

Why do I need to apply?

Parents/Guardians FAQ regarding Free School Meals and Pupil Premium

Derbyshire encourage all parents and students to be on our free school meal database. Even if you think are not currently eligible, by applying for benefit related free school meals (FSM), we can automatically check your eligibility every month. So if your income decreases below the eligibility threshold in future, your child will quickly be identified as eligible.

Eligibility for FSM increases the funding given to schools (known as Pupil Premium or PP) and ensures free meals as well as other possible offers such as holiday club activities, help with school trips, music lessons etc are accessible and available to families.

What information must I provide to apply?

We just need either or both parent's NI Number, DOB and Full Name as well as the full names and DOB of all the children within the family.

If my child moves school, do I need to reapply?

No – once you have applied you never need to apply again whilst in a Derbyshire Setting – we follow your child from nursery, through primary, through secondary until they leave at age 16, 17 or 18.

If you move to a different County you would need to reapply with that Local Authority but we can provide evidence of previous eligibility in order that you will receive transitional protection.

Protection

Any child who has been eligible for FSM at any point on or after 01.04.18 will remain eligible until at least 31.08.26. This is due to protection that the government has put in place whilst Universal Credit is fully rolled out. Protection also includes eligibility for things like grocery voucher schemes, Holiday Activity Funding (HAF) and help with school transport.

From September 2026 The Government have announced they are changing the eligibility criteria for free school meals which will ensure that additional families will be able to receive them. We will keep the schools informed of changes in eligibility status via our live reports.

Household Support Fund (HSF) Grocery Vouchers

Benefit related FSM eligible students will also receive any grocery vouchers distributed as part of the HSF scheme. Derbyshire do not provide these in the school holidays, but do use HSF funding to provide vouchers at other times in the year. Please make sure your school has the correct email address/mobile number for you stored on their systems to help make sure you receive your voucher. For more info visit www.derbyshire.gov.uk/householdsupportfund

Do I need to contact you if my circumstances change – such as my partner moves in or I increase my hours at work?

No - our monthly check will pick up any changes to eligibility. You do need to get in touch and update us if your surname changes for any reason.

You can also contact us if you have other children starting school. We can add these to your existing family record so you won't have to fill the application form out once again.

My child wants to bring a packed lunch so I don't need to apply, do I?

Yes please do apply – as mentioned eligible children capture additional funding to be used in school such as for additional teaching and support staff. Your family will also be eligible for any future grocery voucher schemes, help with uniform, help towards school trips etc if you are found to be eligible.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

I thought all infant aged children got free meals anyway so why should I apply?

Yes, all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children get free meals thanks to a government scheme known UIFSM. There is no criteria for this – every child will get the same high quality meal. However, if your family meets the eligibility criteria for 'benefit related' free school meals, you may also receive Household Support Fund Grocery Vouchers, help with school trips, school uniform, music lessons, home to school travel, access to HAF. Plus, the school will receive additional funding that will be used to support your child educationally as appropriate. So it's very important that you apply for benefit related FSM so you, your child and the school your child attends do not miss out!

Holiday Food and Activities Programme (HAF)

Benefit related FSM eligible students will be able to attend any of the available Derbyshire HAF activity events free of charge. These are during the Easter, Christmas and Summer Holidays. To book you will need a code which will be shared with the parents of eligible pupils via schools. More information will be available by contacting haf.enquiries@derbyshire.gov.uk Booking is via <https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk>

Do I need to reapply online if I think I may have become eligible or my child is moving school?

No. You should never need to reapply as long as your child remains in a Derbyshire setting our system should track alongside them. You only need to reapply if you change your surname or wish to add additional children.

Please do not reapply simply because you got an unexpected result as entering the same information will not change this. Please email or telephone us for clarification.

For more information please contact the FSM team:

checking@derbyshire.gov.uk

Telephone 01629 536481.

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

