



## ***Free School Meals and School Clothing Awards***

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### **1.0 LEGAL BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1 Free School Meals**

The Council has discretion, under the terms of the **Education (Scotland) Act 1980**, to provide milk, meals and other refreshments for pupils in its schools. Charges for this service are fixed by the Council and may be amended from time to time.

#### **1.2 School Clothing Awards**

The Council has a duty, as defined in terms of **Section 54** of the **Education (Scotland) Act 1980**, to make “such provision as is deemed necessary for pupils who cannot, by reason of the inadequacy or unsuitability of their clothing, take full advantage of the education provided”.

The Council is under the same duty with regard to the provision of clothing for children who have reached the age of five and are waiting to start school.

### **2.0 QUALIFYING FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS/SCHOOL CLOTHING AWARD**

For pupils whose parents are in receipt of **Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Child Tax Credit** (but not Working Tax Credit) (subject to a maximum annual income), **both maximum Child Tax Credit and maximum Working Tax Credit** (subject to maximum annual income) or support under **Part VI** of the **Immigration and Asylum Act 1999**, the Council has a duty to provide a free midday meal. Parents who are in receipt of one or more of these benefits are also entitled to make an application for a School Clothing Award.

Pupils in attendance at Saltersgate School, where eating skills and the midday meal are part of the educational programme, may also receive free school meals, as agreed in consultation with the Psychological Service.

Head Teachers should make parents aware of the above arrangements and schools should hold a supply of application forms for this purpose. [See Appendix 1]

For pupils who live outwith Midlothian attending Saltersgate or a specialist provision in Midlothian, parents/guardians should apply to their ‘home’ authority for School Clothing Award.

### **3.0 APPLYING FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS/SCHOOL CLOTHING AWARD**

Any parent who wishes to apply for the provision of free meals and/or a school clothing award should complete an application form which is available from the Head Teacher of the school or from the Finance and Planning Resources Section, Fairfield House. The same application form is used for both awards.

Parents should complete all relevant parts of the form. The parent may add all children to the application who attend Midlothian Council schools even although some children may not attend the school issuing the form.

### **4.0 SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS**

On completion, the form should be submitted by the applicant to the Education Finance Section, Fairfield House. Proof of benefit is not normally required unless the applicant is only in receipt of Child Tax Credit. In this case a TC602 should be submitted. Receipt of other benefits is checked with information held by the Housing Benefits Section of the Council.

We reserve the right to ask for further evidence if necessary.

Approval of school clothing awards is slightly more flexible than free school meals. If a parent/guardian is not in receipt of any of the recognised benefits, a clothing award may still be given, in exceptional circumstances, and parents/guardians may still apply for an award. In such cases, the parent/guardian should complete 'Section 5: Other Relevant Details' on the form and an Education Welfare Officer will visit them at home to assess their income.

### **5.0 SCHOOL LISTINGS**

Head Teachers will be able to access a full listing for their school of pupils who have been awarded free school meals using SEEMIS.

### **6.0 RENEWAL OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

Once an award of free school meals has been made it remains valid for the remainder of the school session. However, if the parent ceases to receive the appropriate benefits at any time before this date, free meals will be cancelled.

Parents whose children have been awarded free school meals will automatically receive a renewal letter and application form directly from Education, Communities and Economy in March/April. The completed form can be submitted any time after 1 April for the school session starting in August.

Applicants who are not successful in their application but consider that their circumstances have significantly altered may re-apply at any time.

#### **6.1 Frequency of School Clothing Award**

School clothing awards are only disbursed once a year for each child. It is currently the parent's/guardian's responsibility to re-apply for a clothing award.

## **7.0 AVOIDING DISCRIMINATION**

Head Teachers should ensure that arrangements for pupils in receipt of free meals do not cause discrimination as a result of ticket issue, queuing arrangements etc.

## **8.0 PACKED LUNCHES**

Head Teachers should ensure that adequate facilities are provided, preferably in a dining area, for pupils who choose to bring packed lunches to school. Arrangements should include access to drinking water and glasses to enable it to be drunk along with the packed lunch.

## **9.0 SUPERVISION**

When pupils remain at school for their lunch, the authority has a duty to ensure their safety and supervision. Head Teachers should take all necessary steps to meet this obligation, appropriate to their own school situation.

## **10.0 FURTHER INFORMATION**

If further information or advice is required on any of these points outlined above, please contact the Finance Section, Fairfield House, Dalkeith.

Education, Communities and Economy  
Midlothian Council  
Fairfield House  
Dalkeith  
EH22 3ZG

Tel: 0131-270-7500

Appendix 1: Application Form

**Original policy guidelines:**

**3.13 School Clothing Awards (March 2002)**

**3.14 Free School Meals (April 1999)**