

APPLICATION FORM FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- ✓ You must be in receipt of one of the below benefits to be eligible for a Free School Meal for your child/ children.
- ✓ Free meals are available to eligible children that **attend school within Milton Keynes, on a full-time basis**. This includes nursery children (of compulsory school age) who attend school full-time and sixth form students (but NOT College or Further Education level students). If you live in Milton Keynes, but your child attends schools in another Local Authority area (e.g. Bucks/Beds/Northants), you should apply via the Local Authority to which the school is linked.
- ✓ We check entitlement to free school meals via a secure government website, which links to your benefit providers. However, if the eligibility checking service (ECS) has not been able to verify your entitlement, then we may need to contact you to ask for evidence to show you are in receipt of one of the eligible benefits.

PLEASE NOTE:

Parents/carers currently in receipt of Working Tax Credit do NOT qualify for Free School Meals, regardless of income.

I confirm that I am currently in receipt of one of the below benefits. Please tick the box to indicate which benefit you are currently in receipt of. **Without this information we cannot process your claim.**

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Income Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Employment & Support Allowance – Income related only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (NOT Contribution Based JSA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Child Tax Credit only (with a combined family income of less than £16,190 per annum as assessed by HM Revenues & Customs) – as at April 2012 Please note anyone receiving Working Tax Credit, regardless of Income, will NOT qualify for FSMs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | National Asylum Seekers Support (NASS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Guaranteed Element of Pension Tax Credit |

YOUR DETAILS (Parent/Carer) please complete **all sections** as clearly as possible

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms | | | |
| Legal First Name | | | |
| Legal Surname | | | |
| Address | | | Postcode |
| Date of Birth | | Telephone Number | |
| National Insurance Number or NASS number* (this can be found on your benefits letters) | | | |
| *We cannot process your application without this. | | | |

Please complete details below for **ALL dependant children** that you wish to claim free school meals for (they may go to different MK schools).

| Legal First Name | Legal Surname | Date of Birth | Male or Female | School Name | Your relationship to the child |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
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I sign to certify that the information I have given is correct and I understand it is fraudulent to give false information. I agree that you will use the information provided to assess my current and ongoing eligibility to claim Free School Meals. I understand that my entitlement to Free School Meals will continue only for as long as I receive one of the qualifying benefits. I agree to inform the Free School Meals Team IMMEDIATELY if my benefit or tax credit entitlement changes or if I change my address/ name.

Signed.....Date.....

Data Protection Act

In order to provide services to you, we need to record your details, which you have a right to see and check. Information may be shared with organisations we work with to provide services to you. We will process and safeguard your details in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Information may also be used in connection with the prevention and detection of crime and fraud.

You can return this form to your child’s school. The school can forward it to us - on your behalf - via the internal post system. Don’t delay!

Free School Meals Team, Children & Families Service Group, Milton Keynes Council, Saxon Court, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes MK9 3HS

Tel: 01908 254590 Email: freeschoolmeals@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Please note: The FSM Team can only discuss your form by telephone between 9am - 1pm. The FSM Team is NOT available to discuss claims in person, or able to photocopy your benefits evidence.

Office use only

Date received:

Processed by:

DFE ECS checked:

Date Authorised:

Parent Notified:

School notified:

Details of any query/further action:

FREE SCHOOL MEALS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1) What is a Free School Meal (FSM)?

If you are eligible for FSMs for your child/children this is a legal entitlement. A Free School Meal should consist of a 2 course meal with drink (which may be water) at lunchtime.

2) Am I entitled?

Free School meals are an entitlement for eligible children who are still at school (full-time) and **attend school in Milton Keynes**. This includes nursery children (of compulsory school age) who attend school full-time and sixth form students (but NOT College or Further Education level students). If you live in Milton Keynes but your child attends schools in another Local Authority area (e.g. Bucks/Beds/Northants), you should apply via the Local Authority to which the school is linked.

For a child to be eligible for a FSM, their parents, carers, foster carers, or on occasion the child themselves (if over 16 and on benefit in their own right), need to be in receipt of at least one of the following benefits:

- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ Employment & Support Allowance – Income related only
- ✓ Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (NOT Contribution Based JSA)
- ✓ Child Tax Credit only (with a combined family income of less than £16,190 per annum as assessed by HM Revenues & Customs) – as at April 2011. **Please note, anyone receiving Working Tax Credit, regardless of income, will not qualify for FSMs.**
- ✓ National Asylum Seekers Support (NASS)
- ✓ Guaranteed Element of Pension Tax Credit

Pupils who are over 16, but still in statutory education, may receive Income Support in their own right. These pupils may be entitled to claim free school meals.

Parents/carers currently in receipt of Working Tax Credit do NOT qualify for Free School Meals, regardless of income.

