



Who Qualifies?

Who qualifies for a free school meal?

Parents who live in England / Wales can claim free school meals for their child if they or their partner get one of the following:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance**
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance**
- **Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999**
- **The 'Guarantee' element of State Pension Credit**
- **Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190**

Parents receiving Working Tax Credit for four weeks after their employment finishes are also entitled to free school meals during that period.

Children who receive any of the qualifying benefits listed above in their own right are also eligible to receive free school meals.



What is Income Support?

Income Support is extra money to help people on a low income, who can't work full-time but don't have enough to live on. It's for people who don't have to sign on as unemployed. Whether people qualify or not and how much they get depends on their specific circumstances.

What is Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance? Jobseeker's Allowance is the main benefit for people of working age who are out of work or who work less than 16 hours a week, on average. If a parent is eligible, it is paid while they are looking for work.

Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is based on actual income and savings. A parent may get this if they have not paid enough National Insurance Contributions to count for the State Pension or other long term state benefits (or if they've only paid contributions for self-employment) and they're on a low income.



What is Income-based Employment and Support Allowance?

The Employment and Support Allowance provides financial help to people who are unable to work because of illness or disability. It also provides personalised support to those who qualify, who are able to work.

Parents are entitled to claim income-based Employment and Support Allowance if they do not have enough money coming in, or they have not paid enough National Insurance Contributions to count for the State Pension or other long term state benefits, and they can satisfy the entitlement conditions.

This means that they have savings of less than £16,000 and, if they have a partner or civil partner, that person works for less than 24 hours a week on average.

Who receives support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999?

The Secretary of State may provide, or arrange for the provision of, support for asylum-seekers or their dependents who appear to the Secretary of State to be destitute or to be likely to become so, within a specific period.

What is the 'Guarantee' element of State Pension Credit? Pension Credit is an income-related benefit for pensioners living in Great Britain. It is made up of two different parts, Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit.

The Guarantee Credit works by topping up weekly income to:

£137.35 if you are single

£209.70 if you have a partner

These amounts may be more for people with disabilities, or people with caring responsibilities or certain housing costs, such as mortgage interest payments.

What is Child Tax Credit?

Parents with a new baby or those responsible for any children under the age of 16 - or under 20 if they're in full-time education or approved training - may be able to claim Child Tax Credit to help with the cost of looking after them.

For more information about any of these benefit schemes, visit www.direct.gov.uk

Some local authorities also offer families on low incomes extra support at their discretion. It is worth exploring whether families at your school would qualify for any of the following:

School uniform allowance

Families who are receiving benefits or who are living on a low income could be entitled to discretionary grants to help with buying school uniforms.

Local authorities that offer these grants set their own criteria for eligibility. Check with your local authority to find out what is available in your area.



Residential visits

Families whose children qualify for free school meals will be entitled to free board and lodging on a residential trip provided:

- it takes place wholly or mainly during school hours
- it takes place outside of school hours but it is a necessary part of the National Curriculum
- it forms part of the syllabus for an examination that the school is preparing the pupil to sit
- it is part of religious education



Free milk

There is no statutory requirement for milk to be provided in schools or nurseries. It is a matter for local authorities and schools to decide. Where milk is provided, it must be free to children eligible for free school meals. For all other parents, schools can choose to participate in the EU School Milk Scheme, which provides a subsidy to reduce the cost of their milk.

Free home to school transport

Local authorities must provide free home to school transport for children if they:

- are between 5 and 16 years old and
- are attending their nearest suitable school and
- live further away from the school than the statutory walking distances (2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 plus)

Children who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit are also entitled to free school transport if they live between 2 and 6 miles from their school or between 2 and 15 miles if they attend a school based on their parents religion or belief. Claims should be made through the local authority.

Free swimming

Some local authorities offer free or reduced-price swimming for children under 16. Check with your local authority to find out what is available in your area.

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