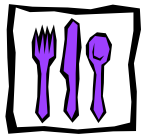

What if I claim other benefits?

You will only be able to claim free school meals if you receive one of the benefits stated previously. If you receive any other benefit such as Incapacity Benefit, you will need to look at your TC602. This benefit is identified as annual household income and if it is below £16,040*, you may be eligible to claim under the Child Tax Credit criteria.

What do I do if I stop claiming benefit?

You will need to contact the Access and Education Team (0-16) team immediately. Do not continue to take free school meals, otherwise you will be asked to pay for all the meals your child has had since you stopped claiming benefit.

You will also need to tell us about any changes of circumstances, such as; benefit, address, school, claimant etc.

I do not receive any of the benefits shown, but am struggling financially. Can I appeal?

No, it is set criteria and there is no appeals process.

REMEMBER—All applications must be accompanied with proof of a qualifying benefit. Claims cannot be processed without it.

If you would like to apply or have any further questions, please contact the Access to Education Team (0-16) Team:

Tel: 01452 425434

Fax: 01452 425399

Email:

schadmit@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Write to:

Access to Education(0-16) Team
Children and Young People's Directorate
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester GL1 2TP

Alternatively, forms and leaflets are available at many schools and libraries or you can download one from our website:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Gloucestershire COUNTY COUNCIL

FSM 2009/10

Free School Meals

Who is eligible?

Gloucestershire COUNTY COUNCIL

Free School Meals

Who can apply ?

If your child attends a state school and you are currently in receipt of one of the following benefits, you will be eligible to claim Free School Meals for them:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance** *(If you receive contribution-based Jobseekers Allowance you will not qualify. Please ask your local Job Centre if you are not sure which one you receive)*
- **Support under part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999**
- **Child Tax Credit—provided you are NOT entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual household income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) that** *does not* **exceed £16,040*** (*If you receive any amount of Working Tax Credit you will not qualify, even if your earnings are below £16,040*. If you were receiving payments that have now stopped you will need to provide clarification of why they have stopped)*
- **Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit**
- **Employment & Support Allowance**
- **Where you are entitled to Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after your employment ceases, or after you start to work less than 16 hours per week, your children are entitled to free school meals.**

**This amount relates to academic year 2009/10 and is subject to change.*

How does it work?

Once you have filled out your application form, you need to return it with proof of either Income Support, Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance, Asylum Seekers Support, eligible Child Tax Credit (TC602) or Guaranteed Pension Credit, or Employment & Support Allowance to the Access to Education Team at the address on the back of this leaflet.

How long does it take?

We try to process applications within 5-10 working days. If you are entitled to free school meals you will receive a letter confirming the date from which you will be able to claim free school meals. When you receive this letter you should inform your child's school.

How often do I have to apply?

You should apply when you first start to receive benefit. Your eligibility will be reviewed every six months and a review form will be sent to you automatically. It is essential that you contact us directly with any changes of address to ensure you receive this form. If you fail to renew your entitlement you will have to pay for any meals taken. It is your responsibility to ensure your claim is continuous.

Will my claim be back-dated?

No, entitlement to free meals will start from the date we receive your application or the date handed in at a school.

Will it be a cooked dinner?

Not necessarily, a school meal can be either hot or cold. It depends on what facilities the school has.

My child's school does not have facilities to provide meals, can I still claim?

If you are entitled to free meals, the school can arrange to have a meal brought in for your child.

How will the school know my child does not have to pay for school meals?

The schools concerned will be notified directly by the Access to Education Team (0-16) that your child can have a school meal free of charge. Each school makes its own arrangements for notifying the dinner service staff which children are eligible to receive a school meal free of charge. You can use your letter of entitlement as confirmation.

What can I expect my child to receive as a meal?

Your child will receive a main course and a dessert. Drinking water should be provided by all schools, therefore, any alternative drinks will need to be paid for.

Will my child feel singled out?

No, whatever system the school has in place, the same meals are provided to all children whether it is paid for or free.

How do I apply for free milk?

If your child's primary school provides milk at break-time, this will be free for the time your child is entitled to free school meals. Please contact your child's school to see if free milk is available and how to apply for it. Unfortunately, this is not available in secondary schools.

What if I foster a child?

If you foster a child through Gloucestershire County Council then you will not be able to claim. This is because you will receive a fostering allowance to cover all costs for the child, including meals at home and school.