However, parents/carers receiving Working Tax Credit who become unemployed can claim for free school meals **for a 4 week period** after their employment finishes. This also applies to parents/carers who start working less than 16 hours per week. Supporting evidence that shows your unemployment or reduction in hours will be required.

Part-time pupils are not entitled to free school meals even if the family receives one of the above benefits. Children must receive education before and after lunch to be eligible.

3) I receive Incapacity Benefit + Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Do I qualify for free school meals?

Incapacity Benefit and DLA are not qualifying benefits for free school meals. Unfortunately unless you receive Income Support or Child Tax Credit in addition to Incapacity Benefit and DLA you will not be eligible to claim free school meals.

4) When should I apply?

You should apply as soon as possible from the time you become aware that you are entitled e.g. when you start to receive benefit, when your child starts school in Milton Keynes. You can apply at any time of year. **The system does NOT allow us to backdate claims and can only be authorised from the date they are received into our office. Until your eligibility is confirmed to the school by the FSM team, the school may require you to pay for lunches or to provide a packed lunch.**

5) Where can I get an application form?

You can collect an application form from your child's school, print one from the MKC website <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schoolmeals/home.asp>, or telephone the FSM team on 01908 254590 to request one be posted out to you. Application forms will also be available at MKC Council offices (Saxon Court and Civic Offices reception desks).

6) How do I apply?

Please complete ALL sections of the form, as clearly as possible in order to avoid unnecessary delays. Please do not send forms electronically as your signature is required. You can return your form to your child's school and they can return it to the FSM team, on your behalf, via our internal post system; or you may send forms directly to our office. If you do not complete all the details this will delay your application and we will need to contact you. Some people are known by different names, please ensure when completing the form that you use the name that you have claimed your benefit under i.e. your legal name.

7) How do you assess my application?

We are now able to check entitlement to free school meals (FSMs) via a secure government website which links to your benefit providers. It will tell us if you are eligible for FSMs or not, but does not provide us with any other information. However, if the eligibility checking service (ECS) has not been able to verify your entitlement (there can be various reasons for this), then we will need to contact you and ask you to provide current proof of benefit.

8) How will I know if my application has been successful?

Once your form has been processed and eligibility checked, the FSM team will contact you in writing and also advise your school by way of a monthly and mid monthly report i.e. eligible, not eligible. We aim to process applications as soon as we are able. If we have any queries about your application we may contact you directly.

9) How do I contact the FSM Team at Milton Keynes Council?

Contact us at: Free School Meals Team, Children & Families Service Groups, Milton Keynes Council, Saxon Court, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3HS. Tel: 01908 254590
Email: freeschoolmeals@milton-keynes.gov.uk

The FSM Team can only discuss your form by telephone between 9am - 1pm.

10) What if my circumstances change?

You need to contact the Free School Meals team immediately if:

- You or your partner start work or come off benefits
- Your benefit changes
- You change address
- Your child changes school
- You have another child starting school for the first time

Please do not assume your school will tell us about these changes. If you do NOT keep us up-to-date with the above, this could result in your claim being cancelled/queried when the monthly eligibility checking takes place. For example, if you do not tell us that your address has changed, it won't match up with the details on our system. Any free school meals provided after your entitlement ceases may be charged to parents by the school.

11) How often do I need to apply?

You need not re-apply/renew each year (as has happened historically). Using a new software tool linked to the eligibility checking system, we are now able to regularly check your **on-going eligibility**. **Once you have applied for free school meals you need not re-apply, unless it is for a new child.** Your entitlement will be checked on a regular basis i.e. monthly, to verify your continued eligibility. We will contact you should your status come back as changed.

NEED ADVICE & HELP WITH YOUR BENEFITS?

❖ Housing Benefit and / or Council Tax Benefit

You may be entitled to help towards your rent and/or Council Tax bill if you are on a low income. For advice and assistance regarding Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit please contact the Benefits team at Milton Keynes Council:

Opening Hours

Our office is open from 9am - 5.15pm Monday to Friday

Telephone: 01908 253100

Fax: 01908 253025

E-mail: benefits@milton-keynes.gov.uk

New Claims Hotline 01908 252770

❖ For advice and assistance regarding Job Seekers Allowance contact:

Milton Keynes Jobcentre Plus

St George's House
811 Silbury Boulevard
Milton Keynes
Bucks
MK9 3LR

Telephone: 0845 604 3719

Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

❖ For advice and assistance regarding Child Tax Credits or Working Tax Credits contact the Tax Credits Helpline at HMRC:

Telephone: 0845 300 3900

Website: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits/index.htm>

Tax Credit Office
Preston
PR1 0SB

Opening hours

8.00 am to 8:00pm, seven days a week.