



Department  
for Education

# **Free school meals supplementary grant**

**Guidance for local authorities, maintained  
schools, academies and free schools**

**July 2018**

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# Summary

## About this guidance

This guidance is from the Department for Education.

Due to the roll-out of Universal Credit, we introduced an income-based threshold for free school meal eligibility. As a result of this change to the benefit system and free school meal eligibility, the number of pupils eligible for free school meals will increase. Part of this increase will be because of the transitional protections we have put in place, which mean that pupils who were eligible for free school meals<sup>1</sup> on 1 April 2018, and those who become eligible during the Universal Credit rollout period, will retain eligibility until the end of this rollout period. For those still in education at this point, protections will continue until the end of their current phase of education; this covers until at least summer 2023. This means that schools should not remove free school meals eligibility for pupils over this period, unless the pupil's parent requests that they do so.

The school funding system already reflects the number of meals that schools need to provide. But we recognised that for some schools this increase in free school meal numbers may be difficult to manage in the short term, because school funding operates on a lagged basis. That means that changes in the characteristics of pupils in a school take time to have an impact on the funding the school receives. This grant will provide schools with extra funding to help them meet the higher costs of providing extra meals before the lagged funding system catches up.

This guidance sets out details of the school meal cost grant that will be paid in 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Conditions of Grant document for this grant will be published alongside the allocations in February 2019.

## Expiry or review date

This guidance will next be reviewed in spring 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> This applies to children eligible for free school meals due to their parents' being in receipt of Universal Credit or the qualifying benefits being replaced by Universal Credit. The small numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals due to their parents' receipt of the guaranteed element of Pension Credit, or support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, are not eligible for transitional protections as these are not affected by the introduction of Universal Credit. For these pupils, we expect parents to inform schools where their circumstances have changed.

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- Local authorities
- School leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and academies

## Calculation of allocations in 2018-19 and 2019-20

The allocations will be determined by the difference between the number of meals taken by pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in a school as recorded in the October censuses as follows:

Financial Year	What we will measure	What schools will receive
2018-19	School-level FSM take up increase between October 2018 and October 2017 census	Measured increase in FSM take up x £440
2019-20	School-level FSM take up increase between October 2019 and October 2018 census	Measured increase in FSM take up x £440

For example, if the number of pupils taking up free school meals in a school increases by 11 between the October 2017 and October 2018 census dates they will receive a total of £4,840 for the financial year 2018-19. This payment would be allocated in early 2019.

### New and growing schools

The only exception to the above is for schools that are adding year groups. In order to apply the policy fairly, we will estimate increases in the number of pupils taking up free schools meals as follows:

Allocations will be calculated by multiplying the difference in the average number of pupils taking up free schools meals in each year group by the number of year groups.

Census Year	Year Group			Total	Average per year group
	Y7 (no. of pupils taking up FSM)	Y8 (no. of pupils taking up FSM)	Y9 (no. of pupils taking up FSM)		
October 2017	110	90	-	200	100
October 2018	125	120	115	360	120
Difference					20
Number of pupils we would allocate additional funding for = average difference multiplied by number of year groups					60
Amount of funding allocated = number of pupils x £440					£26,400

## **Local authority maintained schools, academies and free schools**

This grant will not affect a school's allocation through the pupil premium, national funding formulae, or any other source of existing funding.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will publish allocations for maintained schools, academies and free schools in February 2019.

### **Payments**

- February 2019 - ESFA pay local authorities for their maintained schools
- March 2019 - ESFA pay academies and free schools

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How does this impact on other funding streams?

The FSM supplementary grant is a separate grant and does not affect Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), pupil premium or Dedicated Schools Grant funding which will continue to be provided to schools and local authorities as they are currently.

### Why are the funding rates per eligible pupil different between this grant and UIFSM?

The UIFSM grant is based on the number of pupils recorded as taking a meal in year 1 and year 2 in the school censuses. Each meal taken by an eligible pupil attracts £2.30. An allocation assumes that pupils will take 190 school meals over an academic year, providing £437 per eligible pupil

For the FSM Supplementary Grant, we have used the FSM factor value in the national funding formula (NFF) of £440 per pupil as schools are expected to pay for free school meals through their core funding, which is allocated to local authorities through the NFF.

## Further information

### Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- [Eligibility Checking Service guidance](#)
- [UIFSM: guide for local authorities and schools](#)
- [The national funding formula for schools and high needs: Policy document](#)





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