



Parents urged not to miss out on extra funding for their child's school

Regardless of free school meals being available for all infant-aged children, Nottinghamshire County Council is urging parents and carers of both infant and older children who receive one of the qualifying benefits to register for free school meals.

Doing this will mean that their child's school can claim pupil premium from the Government – additional funding given to publicly-funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers.

The Council's Committee Chairman for Children and Young People's Services, Councillor John Peck, said: "This extra money helps schools to focus closely on the needs of disadvantaged pupils in order to improve their learning and attainment.

"Many schools use the funding to provide additional support and/or enriched educational opportunities and resources. Schools recognise that the pupil premium allows them to make good and timely decisions about providing support to narrow the gaps in attainment for disadvantaged children as quickly as possible."

In the 2016-17 financial year, schools will receive the following funding for each child registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years:

- £1,320 for primary-aged pupils
- £935 for secondary-aged pupils

There is no additional requirement for schools to contact parents to determine their qualifying benefit.

The Council's acting service director for education standards and inclusion Marion Clay said: "Parents must be receiving one of the eligible benefits to qualify.

"We notify parents where a child is eligible to receive a free school meal and qualifies for pupil premium - and our schools work really hard to encourage eligible parents to get what they're entitled to.

“However, we’re particularly mindful that since all pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 at state-funded schools automatically became entitled to free school meals back in September 2014, those also receiving qualifying benefits may wrongly assume that there’s no point in also registering for free school meals. Some qualifying parents of older children may also be missing out.

“In fact, the financial benefits to schools can be considerable and provide disadvantaged pupils with much-needed support as well as helping to alleviate the ongoing budgetary pressures schools are under.”

The eligibility criteria for free school meals is financial and set nationally by government.

Parents and carers need to be in receipt of one of the following qualifying benefits:

- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs (HMRC)) that does not exceed £16,190
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based and Contributions-based JSA and ESA on an equal basis
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after the person stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – during the initial roll-out of the benefit.

Since the introduction of free school meals for infant-aged children, there has been no change to the process for applying for free school meals.

Families receiving a qualifying benefit still need to apply to the County Council and its free school meals team will continue to notify schools that the child is eligible to receive a free school meal and qualifies for pupil premium.

To find out if you qualify for free school meals, go to www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or call 0300 500 8080.

If your child is eligible and attends our Foundation unit on a part time basis, they will be entitled to one free school meal per week. Your child will also be entitled to free school milk when they reach the age of 5.