

# Free School Meals Administration



## Service Level Agreement 2021/22

## Introduction from Service Lead

---

Dear Headteacher, Chair of Governors and School Business Manager

Welcome to the Service Schedule for Free School Meals Administration, which contains all of the information you will need about our service.

We look forward to working with you.

**Phil Wilson**

**Service Delivery Manager, Business Support**

**Please note: The Free School Meals Administration offer for 2021/22 has not had any significant changes to the previous year.**

### **Changes:**

Shropshire Council's free school meals system moved from the Capita ONE EMS to the Servelec Synergy platform in August 2020.

Parents/carers can apply online and are able to view the result of an initial eligibility check at the end of their application. The application is then processed which includes a further eligibility check and the parent/carer is informed of the outcome of their application.

Schools who sign up to the free school meals SLA have access to a live (real-time) portal to view the details of students in their school who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

## Description of our service

---

The Education Improvement Service provides a comprehensive administrative support service to schools in respect of the processing and checking of benefits-related free school meal applications. This includes utilising the National Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), a web portal that schools do not have access to.

### **School Nursery Children and Free School Meals**

The child must be a registered pupil of the school. To be eligible for benefits-related free school meals the parent/carer needs to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and the nursery child must be accessing a funded session as part of their EY free entitlement before and after the lunch break.

In summary, any eligible child should be offered a FSM if they are accessing a funded free entitlement session in the morning and afternoon of the same day. This includes two year olds who may be accessing 24U provision. If a child is accessing a free session in the morning and then the parents are paying for an afternoon session they are not entitled to a meal.

If the parent/carer meets the eligibility criteria by being in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits, the child will appear on your School Access Module showing as being eligible for FSM but the school will need to check if child meets the additional criteria regarding the qualifying sessions attended.

### **Free School Meals**

Statutory entitlement to FSM only applies to children in maintained schools, including the extended eligibility criteria for those in reception, Years 1 and 2 (UFSM). Academies and free schools are required to follow the FSM legislation as if it applied to them by virtue of their funding agreements. FSM requirements do not apply to children in the private, voluntary or independent sector.

#### **In order to qualify for FSM:**

- A child must be a registered pupil of a school;
- If the child is under compulsory school age, the child must be receiving full time education, or if part time, receiving education before and after the lunch break;
- Under current criteria the child's parent/carer must be in receipt of any one or more of the following benefits:
  - Income support (IS);
  - Income-based jobseeker's allowance (IBJSA);
  - Income-related employment and support allowance;
  - Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
  - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit;
  - Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income not exceeding £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs;
  - Working Tax Credit four-week run-on (the payment someone receives for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit);
  - Universal Credit. From 1 April 2018 if a parent is entitled to Universal Credit they must have an annual net earned income equivalent to and not exceeding £7,400, assessed on up to three of the parent's most recent Universal Credit assessment periods, to be eligible.
- A child who is in receipt of a qualifying benefit in their own right is also entitled to FSM.

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal when a claim for the meal has been made on their behalf, and their eligibility has been verified by the school/LA where they are enrolled.

## **16 – 19 Age Children: Free Meals in Further Education Funded Institutions (guidance issued April 2020)**

The 1996 Education Act requires maintained school and academy sixth forms to provide free meals to disadvantaged students aged over 16. The parent/guardian or student themselves needs to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits. The student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2020 to be eligible to receive a free meal.

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Transitional protections introduced in the 2018 to 2019 academic year continue to apply. The protection means that all students already receiving free school meals on or after 1 April 2018 continue to be eligible to receive free school meals whilst Universal Credit continues to roll out. This also applies to students who were eligible for free school meals prior to moving into further education provision.

## **Individual responsibilities of our staff**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Service Delivery Manager, Business Support	Management of the traded service detailed in this schedule.

## **Our obligations and requirements**

### **What we will do for you:**

<b>Ref.</b>	
<b>P1</b>	Support parents/carers in applying for free school meals online via the Shropshire Council website, by hard copy application form or by telephone.

<b>P2</b>	Provide all the relevant forms relating to free school meal eligibility together with support and advice on eligibility for parents/carers and schools.
<b>P3</b>	Process all applications received and check eligibility against the legal requirements.
<b>P4</b>	Communicate with parents/carers by notifying them of the result of the eligibility check or if further information is required to determine eligibility.
<b>P5</b>	Schools who subscribe to the FSM Service Level Agreement have access to a live portal (School Access Module) to view the details of students in their school who are eligible for benefits-related FSM. The portal also provides information to show if an application has been made for a pupil and the outcome of the application at that time.
<b>P6</b>	Provide a comprehensive support service that allows for immediate responses to eligibility queries via the local authority's access of the National Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service (noting schools do not have access to this web portal).
<b>P7</b>	Review and monitoring of the eligibility of existing claims based on DfE guidance.
<b>P8</b>	Secure storage in line with the Shropshire Council Corporate Retention Schedule - 6 years from the date the claim is made - of all proof of benefit requests.

## What we require from you...

Ref.		Date required (if applicable)
<b>C1</b>	Signpost parents to the comprehensive service rather than having to manage and process the applications in the school.	
<b>C2</b>	Forward any free school meals eligibility applications received in the school at the earliest opportunity.	
<b>C3</b>	Cross-reference the information held in the School Access Module showing students who are eligible for FSM against the school's own management information system and update the records accordingly.	

## Days/times during which services are to be available

---

Agreed days as per delivery schedule	Service operating hours Monday to Friday 08:45 – 17:00
--------------------------------------	---

## Charging and enquiries

---

For details on the various packages available for this service, including pay-as-you use options, or if you have any queries or issues regarding your service arrangements please contact us on the below contact details.

## Contact information

---

For more information	
Contact name	Anne Cholmondeley
Role	Free School Meals Administrator
Telephone	01743 254494
Email	anne.cholmondeley@shropshire.gov.uk