

12 January 2011

Dear Parent

Funding cuts – how you can help

As you will be aware Education along with many other areas is subject to spending cuts. These cuts will of course affect us all.

Many families are unaware that they can claim free school meals, and that the more children who claim free school meals helps to increase our school budget. A huge factor in funding for schools is the percentage of children who are claiming free school meals. Extra funding will allow us to have more money to spend on our students to ensure all have an opportunity to reach their full potential.

Students entitled to free school meals are able to access the excellent and nutritious meals on offer in the school canteen. Be assured that their free school meal status is not made obvious to other students and staff. To find out more about our canteen and the delicious meals on offer visit our web site and follow the "About Aldridge School – Information – Catering" link.

To find out if you are eligible to receive free school meals and help support our school during these current times of budget cuts please see the reverse of this letter. Forms can be obtained from any of the following:

- Aldridge School
- Walsall Council Civic Centre
- An Education Welfare Officer
- Or by calling Benefits Service Customer Contact on 0845 111 2855

I urge you to check if you are entitled to claim for Free School meals and if so to make sure you use your entitlement.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

S Sedgwick
Assistant Headteacher

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[Home](#) | [A-Z index](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site map](#) | [AAA](#) | [Text only](#) | [Change contrast](#) | [Print friendly version](#) | [Contact us](#) |



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Search

Select Language

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[Home](#) > [Education](#) > [Schools - general information](#) > Free school meals

Free school meals

It is the duty of the Local Education Authority (LEA) to provide a meal for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Schools and some colleges also offer this facility to students who are receiving a support payment in their own right, up to the age of 20 years.

1. [Do I qualify for free school meals?](#)
2. [What do I do if my benefit stops?](#)
3. [How long will my child get free school meals?](#)
4. [What evidence do I need to provide?](#)
5. [Why should I apply for free school meals if I do not wish my child/children to receive them?](#)
6. [Why have my free school meals been cancelled?](#)
7. [How do I contact the Benefits Service?](#)

1. Do I qualify for free school meals?

You will qualify for free school meals if you or your partner are receiving:

- Income Support (IS)
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA(IB))
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) (ESA (IR))
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), provided you do not also receive Working Tax Credit and have an annual income, as assessed by the Inland Revenue, that does not exceed £16,190
- Guarantee Credit element of State Pension Credit
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

2. What do I do if my benefit stops?

You must tell the council's benefit service immediately if the benefit or support payment which entitles you to free school meals stops.

If your benefit or support payment stops due to a change from one qualifying payment to another tell us straightaway as we may be able to award free school meals on a temporary basis until you can provide details of your new circumstances.

Free school meals application form

This form can be obtained from:

- your child(ren)'s school
- the Benefits Service at the First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1XU – by calling in person or telephoning us on 0845 111 2855
- [Download and print an application form for free school meals \(PDF 411KB\)](#)

3. How long will my child get free school meals?

Free school meals are awarded for the period of your qualifying benefit or support payment. It is important therefore that you tell us if your circumstances change.

4. What evidence do I need to provide?

If you receive either Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Child Tax Credit We are able to check your entitlement to these benefits. You do not need to supply us with any evidence of them.

Please note: you will not qualify for free school meals if:

1. you have a gross yearly income in excess of £16,190 This figure excludes your child tax credits and child benefit, or
2. you or your partner receive Working Tax Credit - this is a disqualifying benefit.

If you are an Asylum Seeker We are able to check your entitlement. You do not need to supply any further

Pages in this section

- [Concerns about a school](#)
- [Educational visits](#)
- [Exclusions](#)
- [Free school meals](#)
- [Home Education](#)
- [Instrumental tuition](#)
- [Medical concerns](#)
- [National curriculum](#)
- [Performance tables](#)
- [School governors](#)
- [School records](#)
- [School term dates 2009-2010](#)
- [School term dates 2010-2011](#)
- [Schools and service directory 2010-2011](#)
- [Special Educational Needs](#)
- [Truancy](#)
- [School finance](#)
- [Special Educational Needs - Formal Statement](#)

evidence.

5. Why should I apply for free school meals if I do not wish my child/children to receive them?

We would like to ask you to consider registering your child/children as eligible for free school meals, whether or not you intend to take up the option of them actually having a free school meal. This is because a great deal of the funding that comes from the Government for schools in Walsall is based on the numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. So by registering for free school meals you will be helping the funding of your child's school.

6. Why have my free school meals been cancelled?

If you no longer qualify for free school meals because you no longer receive a qualifying benefit we will write to you to tell you.

There may be other reasons why free school meals have been cancelled, if you are in any doubt at all please contact the Benefits Service.

7. How do I contact the Benefits Service?

Please contact us either at:

Benefits Service
Walsall Council
Civic Centre
Darwall Street
Walsall
West Midlands
WS1 1XU

Telephone 0845 111 2855

Email benefitsservice@walsall.gov.uk

This page was last updated on 06 January 2011

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