

# Free School Meals

A pupil shall be entitled to free school meals where:

- i. he/she or the parent is in receipt of Income Support or Income based Jobseeker's Allowance; or
- ii. he/she or the parent is in receipt of Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; or
- iii. the parent receives the Child Tax Credit or the Working Tax Credit; and has an annual taxable income not exceeding an amount as determined by the Department-1; or
- iv. the parent receives Working Tax Credit "run-on" - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit; or
- v. the parent receives the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or
- vi. he/she has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet; or
- vii. he/she is a boarder at a special school; or
- viii. he/she is the child of an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS)-2; or

- ix. if none of the above apply and a child presents at school hungry, then the school should, on humanitarian grounds, provide free school meals to the child. This initial decision, taken by the school at the point of need, must be followed immediately with a referral to the local Education and Library Board's Education Welfare Service (EWS). The school should continue to provide free school meals while the EWS is carrying out its assessment. If, following an initial assessment using the UNOCINI Assessment Framework-3, the EWS is not satisfied that the Level 2 indicators are present (across the Child, the Parent Capacity and the Family and Environmental factors), the provision of free school meals should cease.

A further referral to the EWS for assessment for free school meals should not be made unless the school becomes aware of any change in the child's

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1. Eligibility under the Working Tax Credit was introduced on a phased basis with Nursery, Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils eligible from September 2010 and Key Stage 2 pupils eligible from September 2011. It was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.
  2. In the interim period, until such time as the result of the application for NASS support is known, education and library boards should arrange to provide free school meals to children of asylum seekers enrolled in schools.
  3. The UNOCINI Thresholds of Need Model can be viewed at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/thresholds> of need model.doc