



Be the best you can be...

Dear parent/carer,

RE: PUPIL PREMIUM AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS

If a child is eligible for 'free school meals' (FSM) and is registered for this at any time during their primary years, our school receives extra funding called 'pupil premium' (PP). We use this extra money to improve the educational provision and resources at the school for all pupils, supporting those who need it the most.

Nationally, in 2020--21, approx. 22% of primary pupils were eligible for FSM, and PP funding amounted to just over £1.3 billion. In Cumbria, approx. 18% of primary pupils were registered and £8.5 million was granted to Cumbrian schools.

At this time, our school has a disproportionately low number of pupils registered for FSM (less than 2%) and receives very little of this funding as a result. By 2023 we may have *no* children on roll registered for FSM.

Whilst this may be because the majority of our pupils are simply not eligible, there may be other reasons why parents have not registered. We encourage you to consider whether your family qualifies and to make an application to register your child(ren) if so.

Further information on the FSM/PP funding system is contained below.

What is pupil premium funding?

Pupil premium funding from the government is given to schools to help pupils reach their full potential, regardless of their background or financial situation. The amount given to schools is based on the numbers of pupils on roll who:

- Are registered for free school meals
- Have been registered for free school meals at any point in the past 6 years
- Are, or have been, in care
- Have parents in the armed forces

At Fir Ends we receive an extra £1,345 for every eligible pupil who is registered for free school meals. This extra money can make a real difference to the provision we are able to offer.

For example, we've previously used pupil premium funding to fund:

- Educational provision/resources
- Training for staff to support specific groups of pupils
- Providing every class with a full time teaching assistant, enabling 1-1 and group support
- Academic interventions
- Wellbeing and self-esteem building programmes

Is my child eligible for free school meals?

Your child might be eligible if either parent accesses any of the following:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance** or Employment and Support Allowance

- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of **Pension Credit**
- **Child Tax Credit** (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- **Working Tax Credit** run-on
- **Universal Credit**, provided you have an annual net earned income not exceeding £7,400 (£616.67 per month)

My child is in year R/1/2. Don't they get free meals anyway?

Currently, pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 are entitled to a free school meal thanks to a *different* government funding scheme known as universal infant free school meals (UIFSM).

You shouldn't confuse UIFSM with free schools meals and the pupil premium. It is thought that the UIFSM system has played a significant part in reducing applications for FSM nationwide as parents may feel it is unnecessary until year 3. In turn, this has resulted in reduced PP contributions to many schools.

If your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2 and *is* eligible for free school meals according to the criteria above, you should still register because this is the measure by which the government allocates the extra pupil premium funding to schools.

Does my child have to eat the free school meals?

No. Pupils who are registered for free school meals don't have to eat them if they prefer not to – they can bring a packed lunch as usual instead! If you're eligible you should still register because the school will receive the pupil premium funding which can support children in our school in other ways.

How do I register?

You only need to register once via the local authority website. If you are unsure if you are eligible, simply complete the form, which will determine if you are or not.

To apply, please visit <https://cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/schoolsandlearning/freeschoolmeals.asp>

You will be prompted to set up a Citizen Portal account if you do not already have one and should then be able to complete the online application process.

If eligible for FSM you may also qualify for an annual clothing grant towards the costs of school uniform.

More information

For more information about pupil premium go to our website, which contains details of how the pupil premium has been spent in the past academic year and how it will be spent this year.

If you have any questions or specific concerns, or require support making an application, please contact Mr Spencer or Mrs Schollick.

Best wishes,

Daryl Spencer

Headteacher