

Dear Parent/Guardian,

### **Changes to Free school meal eligibility under Universal Credit**

The eligibility criteria for free school meals have been changed. This letter explains the changes and how they might affect you.

#### **What are the new eligibility criteria?**

- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400.
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC.
- Working Tax Credit run-on paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.

#### **I don't currently claim for free school meals – what does this mean for me?**

If you think you might be eligible for free school meals, submit a claim to your local authority. The school will have a form, otherwise you can get the form from the Council's website. The information you provide will be used to check if you are in receipt of a qualifying benefit, and if you are on Universal Credit, that your earnings do not exceed the threshold. If you claim Universal Credit, your earnings will be assessed from up to three of your last Universal Credit assessment periods.

If you are eligible, your school will be notified. Your child will receive free school meals and the school will receive extra funding.

#### **I am currently claiming free school meals – what does this mean for me?**

Most people won't be affected by the new criteria. If you are currently claiming free school meals, but don't meet the new criteria, your child will continue to receive free school meals until the end of the Universal Credit rollout period. This will apply even if your earnings rise above the new threshold or if you stop being entitled to Universal Credit. The rollout period is currently scheduled to end in March 2022.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you need further information, then visit the free school meal website:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-free-school-meals>