Dear Parent/Guardian

**Re: School Meals – Universal Free School Meals – Free School Meals**

**What does this mean to you?**

School Meals – School meals are charged at £2.60 per day/£13.00 per week. Your child has the option to take a paid school meal or bring in a packed lunch from Years 3 to 6. School meals should be paid for weekly in advance every Monday or in advance termly or yearly. All dinner monies are to be paid online using SIMS Pay.

 If you do not have an email address school will assist you in creating one free of charge, a valid email address is necessary to set up SIMS Pay online. Clubs/Trips/ Music Lessons/Swimming etc are all to be paid online from September 2020.

When your child is moving into Year 3 and if you need a SIMS Pay log in created again or at any time, to pay on line please contact the school office on E: portobelloprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

**Universal Free School Meals (UFSM)** – All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will be eligible for a hot school meal free of charge from September, no application necessary for UFSM. The provision of Universal Free School Meals aims to play a key role in promoting and supporting healthy eating and lifestyles. It will enable children to try a wider range of foods, as well as give them the fuel they need for an afternoon of focused and high-quality learning.

A blanket entitlement to Universal FSM will be provided to all in Reception Class, or Year 1 or Year 2 class. You can of course provide your child with a healthy packed lunch although we do encourage all children in key stage 1 to take a school meal.

**You may find you are eligible for FSM too** – please review the information below and if you are eligible school will receive additional funding in the school budget called Pupil Premium which is used to raise achievement levels as well as providing access to facilities, clubs, subsidising trips and residentials too.

If you apply (regardless of receiving UFSM) your child will be eligible for Free School Meals once they move into Year 3/Key Stage 2 and at present until the leave at the end of Year 6, this can save you just under £400 per year.

**Free School Meals (FSM**) – Parents must meet the criteria detailed below and complete an application form. If you are eligible to claim, we encourage you to do so as each valid claim attracts additional funding to the school.

Due to COVID-19 many families income has been greatly disrupted and you may find your eligibility status has changed, that being the case we encourage you to apply for free school meals, not only will this allow your child to receive a free meal in school for the remainder of their primary education (as set out in current guidelines) school will also receive Pupil Premium which will be used to support achievement levels and provide access to facilities and clubs as outlined above.

For every pupil registered with the council as eligible under the entitlement criteria below, the school will receive additional funding in the school budget called Pupil Premium (£1,320 per child).

If you do not claim for Free School Meals, then the Pupil Premium funding will not be available for your child (e.g. subsidising the above). *If you cannot apply online contact the school office ASAP*.

Your child will qualify for free school meals if you meet the following criteria:

* you or your partner receive child benefit (for the child you are applying for), and
* the child is in full time education, under 19 years of age, and
* the child attends a local authority school or sixth form (but not a sixth form college). If your child attends nursery, attendance must be full-time, and your child must attend before and after lunch in a nursery run by Gateshead Council. This still applies even if your child is presently unable to attend school because of the COVID-19 restrictions on schools being open.

You and your partner must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

* Income Support
* Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA - IB)
* Guarantee Pension Credit
* Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA Income Related)
* Child Tax Credit - but not Working Tax Credit - and your income for Tax Credit purposes must be less than £16,190.00 (details are shown on your Tax Credit award notice)
* Working Tax Credit Run-on
* Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
* Universal Credit and your net earned family income is less than £7,400.

Receipt of one of the above benefits will be checked with the relevant government departments (HMRC, DWP and Home Office) and this may be done via the Eligibility Checking Service. By signing the declaration on the application form, you are giving your consent for us to check your eligibility through this service.

Free School Meals Team
Benefit Section
Civic Centre
Regent Street
Gateshead
NE8 1HH

0191 433 3729 -  [**Application form for means tested free school meals [36.4KB]**](https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/13526/Application-form-for-means-tested-free-school-meals/doc/Benefits_FSMs_Application_Form.docx?m=636929163635730000)

E: **benefitsfsm@gateshead.gov.uk**

Please let the school office know before the end of September, if you think your child may be eligible for Free School Meals as Pupil Premium funding for the following year will be calculated in October.

Kind regards

Mrs J Humphrey - Head Teacher