

Free School Meals and Pupil Premium Checking

July 2017

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers



The online Citizen Portal enables parents and carers to determine eligibility for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium. The portal which is a supported IT system interrelates with the Department of Work and Pensions data source and provides applicants with an instant eligibility result. The following list of question and answers sets out to support any queries you may experience when you or parents are using the system:

Q. "The system sometimes returns children as not entitled, when siblings in the same family are entitled" or "I know the children are eligible but why aren't they showing?"

A. The system has a tolerance level and as such carries out 'data matching'. If a family has selected a nick name or submitted an inaccurate spelling of a name, it causes a 'system clash' and the record will therefore not show as eligible. Parent/Carers must include the following accurate information for themselves and their children:

- Date of birth
- National Insurance number
- legal names
- gender
- parental responsibility (this must be indicated or the claim will be rejected)

If applications are delayed or unexpectedly rejected it is mostly due to the incorrect data that could not be validated.

Q. "I have forgotten the password to access the schools portal, how do I login?"

A. Through recent improvements schools are able to change their own password on the portal. Please see instructions on page 8 of the training guide, which can be found here: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/schoolmeals>

Please note the login details are the same for Exclusions and Free School Meals.

Q. "how can parents check eligibility, many do not have an email address or a computer?"

A. Parents can apply using a variety of sources including smart phones, computers, laptops, tablets. Parents can also choose to access their local Library, the council's Civic office or their child's school if they do not have the technology to hand.

Please note that each parent must use their own email address and not a school staff email address. Only one parent's eligibility can be checked in an account.

Guides on setting up an email address and details on enrolling in the IT Buddy Scheme at libraries can be found on our website at:- <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/libraries/it-services/computers-and-printing>

Q. "Parents believe they should be eligible because they are on a low income but they are showing as not eligible, why is this case?"

A. Parents should be advised that details of the free school meals eligibility criteria are available on our website at:- <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/schoolmeals>

It is commonly discovered in these situations that families on low incomes may still not be eligible for free school meals because they receive Working Tax Credit. Families in receipt Working Tax Credit will not qualify for free school meals.

Where a parent believes they are eligible and have checked the eligibility criteria and the accuracy of their details provided on their online application, they should be advised to contact the DWP to confirm that their records have been updated and they are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits outlined on our website.

Unfortunately the Education Access service only receives Eligible or Not Eligible Status's for each parent from the DfE/DWP and are unable to access any additional information or reasons for the decision.

Rechecking of the data on a fortnightly basis takes place through the supported IT system to confirm ongoing parental eligibility. If both parents apply and one parent is eligible and the other is in-eligible you will see both scenarios on your school report.

Q. "I can see that a parent has applied successfully for FSMs and the parent has shown me the application summary confirming eligibility, they are however missing from the schools report. Why is this?"

A. Often this is because the child is not showing on roll at the selected school. In order for the details to appear on the school report it needs to be recorded on the MKC IT system that the pupil is on roll at the school. The parent selecting the school name in the application is not enough; we need the school to confirm when the pupil started. This is done through the weekly starters and leavers' data return

Q. "Help, I am experiencing technical difficulties with your Capita system, who can I speak to?"

A. If it is a case that your IT department is unable to resolve an issue with the Capita system, please send a screenshot of the issue you are experiencing and a summary to freeschoolmeals@milton-keynes.gov.uk. This can then be investigated and resolved.