

Free school means (FSM) auto enrolment project

Information sheet September 2024

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Why have I received a letter about FSM?

- As part of the FSM auto enrolment project, some parents and carers with a child or children who we think may be eligible for FSM, but not currently claiming them, will receive a letter offering to check their FSM eligibility and auto enrol them to FSM if they are eligible.
- Parents and carers do have the right to opt out if they wish.

What personal data are you using to identify the children who may be eligible?

- This project involves the processing of your personal data. It's in the council's legitimate interests to do so and it means that we can help families and schools get the services they need.
- We've looked at the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support information we hold and found that there are some households that may meet the criteria for FSM but have not yet made an application.

- We'll use your surname, National Insurance number and your date of birth so that we can check if you qualify for FSM. When we use your information, the government's electronic FSM checking service gives us a simple reply – yes or no. This is how we check to see if you qualify for FSM.
- We don't see any other information about you or your family when we use the checking service and we're not allowed to ask anything else from the Department of Work and Pensions, Inland Revenue or the Benefits Agency.
- We cannot use your information for anything other than for the FSM auto enrolment project.
- Your data is secure, and we follow strict procedures about how we look after your personal information under the General Data Protection Regulations.

More funding for schools

- The school your child is attending will automatically get a pupil premium amount if the child is eligible for FSM.
- For each child in primary school the Pupil Premium payment is £1,455 and for each child in secondary school it is £1,035.
- The funding received through the Pupil Premium grant can help fund valuable support including extra tuition, support staff or providing after school activities.
- If your child is 3 or 4 years old, accessing free early learning at a private nursery or childminder and you meet the criteria for FSM, their provider will receive Early Years Pupil Premium. We'll automatically recheck your child's entitlement to FSM when they start school.

How will I know if my child is eligible?

- We'll advise parents, carers, and schools if a child is eligible for FSM following the eligibility check.
- Parents and carers will also be told if their child is not eligible for FSM after the eligibility check.

Does my child have to have the school meal?

- Your child does not have to have a school meal, although one will be available free of charge at any time until your circumstances change and you no longer qualify.
- The value of the meals is around £400 per year to you. You could put the money you would spend on a packed lunch towards other things.
- Your child would not be treated any differently to any other child in school if they receive a FSM.

- Also, children will often eat meals at school if they see their friends having them. They often try different foods at school rather than at home.

Opt-out of the FSM auto enrolment

- If you don't want us to carry out the FSM eligibility, check to check your child's eligibility or to enrol your child onto the FSM scheme, you must let us know as soon as possible and before the deadline within the letter.
- You can email your objection to us at supportingyou@luton.gov.uk.