

Notes for Information 2021/2022 (Please read and **DO NOT RETURN**)

Due to the high volume of forms received during the months of June to September it may take up to 4 weeks to process your claim and telephone calls to the office will only delay this.

Who is eligible to apply for free school meals/school uniform/physical education allowance?

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who live in Northern Ireland, whose child/children attend a school or Regional/FE College in Northern Ireland and who receive one of the following benefits -

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable household income of £16,190 or less;
- Universal Credit with net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year; **or**

where the parent/guardian is an Asylum Seeker supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT).

Can I apply if I am a student who receives benefit in my own name?

Yes. Complete a form in your own name. Enter 'Self-Claimant' at "Relationship to Child(ren)" and enter your own name, date of birth and school in the section for child(ren).

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if I have a fostered child in my care?

No. If you or the foster carer are in receipt of funding you are not eligible to make application for free school meals and uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals if my child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and requires a special diet?

Yes. Please contact the Meals and Uniform Section for further information.

Can I apply if I am an Asylum Seeker?

Yes. You must attach evidence e.g. your Asylum documents such as your Application Registration Card (ARC) or BAIL 201 letter to show that you are supported by the Home Office Asylum Support Assessment Team (ASAT) or evidence from your Key Worker in the Red Cross/Barnardos/Extern, etc. to confirm that you are an Asylum Seeker and that you have applied for support.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform allowance if my child attends a Nursery School?

Yes, if your child is in **full-time** nursery school/nursery unit/reception class. He/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance. Children attending part-time nursery school/nursery unit/reception class are not eligible for free school meals or a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child is at an EOTAS Learning Centre or Educational Guidance Centre?

Yes. Enter the EOTAS Centre or the Educational Guidance Centre attended along with the registered school on the form. Not all students may be eligible for a uniform allowance.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends a full-time course at a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. If eligible your child can be entitled under the above criteria to free school meals only if he/she has not reached the age of 18 on or before 31 July and is not attending a paid training course. If the full-time course includes Physical Education an allowance can be paid for PE.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child attends full-time at an Independent School?

Yes. You can apply for free school meals if your child attends full-time at an Independent School. However, he/she will not be eligible for a uniform allowance.

Can I apply if my child is waiting for results and is unsure of what school he/she will attend in September?

Yes. Enter the name of the school which he/she is most likely to attend in the School or College to be attended column and inform the Meals and Uniform Section by phone, email, or in writing if this information changes.

Can I apply for free school meals/uniform if my child has reached 16 years of age on or before 1 July and is not attending a Regional College/FE College?

Yes. Free school meals will be processed if entitled. The Meals and Uniform Section will write to the school/college at the beginning of the new school year and when confirmation of your child's return is received the uniform allowance will be paid as soon as possible. Payments for students over 16 years of age will not be made until September/October.

Can free school meals entitlement be backdated?

No. The Meals and Uniform Section requires parents to submit an application for meals and uniform during each school year and meals and uniform will only be awarded after the claim for the relevant school year has been assessed. The Meals and Uniform Section does not accept or process back-dated claims for meals and uniform. Entitlement for eligible claims will be determined after a fully completed application and relevant supporting documentation has been received.

What are my responsibilities as a parent/guardian?

You must:

- Submit to the Meals and Uniform Section a fully completed application including proof of Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, or Universal Credit if applicable. Benefits other than Tax Credits and Universal Credit will be confirmed by the Department for Communities so evidence is not required. The child(ren) applied for must be in your actual custody, included in the payments for Child Benefit / Child Tax Credit / Universal Credit and the name(s) entered as they appear on the Birth Certificate unless legally changed;
- Notify the Meals and Uniform Section immediately of any changes in family circumstances or benefit entitlement;
- Provide the correct bank/building society details of the person claiming benefit and ensure that this account can accept payment by BACS. Uniform grants can only be paid into a bank account stating your name. If you do not have a bank/building society account then your uniform allowance will be paid by a crossed cheque;
- Provide the correct ID to cash your crossed cheque (if paid by cheque) at Bank of Ireland (NI), e.g. current full driving licence, valid passport, electoral card, Translink Smart Pass, student ID/registration card or EU or UK National Identity Card;
- Choose the correct postage method for sending your form/other documents.

What are the current Uniform Allowance rates?

	Total	Uniform	PE
Primary School pupils (born on or before 1 July 2017)	£35.75	-	-
Secondary School and Special School pupils:			
Under 15 years of age on 1 August 2021	£73.00	£51.00	£22.00
15 years of age or over on 1 August 2021	£78.00	£56.00	£22.00
Pupils at Regional Colleges/FE Colleges who are not in receipt of any financial support which includes provision for clothing suitable for Physical Education and where Physical Education is part of their course.	£22.00	PE Only	

What do I need to do when I have completed my form?

If you receive Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit you do not need to send your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602)/Annual Review Notice (TC603R)/Universal Credit Payments breakdown to the Meals and Uniform Section. The Meals and Uniform Section will confirm your entitlement to the relevant benefit with the Department for Communities upon receipt of your fully completed application.

If applying under Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit all pages of your Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) for the year **06/04/2021 to 05/04/2022** must be submitted with your completed application form. Tax Credits Award Notices (TC602) before these dates cannot be accepted.

If you have not received your **06/04/2021 to 05/04/2022** Tax Credits Award Notice (TC602) but have received a Tax Credits Annual Review Notice (TC603R) for the year ended April 2021 which states "**Check now no later than 31/07/2021**" then you can send this with your application form. Tax Credits Annual Review Notices (TC603R) which state "**Reply now no later than 31/07/2021**" cannot be accepted. You must attach all pages of your TC603R, which must include household income details where applicable.

If you have misplaced/lost your TC602/TC603R you must contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on their Helpline **0345 300 3900** to request a replacement. If you have renewed your Tax Credits and have not received a TC602/TC603R or a replacement from HMRC by the end of July 2021 you can submit this application form with a letter stating why a TC602/TC603R is not attached. This may delay your claim.

If you are applying under Universal Credit you must attach all pages of your most recent Universal Credit Payments breakdown, which can be found by logging into your Universal Credit account at <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit> and clicking on your most recent payment details where you will be shown the breakdown of all payments and deductions of how your Universal Credit has been calculated. This will ensure you provide us with all of the necessary information.

Please note: **Clear photocopies of the above income documentation will be accepted.** These will not be returned.

Will I be notified if my children are entitled to free school meals?

All parents/guardians who have made a claim and whose children are eligible for free school meals will receive information advising when the meals will start. The school will be informed.

Payment of uniform allowance.

Payment of a uniform allowance may not be made until August. Payments are normally made into bank accounts towards the end of the week. If you enter bank/building society details on the form you should check your account for payment. If no bank/building society details are entered, you will be paid by a crossed cheque. If incorrect account details are given you may not receive payment.

Any person wilfully making a false statement in support of this application will be liable to prosecution.
