



February 2022

Dear Parent,

**RE.: ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

Below is some information about entitlement to free school meals that parents may find useful:

A PUPIL SHALL BE ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS WHERE

- i. the pupil or parent is in receipt of Universal Credit and has net earnings not exceeding £14,000 per annum; or
- ii. the pupil or parent is in receipt of Income Support or Income based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income related Employment and Support Allowance; or
- iii. the parent receives the Child Tax Credit or the Working Tax Credit; and has an annual taxable income not exceeding an amount as determined by the Department<sup>1</sup>; or
- iv. the parent receives Working Tax Credit "run-on" – the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit; or
- v. the parent receives the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or
- vi. the pupil has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet; or
- vii. the pupil is a boarder at a special school; or
- viii. the pupil is the child of an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS)<sup>2</sup>; or
- ix. if none of the above apply and **a child presents at school hungry, then the school should, on humanitarian grounds, provide free school meals to the child and the Education Authority should be informed** (Free School Meals and Uniform Helpline 02890 418044. E-mail [mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk](mailto:mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk)). **This initial decision, taken by the school at the point of need, must be followed immediately with a referral to the Education Authority's Education Welfare Service (EWS)**. The school should continue to provide free school meals while the EWS is carrying out its assessment. If, following an initial assessment using the UNOCINI Assessment Framework<sup>3</sup>, the EWS is not satisfied that the Level 2 indicators are present (across the Child, the Parent Capacity and the Family and Environmental factors), the provision of free school meals should cease and the Education Authority should be informed.

A further referral to the EWS for assessment for free school meals should not be made unless the school becomes aware of any change in the child's circumstances. Where the entitlement to free school meals on days when the child has neither food nor the means to pay for a meal

is confirmed it will be reassessed by the EWS prior to or at the beginning of each school year. It will be reassessed by the EWS prior to or at the beginning of each school year.

If the EWS or school finds that the child already has a social worker EWS will request that the social worker completes the assessment for Free School Meals and forwards the outcome of this in writing to the EWS.

In making their assessment, if the EWS determines that a child is a child in need they should, in addition to making a determination about the child's entitlement to free school meals, make a referral to the Gateway Team of the local Health and Social Care Trust. This referral should be made on the basis of a completed UNOCINI which will enable the Gateway Team to establish if there is a need for this service to undertake any further assessment.

Note: Only pupils in full-time places in school are eligible to avail of a free meal.

**Schools should inform the Authority as soon as possible of any pupils being provided with free meals under sub-paragraph ix. and should provide the following details: pupil's name, date of birth, home address and period through which free meals are to be provided together with confirmation of the previous school attended if he/she has recently moved school. The names and national insurance numbers of the pupil's parents should also be supplied where available.**

\*\*\*Please note that where a child comes to school without sufficient food, it is the school's legal duty to inform the authorities. \*\*\*

Yours sincerely,



D. F. Heggarty (Principal)