

6 June 2025

Free School Meals and Uniform/Physical Education Allowances for School Year 2025/26

I would like to provide an update on the upcoming 2025/26 application process for Free School Meals and School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowances.

All parents/guardians are required to apply via [EA Connect](#).

This includes parents/carers whose child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (Stage 3) and requires a special diet and who do not qualify for Free School Meals under the standard financial eligibility criteria. They will be directed via the above link to the relevant online application for Free School Meals under the Special Diet criterion.

The Education Authority (EA) issues communications on the EA website and social media channels to inform parents/carers of the process for the coming year. It is the responsibility of all parents/carers to make application for support. However, to remind them to do so, parents/carers in receipt of support for the 2024/25 school year and who do not make an application for 2025/26 will receive an email highlighting the need to apply and the process to do so.

We continue to seek your support to promote awareness of Free School Meals and Uniform Allowances and to encourage all potential applicants to apply for the support available before the last Friday in July to ensure all is in place for the new school year in September 2025.

We have attached an informational poster – which can be printed or used on digital channels - outlining the process and what is required to apply.

It is important for all applicants to read and understand what supporting documentation is required for their application. Information on this can also be found on the [EA website](#).

Applicants in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit must upload a Proof of Benefit Letter, dated no earlier than the start of the month before they apply, which can be obtained by visiting this link. Parents in receipt of Universal Credit do not need a Proof of Benefit letter but must upload their most recent Universal Credit Claimant Statement.

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

Education Authority

1 Hospital Road, Omagh, Co Tyrone, BT79 0AW

T: +44 (0)28 9056 4000 W: www.eani.org.uk

The Free Schools Meals and Uniform Allowance Helpdesk is operated by staff across the EA Free School Meals/Uniform Allowance service.

It is available to assist parents and carers who may have any queries. The Helpdesk operates Monday – Friday from 9am to 4.0pm and can be contacted via email:
mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk.

The telephone number which should be used for all enquiries is **028 9047 0233.**

Further information including eligibility criteria for the 2025/26 school year and a list of Frequently Asked Questions to assist with any parental queries can be accessed by visiting our website.

Thank you for your continued assistance in relation to the provision of free school meals and uniform grants to eligible children.

Yours sincerely



Edel McCusker

Head of Admissions & Financial Support

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Applying for _____

Free School Meals & Uniform Allowance

If you require help...



www.eani.org.uk/fsm



028 9047 0233



mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk



1. Are you eligible?

You must be:

- in receipt of a qualifying benefit OR
- be an Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT).

Qualifying Benefits:

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;
- Universal credit and have net household earnings not exceeding the approved threshold.

OR

Special Diet:

- You may be eligible for Free School Meals if your child has a statement of Special Educational Needs and is designated to require a Special Diet.
- You can apply via EA Connect

2. What documentation do you need?

You will be asked to upload proof that you are receiving a qualifying benefit:

- Your most recent Universal Credit Claimant Statement or
- Proof of Benefit letter (if you are in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit).



3. What else do you need?



- National Insurance Number
- Children's names
- Dates of Birth
- Schools they will be attending
- Address
- E-mail and telephone number
- Bank or building society account and sort code details.

4. Where do you apply?

Apply for Free School Meals and Uniform Allowance for the new school year beginning September, through the Education Authority's online portal, EA Connect. If you haven't already registered an EA Connect account, it's quick and easy to do. Information can be found on the EA website.



5. What happens next?

We aim to process applications within 4 weeks. However, in the busy period of June to September, this can take up to 5 weeks. Please do not contact EA for an update on your application within the 5 weeks of submitting your application. If you have provided incorrect or insufficient supporting documentation, you will receive a tailored email advising you to resubmit your application with details of the correct documentation you need to provide.

You will receive an email from EA once your application has been approved and processed.



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