



FSM – Frequently Asked Questions

Guidance for school staff on Free School Meals

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Introduction

This document explains how the Free School Meals (FSM) process is managed in Hackney. This includes the responsibilities of Hackney Education, parents/carers and schools.

If you have any queries regarding FSM, you can contact the Admissions and Pupil Benefits Team on 0208 820 7125 Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

How do parents apply for free school meals?

Parents of pupils attending a Hackney school should make an online application if they have not previously applied in Hackney before. Further information and the online application form can be found on our website: [Apply for free school meals | Hackney Education](#).

Only one application is needed whilst the pupil attends a Hackney school.

How do schools check if an application has been made?

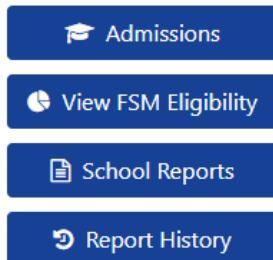
You should check your schools SAM report which will show if the pupil has applied or not and the outcome of the application.

How do schools access the FSM SAM report?

Every school has a shared username and password which is used by all staff who require access to SAM. Your school administrator will share the login details with you if you are allowed access.

Email Stacey Harriott stacey.harriott@hackney.gov.uk to request a password reset if it is lost due to staff leaving.

Sign into your school account via the [SAM portal](#). To access your school's FSM list click 'View FSM Eligibility':



You can use the search/filter to view results by year groups or FSM status. To view the FSM status of children transferring to your school in the next academic year, click 'Admissions Entry Academic Year' and pick the transfer year from the drop down menu:

Q Search Expand/Collapse all School Options: ▾

Page Size: ▾
 500 250 75 25 All

FSM: ▾

NC Year
▾

FSM Status
▾

FSM (UI) Eligibility
▾

Status Start Date on or after
▾

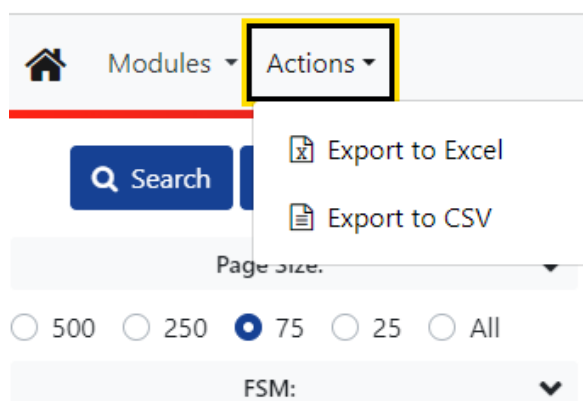
Use Attendance School
 Use Accepted Preference School if no Attendance exists
 Use Accepted Preference School Attendance As At

08/02/2024

Admissions Entry Academic Year
▾

Q Search

To export your FSM reports, click 'Actions' and select 'Export to Excel':



Do all schools have access to FSM SAM reports?

Community schools are maintained by Hackney Education and have automatic access to SAM.

Academies and free schools must purchase the free school meal service as a traded service. Further information about traded services can be found at www.hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/categories/admissions

I cannot see a pupil on the SAM report

It is unlikely that our records show the child as attending your school. Please email Pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk quoting the child's date of birth and full name so that we can check if the school details are correct.

Parent insists they applied but the SAM report says no application was made?

Please email Pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk quoting the child's date of birth and full name so that we can check if an application has been made.

Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) status

Families with NRPF status cannot apply via Hackney's online FSM form because they do not have a National Insurance (NI) or National Asylum Support Service (NASS) number, however they may still be entitled to FSM.

A template application form is available on the Services for Schools website: [Template NRPF form](#). Hackney schools can ask NRPF families to use this form to apply. The completed form must be returned to and processed by the school.

Schools can ask the parent to provide supporting evidence but it is not mandatory. Please read the [DfE guidance](#) for further information.

The Pupil Benefits team cannot record NRPF FSM eligibility on Synergy SAM. You must record eligible children with NRPF status in your school system. You should also keep any evidence of status/income for census.

How do schools record FSM for eligible NRPF children?

