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**‘Opening the Gate to Success’**

Dear Parent/Carer,

Firstly, we hope that you and your loved ones are keeping well and safe during this difficult time. A time where our ‘normal’ is no longer ‘normal’. The national news has made us all aware of the changes that have been made to people’s everyday lives. We are only too aware of those amongst us who have continued in their roles as Key Workers, to those of you a huge thanks from the Parkgate community! Alongside this we are also aware of those who will have lost jobs. As much as possible we want to be able to support you, whether that be emotionally through services you will be able to access through school, or financially, where we may be able to signpost you for advice.

In the past there has been a misunderstanding around Free School Meals and who is entitled to them. Some feel that there is a stigma attached to signing up for them. Let us reassure you there is no stigma, the information is personal to you and is not disclosed by us. However, what it does do is open up opportunities for your children.

To make Free School Meals slightly less confusing, let me start by explaining the difference between Free School Meals and Universal Free School Meals.

**Free School Meals (FSM)** – Parents must meet the criteria detailed below and complete an online application form (we can support you with this if you need it). If you are eligible to claim, we encourage you to do so as each valid claim attracts additional funding to the school. More crucial now than ever before!

Head to <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/54/benefits/168/free_school_meals>

**Universal Free School Meals (UFSM)** – Under normal term time opening, all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are eligible for a hot school meal free of charge, no application required BUT no additional funding to school.

1. **Free School Meals (FSM)** – parents complete a simple on line application form, or call the Free School Meals helpline on 024 7683 3773. 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) which is used to help raise achievement levels. **This also includes enabling access to facilities, clubs, and subsidising trips and residentials. 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).**

Free school meals are available to children of families who are in receipt of:

* Income Support
* Jobseekers Allowance (income based)
* Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
* Guarantee Credit (the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit)
* Universal Credit (UC)
	+ From 1 April 2018, UC claims will only be eligible for free school meals if the total net **earned** income is under £7,400 per year OR if the child was eligible for a free school meal on 01/04/18
	+ Where the child was eligible for a free school meal on 01 April 2018, they will remain entitled to a free school meal  regardless of any change in parental income until they finish the phase of education they are in (primary or secondary) as at 31 March 2022
	+ Any child who becomes eligible for a free school meal between 01 April 2018 and 31 March 2022 will remain entitled to a free school meal  regardless of any change in parental income until they finish the phase of education they are in (primary or secondary) as at 31 March 2022
* Support under part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
* Child Tax Credit, **provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit** and have a **total**annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190

Parents receiving Working Tax Credit for four weeks after their employment finishes are entitled to free school meals during that period.  This also applies to parents who start working less than 16 hours per week (please seek advice about this from the Benefits Agency)

Children who receive Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance in their own right are also entitled to receive Free School Meals.

2. **Universal Free School Meals (UFSM**) – From September 2014, all children in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 will be eligible for a Universal Free School Meal. No application is needed but NO additional funding to your child’s school, as per the Pupil Premium.

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.

**As an additional incentive to those families who have not already registered and are eligible to claim, once school has been notified that you have successfully applied you will receive a £25 food voucher of your choice.**

If you have any queries about any of the above, please email either admin@parkgate.coventry.sch.uk or info@parkgate.coventry.sch.uk

Many thanks in anticipation, keep strong, be kind and stay safe. We look forward to seeing you all in the future!

Mrs Zoe Richards

Headteacher