

Free school meals

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 get a free meal at lunchtime, under the government's Infant Free School Meals scheme. These are provided at all Bury Council maintained schools, academies, free schools, and pupil referral units. **You do not have to apply for these.**

From year 3 onwards free school meals are only available if you get any of the following:

- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your earned income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
- Income Support
- income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, providing you are do not get Working Tax Credit, and your annual gross income is less than £16,190
- guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

(If you receive Working Tax Credits you will not be eligible unless you are receiving a four week 'run on' payment after stopping work)

Free school meals are available for:

- children attending local authority maintained primary and secondary schools, including academies, (they are not available for children at private or independent schools)
- children attending local authority maintained nurseries, providing they receive education before and after lunch
- students aged between 16 and 19 who go to Elms Bank Specialist Arts College sixth form
- students who receive Income Support or Income-based Jobseekers Allowance in their own right

Schools receive extra funding from the government for each child who gets free school meals. If you get a qualifying income please consider applying even if your child doesn't eat the school lunch, because this extra funding will benefit your child's education.

New for 2018

In April 2018 the government changed the qualifying criteria, so that if you get Universal Credit you can only get free school meals if you have earnings below £7400 a year. Prior to this date everyone who received Universal Credit was eligible.

If you were in receipt of free school meals on 1 April 2018 and your income increases above the new limits your child will continue to be eligible until either 31 March 2023, or 'the end of their phase of education', whichever is later. In plain English this means if they're in primary school they're eligible until year 6, or if they're in secondary school they're eligible until the end of year 11.

If you claim free school meals after 1 April 2018, you will only get them if your income is below the new limits. However if your earnings do increase you will still get the same protection until March 2023 or until your child finishes primary or secondary school.

Apply for free school meals

If you live in Bury Council's area, and your child attends a school in borough you will need to complete the online application on the Bury Council website.

If you live in Bury Council's area, and your child attends a school outside the borough, we will need you to apply by phone on 0161-253-5858 (lines are open 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday).

If you live outside the borough, and your child attends a school in Bury Council's area, you will need to complete an online application on the Bury Council website.

When you apply, we will check with either the Department for Work and Pensions or HM Revenues and Customs that you are receiving a qualifying income, during your application. If they confirm you are eligible, we will send an email to your child's school straight away to let them know. If we cannot confirm your income we will ask you provide proof of it to us.

Free school meals will continue as long as you remain eligible. There is no need to reclaim them every year. However please let us know if:

- you move address
- your child changes school