Schools should record eligible free school meals pupils who qualify through the NRPF criteria in the termly school census, in the same way as all other free school meal pupils.

You can email the MISA team at misa@hackney.gov.uk if you require assistance.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

State funded schools in England are required by law to provide free lunches to pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 regardless of income.

Children in these year groups are shown as 'Yes' under the 'UI Status' column on the FSM report in SAM.

Universal Primary Free School Meals - Mayor of London initiative

The Mayor of London is funding universal free school meals for children in Year 3-6 regardless of income until the end of 2027/28 academic year. Further information about the initiative is available at

www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-mayor-does/priorities-london/free-school-meals

Children in these year groups are **not** shown as 'Yes' under the 'UI Status' column on the FSM report in SAM.

How do schools record Universal Infant / Universal Primary Free School Meals

On your MIS, you should only record pupils as eligible for FSM if these pupils have met the standard eligibility criteria for FSM.

You should not include Reception to Year 6 pupils who are receiving free meals as part of UIFSM or the Mayor of London's Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) initiative who do not meet the income eligibility criteria for FSM.

Parent has applied using a NASS number but the application outcome says rejected. Why?

The Eligibility Checking System (ECS) provided by the Department for Education (DfE) doesn't always give an outcome for families using a NASS number to apply so further evidence may be needed to verify eligibility.

If evidence is required, the Pupil Benefits team will email the parent. They must send a photo image of the Home Office letter and/or ARC card confirming their status to

pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk. Once the documents have been checked, the outcome will be updated on SAM (if necessary) and emailed to the parent.

Parent says their child was receiving free school meals at their last school in another borough. What should I do?

You can ask the parent to apply for free school meals in Hackney. However, if they apply and are rejected, you will need to check the pupil's CTF file from their previous school to see if they were listed as Pupil Premium. Pupils marked as Pupil Premium have protected free school meals until 31 July 2026.

If the pupil has protected free school meals status, you must record Pupil Premium eligibility in your MIS for census and holiday lunch support. You should also keep evidence of this for census as the pupil's eligibility will not appear on your SAM FSM eligibility list.

You can email the MISA team at misa@hackney.gov.uk if you require assistance with recording FSM in your MIS.

Parent cannot make an online FSM application. Can the school help?

Yes, if the parent is struggling to make an application due to a language barrier or because they have no internet/device for example, you can assist parents to create an account and make a Hackney FSM application online at [Apply for free school meals | Hackney Education](#). To do this, you will need the following information

- Parent email address and password to create an account.
*****Please note the account must be verified before you can make the application*****
- Parents full name, date of birth, home address and NI or NASS number
- Child's full name, sex and date of birth
- Child's school details

If you are unable to successfully create and verify an account on the Hackney online system, you can instead complete the FSM School Assisted Form on the parent's behalf. This can be found on the Services for Schools Website [here](#). You will still be required to provide the following information:

- Parents full name, date of birth, home address, email address and NI or NASS number
- Child's full name, sex and date of birth
- Child's school details

The form will be processed within 10 working days of submission.

Parent applied using the London Grid For Learning (LGfL) online form. Will the outcome show on SAM?

No, outcomes will only show on SAM if an application is submitted via the online Hackney FSM application or the FSM School Assisted form as detailed in the point above.

If you would like to outcome in SAM, please advise or assist the parent to apply. However if you have evidence of an eligible outcome from LGfL and you are happy to provide a free school meal without having an outcome from SAM, you can record Pupil Premium eligibility on your school system. You should also keep evidence of this for census.

How often do you recheck children who are recorded as Rejected in the SAM FSM report?

The Pupil Benefits team recheck all ineligible pupils weekly.

How do I remove pupils from my SAM list that have left our school?

If a pupil leaves your school, it is essential that you follow the standard off-roll procedure. This involves either submitting a CML file via AnyComms or completing and returning the on/off roll spreadsheet to pupil.benefits@hackney.gov.uk

If you encounter difficulties generating a CML file because the child left during the previous academic year, please email Bo Bagridge bo.bagridge@hackney.gov.uk who will provide guidance on the appropriate steps to take in such cases.