

Free School Meals - frequently asked questions

Why is it important to register for free school meals?

Applying for free school meals is very important because Brent schools get extra funding from the government for every child registered as eligible for a free meal if their parents receive benefits. This is called pupil premium funding.

In 2014/2015 primary schools will receive £1,300 for every pupil who is registered as eligible for a free school meal and secondary schools will receive £935 per pupil.

Schools use this money for a range of activities to support students including art therapy, literacy and numeracy booster classes, educational trips and after school clubs. They continue to receive this money for up to six years, so your application could make a lot of difference.

If you are receiving benefits, even if you don't want your child to get a free meal, we would encourage you to [apply for free school meals](#) so that your child's school receives as much funding as possible.

Why do I still need to apply for a free school meal when children in Reception and Year's 1 and 2 will be getting one anyway?

If your child is in one of these year groups we still need you to apply for a free meal if you are receiving benefits so that your child's school can continue to benefit from pupil premium funding.

Even if you do not want your child to take up a free meal, please [apply online](#) and help your child's school and your child benefit from this extra funding. You can pick up an application form from your child's school or contact Brent Customer Services on 020 8937 3110.

My child is at a Brent primary school but is not in Reception or Year One or Two; can I still apply for free school meals if I am receiving benefits?

Yes, please [fill in an application form](#), pick one up from your child's school or contact Brent Customer Services on 020 8937 3110.

My child goes to a nursery in Brent; can I apply for a free school meal?

Only if your child attends a nursery attached to a Brent school on a full time basis. You must complete our application form which is available online at www.brent.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or by contacting Brent Customer Services on 020 8937 3110.

What do I do if my child attends a secondary school in Brent?

Secondary school pupils can receive a free school meal if their parent or carer

is on benefits, has completed our application form and meets the eligibility criteria.

What do I do if my child is over 16?

Over 16s can still receive free school meals if they are studying at a sixth form at a school, and you should fill in our application form. Free school meals are not available for pupils attending a further education college.

What if my child goes to an Academy?

Brent Council processes all free school meals applications for pupils who attend an Academy in the borough apart from Ark Academy, which you will need to contact directly.

What happens after I make my application?

We will let you and the school know whether or not your child is entitled to free school meals. If your child is eligible, his/her school will then receive the pupil premium funding.

What happens if I don't complete all parts of the form?

We cannot process your application and assess whether you are eligible for a free school meal unless all sections of the form have been completed in full. Your application will be put on hold until the missing information is provided.

Do you need to see proof of my benefits?

You do not have to provide proof of benefits when completing the application form as we can check for eligibility against a central government database, providing that all sections of the form have been completed. If our checks indicate that you are not entitled to free school meals and you think that you are, we may have to ask for proof of the benefit you are receiving so that we can double check that the details we hold are correct.

What if my circumstances change?

If a previous application for free school meals was not successful and a change in your circumstances means that you think you may now be eligible please contact Brent Customer Services on 0208 937 3110 or email school.admissions@brent.gov.uk. You will need to complete another application form.

If your child currently receives a free school meal and you start work, start to receive Working Tax Credit, or stop receiving one of the qualifying benefits you must notify us as soon as possible.

Can my claim be backdated?

It is important that you apply as soon as possible as we are unable to backdate claims for free school meals to cover unpaid dinner money, or to refund dinner money paid prior to the date of a successful application.

What if my child changes school?

If your child is changing schools within Brent, you do not have to re-apply for free school meals but you should contact Brent Customer Services on 020 8937 3110 or email us at school.admissions@brent.gov.uk who will then let the new school know that your child is entitled to free school meals.

If your child is moving to a school outside Brent you should speak to the school and ask them how to apply for free school meals or contact the school's local authority.

Do I have to renew my claim every year?

No, although if your circumstances change, you must inform us as soon as possible. You will only need to make a new application if:

- Your child is starting in Reception, because we will not have any of your details registered.
- Your child is starting secondary school (Year 7), even if your child received free school meals in primary school.
- You have previously not been eligible for free school meals but think that you now might be.

Children in all other year groups who are currently receiving free school meals do not need to re-apply as you will already be registered with us.

Further information

If you need further information or have any questions about eligibility for free school meals or the application process, please contact Brent Customer Services on 0208 937 3110 or visit www.brent.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals