligible for FSMs. See eligibility criteria, (also available at www.teachernet.gov.uk) Forms are available to download from the RBC Website: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/schoolmeals>
2. Copies of **evidence** used in support of the claim are to be taken.
 - See table overleaf for required forms of evidence acceptable in support of the claim

Providing evidence to support the claim

Criteria	Documentary evidence
Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A recent letter or bank statement, less than one year old, confirming the applicant's entitlement to either Income Support or Income-based Job Seekers Allowance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letter and /or statement must show the current name and address. ▪ Bank statement must record the payment as 'DWP I/S' <p>www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</p>
Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A copy of Tax Award Credit Notice (Form TC 602, Final Award Notice - 2010/11) from the Inland Revenue that confirms the household's entitlement to Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by Her Majesty's office Revenue and Customs) that as of 6 April 2011 does not exceed £16,190 <p>Note: within Working Tax Credit there is an element for child care. This element forms part of WTC and therefore precludes entitlement to claim FSM with the exception of where this is paid for the first four weeks of unemployment before transferring to other benefits.</p> <p>www.hmrc.gov.uk</p>
Guarantee element of State Pension Credit:	<p>Pension Credit Award Credit Notice (M1000) from The Pensions Service, which is less than a year old and must clearly state the Guarantee element</p> <p>www.thepensionservice.gov.uk</p>
Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 AND Parent / Legal Carer status	<p>www.asylumsupport.info/nass.htm</p> <p>www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2002/20020041.htm</p>

You will need to confirm asylum seeker status and your legal responsibility for the child/children. Acceptable forms of evidence are:

Evidence of Asylum Seeker status

- Home Office documentation confirming Asylum Seeker status and Port of Entry and/or Home Office reference number,
OR
- If applicable, National Asylum Support Service (NASS) documentation including reference,
AND

Parent / Legal Carer status

- Evidence that you are the parent/legal carer responsible for the child/children you wish to claim Free School Meals e.g. Home Office documentation / NASS documentation / IND Application Registration Cards.