

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

ELIGIBILITY

Your child may be entitled to receive free school meals if you are in receipt of:

- Income Support (IS); **or**
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance (IB-JSA); **or**
- Child Tax Credit with no Working Tax Credit and an annual income as assessed by the Inland Revenue of less than 16,040 (April, 2009);
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit;
- Support under part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Employment Support Allowance (Income Related) (ESA) (IR).

(Families who receive Working Tax Credit (WTC) are not entitled free school meals).

NEW APPLICATIONS

You can get an application form for Free School Meals from the Local Authority's Home to School Transport Team or it be downloaded by clicking the link below. Completed forms should be returned by post to: **Family Services, Home to School Transport, County Hall, Wakefield, WF1 2QL.**

RENEWAL OF CURRENT APPLICATIONS

Application forms are sent to parents/carers at the half term before the end of the term in which they expire (for example applicants with P-Z surnames receive an application form at the October half term as their entitlement finishes at the end of the Autumn Term). A completed application form must be sent to the Free School Meals Team before a pupil's entitlement to receive free meals is received.

Acknowledgement letters are sent back one week before the term ends. Therefore if you have not received a renewal form or acknowledgement letter before your allowance is due to expire, you need to contact the Finance Office at the Academy or the Local Authority's Home to School Transport Team.

If your child is entitled to free school meals an allowance will be placed on your child's dinner account. This allowance will be available on a daily basis and will always be used **before** any additional money you may chose to give your child. However it is important to note that any unused free school meal allowance at the end of the day cannot be carried forward to the following day and will therefore be lost. Only the additional monies you have given your child/children can be carried over.

BACKDATING YOUR CHILD'S ENTITLEMENT

Your child will normally start having free school meals from the day the Local Authority receive your application form. If you can show them that there are exceptional circumstances to your case, it may be possible to backdate your child's entitlement to free school meals. You will be asked to provide evidence of these

circumstances. and you will have to make your request in writing to the Home to School Transport Team.

Exceptional circumstances are, for example, situations when the Job Centre Plus has taken a long time to make a decision about your benefit or when your Income Support has been backdated after you appealed. If the Local Authority decide to backdate your child's entitlement to free school meals, you may be given a refund. You will not be entitled to a refund if your only reason for not applying sooner is that you did not know how to apply. If you are unhappy with the Local Authority's decision, you can appeal and this must be made in writing, addressed to Family Services, Home to School Transport, County Hall, Wakefield WF1 2QL.

ENTITLEMENT PERIODS RUN AS FOLLOWS AND ARE BASED ON THE APPLICANT'S SURNAME: A-F run Easter to Easter; G-O run September to July; and P-Z run January to December. This means that regardless of when the application is received, the expiry date is determined by the surname of the applicant and **not the child's surname. Therefore if your surname is Brown and your child's is Green the entitlement will be under the name Brown and run Easter to Easter, it's important to remember this when discussing your application with anyone.**

ADVISING OF CHANGES: you must tell the Local Authority immediately when your benefits, address or circumstances change, or if you receive Working Tax Credit in addition to the Child Tax Credit. It is illegal for your child to have free school meals when you stop receiving these benefits. You will be asked to pay back the cost of the meals your child has had during the times when you were not entitled.

FURTHER INFORMATION: to discuss this further or get additional information please can contact the Local Authority's Free School Meals Team on 01924 305061 or contact Lynda Evans, Finance Officer at the Academy.