

Service Centre • Resources & Transformation
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31 August 2017

FAO Head teacher – Free School Meals and School Clothing grant applications

Dear Colleagues,

As you may know, at the end of the summer term we launched a new and improved online application process for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants. The online application process is now held within the Citizen's portal where parents and guardians can also complete the school admissions process.

Link to Citizen's portal:

https://emsonline.cumbria.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fCitizenPortal_LIVE

As you will appreciate, the summer months have been a very busy period for us processing a high volume of applications. By using the new online process we are able to enhance our customer service by providing the following benefits:

- Parents/guardians are able to check eligibility without waiting for a phone call/email from the Service Centre
- Reduces the risk of duplicate applications being submitted for the same child
- Reduces the risk of application forms and supporting documentation getting lost in the post
- Provides the Service Centre with an audit trail of applications
- Enables the Service Centre to issue vouchers in a more timely manner; a postal application takes twice as long to process as an online application

We understand you need to encourage parents/guardians to apply, however we have received hundreds of paper applications over the summer break from parents who are not eligible; this situation could have been avoided by parents checking the eligibility criteria prior to submission. We'd like you to urge parents/guardians to **apply online** but please ask them to **review the eligibility criteria** before submitting an online application:

Free school meals and clothing vouchers are available if parents/guardians are receiving one of the following qualifying benefits:

- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- An income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, provided parents/guardians are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) that as of April 2012 does not exceed £16,190. Note: From 1st May 2009 where recipients are entitled to Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after employment ceases, or after start to work less than 16 hours per week, your children are entitled to Free School Meals, this may be extended.
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit;
- Universal Credit
- Children who receive Income Support or Income Based Jobseekers Allowance in their own right are also entitled to receive Free School Meals.

- Children who receive "education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age" will still need to satisfy the additional requirement of "receiving education both before and after the lunch period", before being eligible to receive free school meals.

We ask for your support and commitment in disseminating this message to your parents/guardians going forward in to the new school year. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the team using the details at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Alison Graham
Operations Manager
Service Centre