



The Pinvin Federation Information for Parents

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Free School Meals

We believe it's important that every family is able to access the support they are entitled to during this period.

Included in this support are vouchers to cover free school meals. In this article, we explain who is eligible for what, how eligible parents and carers can apply for free school meal vouchers, and how these vouchers can be used.

Free School Meals vs Universal Infant Free School Meals

Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) is different to free school meals. UIFSM is available to all children in reception class, year 1, and year 2. Unfortunately, we have not been given funding to provide vouchers for families eligible for UIFSM. However, even if you had been receiving UIFSM, you may still be eligible for Free School Meals, and should apply to register through your local council.

Free School Meal Eligibility

During this period of school closures, we are supplying vouchers to cover the cost of lunches to parents and carers of eligible children. The working situation for many families may well have changed recently, and as a result, your child's eligibility for free school meals may also have changed. Your child may be eligible if you are entitled to any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

Your child may also get free school meals if you get any of these benefits and your child is both:

- Younger than the compulsory age for starting school
- In full-time education
- If your child is eligible for free school meals, they'll remain eligible until they finish the phase of schooling (primary or secondary) they're in on 31 March 2022.

More information about eligibility can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

How to Register:

Please contact the school office at office@pinvinfed.co.uk if you think any of the above apply to you. We will then apply to Worcestershire Council on your behalf.

How Will the Vouchers Work?

The currently-issued vouchers run until Monday 1st June 2020. From Monday 20th April, parents of children registered for free school meals will be sent an eCode via email by Edenred, the company commissioned by the government to provide families with vouchers. Parents and carers should also make sure to check their spam folders for this email.

This eCode can be used to purchase an e-card from a selection of supermarkets. This e-card works in the same way as a gift card from a store. This new scheme also allows us to combine funding where a family has more than one child eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals. So if you have 3 children in your family, all the money for all 3 children will go on one e-card.

Once parents have received their eCode, they will be able to redeem them in a supermarket of their choice, from the list provided in the email, by either:

- Presenting the gift card, as an e-card on a smartphone or tablet.
- Presenting a paper copy of the gift card that you have printed at home.

To make sure registered families receive the eCode and instructions as they should, we encourage parents and carers to make sure their school has a correct email address.

We hope this guidance is helpful in supporting all of our families to get the extra help they may need in these challenging times