

To: All Principals

May 2019

Free School Meals/School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowance 2019-20

The application process for assessment of eligibility to the above entitlements has commenced. An application form has been posted to the parent/guardian home address of children currently entitled to free school meals advising that a new application has to be completed for the 2019-20 school year.

Forms prior to 2019-20 should not be given out to parents/guardians but should be discarded.

Enclosed is a small batch of 2019-20 application forms and notes for information for potential new applicants. **The application form and notes for information can also be accessed from the EA website** – <https://www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals>

Applicants can request an application form from the Meals and Uniform Section (contact details below) or from their local Social Security Agency or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Parents/Guardians whose child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (Stage 5) and requires a special diet should contact the Meals and Uniform Section if they wish to apply under the special diet criteria.

It is important that a school should not give free school meals to any pupil until the Education Authority issues authorisation.

The Education Authority continues to seek your support to promote awareness of Free School Meals and Clothing Allowances and to encourage all potential applicants to apply for the support available. Further information including eligibility criteria for the 2019-20 school year can be accessed by logging onto <https://www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals>

It should be noted that the Authority is currently exploring the options to provide an online platform for parents to apply for free school meals and uniform in the future and the views of principals and parents will be actively sought as part of that process.

Meals and Uniform Section

Enc

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

Education Authority, Ballymena Office, Meals and Uniform Section,

Ballee Centre, Ballee Road West, Ballymena. BT42 2HS **T:** +44 (0)28 2566 1355 **W:** www.eani.org.uk

Notes for Information 2019/2020 (Please read and **DO NOT RETURN**)

Due to the high volume of forms received during the months of June to September it may take up to 6 weeks to process your claim and telephone calls to the office will only delay this.

Who is eligible to apply for free school meals/school uniform/physical education allowance?

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who live in Northern Ireland, whose child/children attend a school or Regional/FE College in Northern Ireland and who receive one of the following benefits -

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less;
- Universal Credit with net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year; **or**

where the parent/guardian is an Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT).

Can I apply if I am a student who receives benefit in my own name?

Yes. Complete a form in your own name. Enter 'Self-Claimant' at "Relationship to Child(ren)" and enter your own name, date of birth and school in the section for child(ren).

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if I have a fostered child in my care?

No. If you or the foster carer are in receipt of funding you are not eligible to make application for free school meals and uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals if my child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and requires a special diet?

Yes. Please contact the Meals and Uniform Section for further information.

Can I apply if I am an Asylum Seeker?

Yes. You must attach evidence e.g. your Asylum documents to show that you are supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT) or that you have applied for support.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform allowance if my child attends a Nursery School?

Yes, if your child is in **full-time** nursery school/nursery unit/reception class. He/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance. Children attending **part-time** nursery school/nursery unit/reception class are not eligible for free school meals or a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child is at an EOTAS Learning Centre or Educational Guidance Centre?

Yes. Enter the EOTAS Centre or the Educational Guidance Centre attended along with the registered school on the form. Not all students may be eligible for a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends a full-time course at a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. If eligible your child can be entitled under the above criteria to **free school meals only** if he/she has not reached the age of 18 on or before 31 July and is not attending a paid training course. If the full-time course includes Physical Education an allowance can be paid for PE.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends full-time at an Independent School?

Yes. You can apply for free school meals if your child attends full-time at an Independent School. However, he/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance.

Can I apply if my child is waiting for results and is unsure of what school he/she will attend in September?

Yes. Enter the name of the school which he/she is most likely to attend in the School or College to be attended column and inform the Meals and Uniform Section by phone or in writing if this information changes.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child has reached 16 years of age on or before 1 July and is not attending a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. Free school meals will be processed if entitled. The Meals and Uniform Section will write to the school/college at the beginning of the new school year and when confirmation of your child's return is received the uniform allowance will be paid as soon as possible. **Payments for students over 16 years of age will not be made until September/October.**

Can free school meals entitlement be backdated?

