

20 June 2023

Dear Principal

RE: Free School Meals and Uniform/Physical Education Allowances for School Year 2023/24

I would like to provide an update on the upcoming 2023/24 application process for Free School Meals and School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowances.

The Education Authority (EA) will be issuing communications on the EA website and social media channels to inform parents/guardians of the process for the coming year. We continue to seek your support to promote awareness of Free School Meals and Uniform Allowance, and to encourage all potential applicants to apply for the support available, before **28 July** to ensure all is in place for the new school year in September 2023. Timely applications will also help staff and schools as we work towards the Census date of 6th October 2023.

Current Eligible Families and New Applicants

Parents/guardians who are currently in receipt of support for the 2022/23 school year will receive an e-mail highlighting the need to apply for the 2023/24 school year and the process to do so.

Applications can be submitted from **Thursday 22 June**, however we will be communicating the launch of applications with parents on **Monday 26 June** via our website and social media channels.

The application portal can be accessed via the [EA website](#).

It is important for all applicants to read and understand what supporting documentation is required for their application. Information on this can also be found on the EA website, via the link above.

Proof of Benefit Letter

We recently issued a communication on Tuesday 13 June (from EA Mail) with information on the Proof of Benefit letter that some applicants require.

Applicants can request a Proof of Benefit Letter, by visiting this [link](#).

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

Education Authority

40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ

T: +44 (0)28 9056 4000 **F:** +44 (0)28 9033 1714 **W:** www.eani.org.uk

Special Diet

Parents/Guardians whose child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (Stage 3) and requires a special diet should contact the Meals and Uniform Section for a paper application form if they wish to apply under the special diet criterion.

Those who received this support for the current school year (2022/2023) have been sent a pre-populated paper form to complete and return.

Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals

The first full list of pupils eligible for free school meals will be sent to you at the end of August 2023 via AnyComms (or by post/email to schools and colleges who do not use SIMS). Weekly updates will be sent each Friday and further full lists sent on the following Monday.

Can you please check the lists and inform the EA Meals and Uniform Section immediately if a pupil/student has not enrolled for the 2023/24 school year or is no longer in attendance during the year.

Free School Meals / Uniform Allowance Helpdesk

The Free Schools Meals and Uniform Allowance Helpdesk is operated by staff across the EA Free School Meals/Uniform Allowance service.

It is available to assist parents and guardians who may have any queries. The Helpdesk operates Monday – Friday from 9am to 4.30pm and can be contacted via email:

mealsanduniform@eani.org.uk.

As previously advised, schools should use mealsanduniformschools@eani.org.uk which is the email for schools' staff only. This will ensure that your enquiry is given priority.

The telephone number which should be used for all enquiries is 028 9041 8044.

Further information including eligibility criteria for the 2023/24 school year and a list of Frequently Asked Questions to assist with any parental queries can be accessed by visiting our [website](#).

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

Peter Canavan

Head of Admissions and Financial Support

Email: Peter.Canavan@eani.org.uk

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