Free school meals

A quick guide for parents and carers



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk/schoolmeals

Free school meals can help with the cost of living. The scheme also ensures children have a healthy meal during the school day.

This helps them focus in class, stay well and supports their learning.

This leaflet explains the different types of free school meals, who can get them, and how to apply.



Types of free school meals

Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception to Year 2)

- Your child gets a free school lunch if they are in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2.
- We would encourage families to apply for Targeted or Expanded free school meals, because your child's school will receive extra funding if you qualify for Targeted meals.

Universal Free School Meals for Key Stage 2 (Year 3 to Year 6)

- Through the Mayor of London's Universal Free School Meals programme your child currently gets a free school meal if they are in Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 or Year 6.
- We would encourage families to apply for Targeted or Expanded free school meals, because your child's school will receive extra funding if you qualify for Targeted meals.

Targeted free school meals

- Targeted free school meals are for children whose parents/carers meet the government's eligibility rules.



- Example (not a full list): you may qualify if you are on Universal Credit and your household income is under £7,400 a year (after tax and not including benefits).
- If eligible, your child gets free meals and the school will receive extra funding (pupil premium). Schools can use this money to provide extra learning support, resources and activities to help children do well at school.



Key points

- You must apply.
- Once awarded, eligibility will continue unless a review shows your family no longer meets the qualifying criteria. Eligibility will be checked annually.
- If eligible, your child gets free meals, access to the Holiday Activities and Food programme and the school will get extra funding.

Expanded free school meals

Expanded free school meals are for children whose parents/carers receive Universal Credit.

Key points

- You must apply.
- Once awarded, eligibility will continue unless a review shows your family no longer meets the qualifying criteria. Eligibility will be checked annually.
- Eligibility for Expanded Free School Meals does not attract pupil premium funding.

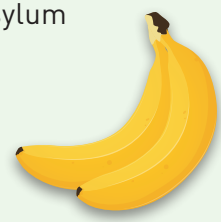
Auto-enrolment

- For children not previously recorded as receiving free school meals, the council will check annually if families are eligible for Targeted or Expanded free school meals.
- The council will use benefits data to compare against the School Census information.
- If your family is included, we will write to you. You can choose to opt out by following the instructions in the letter.



How to apply

You will need to apply through your child's school and provide the following information so that your eligibility can be checked:



- your National Insurance (NI) number or National Asylum Support Service (NASS) number (this can be found on your benefit entitlement letter)
- your date of birth
- your surname
- your full address
- your child's details.

For further information, please contact your child's school directly.



Produced by Hillingdon Council

July 2026
15290