

Free School Meals and Uniform/Physical Education Allowances for School Year 2026/27

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

The 2026/27 application process for Free School Meals and School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowances opened on 1 June 2026.

All parents/carers can apply via <https://connect.eani.org.uk/parent/Login>

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. The Eligibility checker must be completed first by parents/carers to access the separate application for Free School Meals under the Special Diet criterion.

It is the responsibility of all parents/carers to make application for support each year. However, to remind them to do so, parents/carers in receipt of support for the 2025/26 school year and who do not make an application for the 2026/27 school year will receive a series of e-mails highlighting the need to apply and the process to do so.

The Education Authority (EA) website provides information including eligibility criteria for the 2026/27 school year and a list of Frequently Asked Questions. The EA also issues communications via social media channels to update parents/carers of the process for the coming year.

As parents/carers may still not apply, we continue to seek your support to promote awareness of Free School Meals and Uniform Allowances and to encourage all potential applicants to submit an application before the last Friday in July to ensure all is in place for the new school year in September 2026.

We have attached an informational leaflet outlining the process.

It is important for all applicants to read and understand what supporting documentation is required for their application.

Applicants in receipt of Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit must upload a Proof of Benefit Letter with their application, dated

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Education Authority

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no earlier than the start of the month before they apply. This can be obtained by visiting this link <https://secure.dwp.gov.uk/get-a-proof-of-benefit-letter>

Parents in receipt of Universal Credit do not need a Proof of Benefit letter but must instead upload all pages of their most recent Universal Credit Claimant Statement.

Incorrect or incomplete information will mean that the application cannot be processed and support will be delayed. Relevant information can be found on the EA website.

Staff from the Free Schools Meals and Uniform Allowance service operate a Helpdesk to assist parents/carers who may have queries or who have difficulty in making an application.

The Helpdesk operates Monday – Friday from 9am to 4.0pm and staff can be contacted via email: mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk or by telephone on 028 9047 0233.

Yours sincerely



Edel McCusker

Head of Admissions & Financial Support

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