No. The Meals and Uniform Section requires parents to submit an application for meals and uniform during each school year and meals and uniform will only be awarded after the claim for the relevant school year has been assessed. The Meals and Uniform Section does not accept or process back-dated claims for meals and uniform. Entitlement for eligible claims will be determined from the date the application form is received.

What are my responsibilities as a parent/guardian?

You must:

- Submit to the Meals and Uniform Section a fully completed application during each school year showing or including proof of benefits/Tax Credits/Universal Credit. The child(ren) applied for must be in your actual custody, included in the payments for Child Benefit/Child Tax Credit/Universal Credit and the name(s) entered as they appear on the Birth Certificate unless legally changed;
- Notify the Meals and Uniform Section immediately of any changes in family circumstances or benefit entitlement;
- Provide the correct bank/building Society details of the person claiming benefit and ensure that this account can accept payment by BACS. Uniform grants can only be paid into a bank account stating your name. If you do not have a bank/building society account then your uniform allowance will be paid by a crossed cheque;
- Provide the correct ID to cash your crossed cheque (if paid by cheque) at Bank of Ireland (NI), e.g. current full driving licence, valid passport, electoral card, Translink Smart Pass, student ID/registration card or EU/UK National Identity Card;
- Choose the correct postage method for sending your form/other documents.

What are the current Uniform Allowance rates?

	Total	Uniform	PE
Primary School pupils (born on or before 1 July 2015)	£35.75	-	-
Secondary School and Special School pupils:			
Under 15 years of age on 1 August 2019	£73.00	£51.00	£22.00
15 years of age or over on 1 August 2019	£78.00	£56.00	£22.00
Pupils at Regional Colleges/FE Colleges who are not in receipt of any financial support which includes provision for clothing suitable for Physical Education and where Physical Education is part of their course.	£22.00	PE Only	

What do I need to do when I have completed my form?

If you receive **Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit** your form needs to be stamped by the agency paying your benefit. You do not need to send your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) to the Meals and Uniform Section.

If applying under **Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit** all pages of your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) for the year **06/04/2019 to 05/04/2020** must be submitted with your completed application form. Tax Credits Award Notices (TC602) before these dates cannot be accepted.

If you have not received your **06/04/2019 to 05/04/2020** Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) but have received a Tax Credits Annual Review Notice (TC603R) for the year ended April 2019 which states "**Check now no later than 31/07/2019**" then you can send this with your application form. Tax Credits Annual Review Notices (TC603R) which state "**Reply now no later than 31/07/2019**" cannot be accepted. You must attach all pages of your TC603R.

If you have misplaced/lost your TC602/TC603R you must contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on their Helpline 0345 300 3900 to request a replacement. If you have renewed your Tax Credits and have not received a TC602/TC603R or a replacement from HMRC by the end of July 2019 you can submit this application form with a letter stating why a TC602/TC603R is not attached. This may delay your claim.

If you are applying under **Universal Credit** you must attach all pages of your most recent Universal Credit Statement dated no more than one month before the date when you submit your application for free school meals and uniform allowance. When printing your Statement, please click on "See details of Universal Credit payment...." on page 1 to ensure that you provide us with all necessary information.

Please note: Clear photocopies of the above income documentation will be accepted. These will not be returned.

Will I be notified if my children are entitled to free school meals?

Only parents/guardians who have made a new claim will receive a letter advising them when the meals will start. The school will be informed.

Payment of uniform allowance.

Payment of a uniform allowance may not be made until August. If you enter bank/building society details on the form you should check your account for payment. If you provide an e-mail address your payment remittance will be sent to you by email. If no bank/building society details are entered you will be paid by a crossed cheque. If incorrect account details are given you may not receive payment.

All information will be treated in confidence. The information provided on the Free School Meals/School Uniform application form may be made available to other bodies for the purposes of preventing and detecting crime. The Meals and Uniform Section reserves the right to take whatever steps it considers necessary to verify the information given on the application form. Any person wilfully making a false statement in support of this application will be liable to prosecution.
