

HACKNEY LEARNING TRUST

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Eligibility Criteria

Parent(s) in receipt of the following benefits are entitled to free school meals:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related 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 there is no entitlement to Working Tax Credit and the annual gross income is no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after ceasing to qualify for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – for parents who apply on or after 1 April 2018 the household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits received)

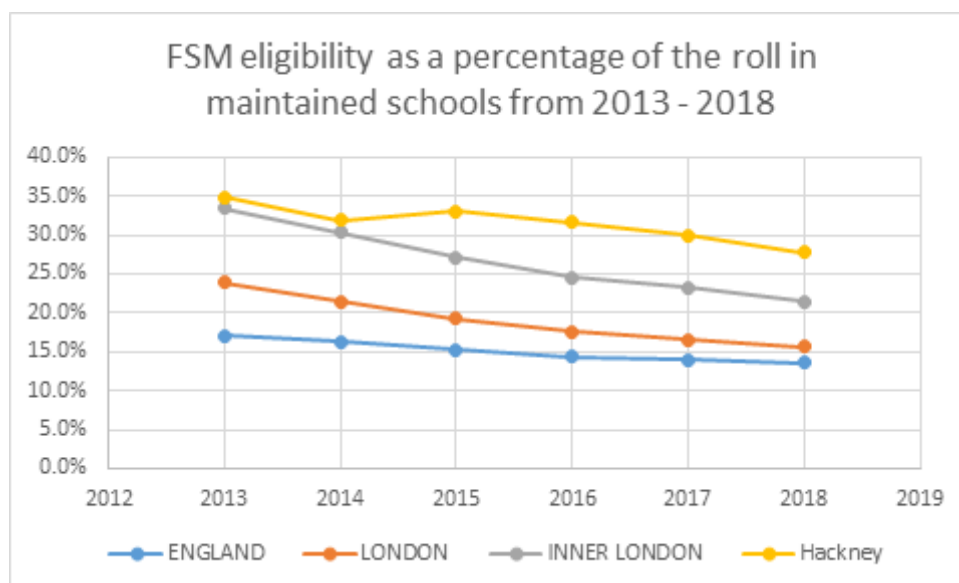
Transition into full universal Credit

As a transition into full universal credit, if a child is currently eligible for free school meals, they'll remain eligible until they finish the phase of schooling (primary or secondary) they're in on 31 March 2022. This protects eligibility until the roll-out of universal credit is completed. The implications after that date are not yet known.

A range of measures are currently in place to ensure that eligible parents apply for free school meals. These include:

- The benefits of applying for free school meals are highlighted and made explicit in the nursery application and guidance form.
- The design of an easy to use on-line application with additional support available via an easy to use guide and HLT's advertised drop-in sessions;
- Advising schools to make explicit to parents the benefits of applying for free school meals as part of the enrolment.
- The admissions and pupil benefits team run weekly eligibility checks on all applicants who have applied for free school meals. Those who are eligible, due to changed circumstances, are added to the updated reports which are then sent to schools on a weekly basis.
- Schools are sent a complete list of eligible pupils on a monthly basis. From February 2019 they will also be sent a list of families that have applied for free school meals but are not eligible. This will enable schools to identify the parents of children who have not applied but may be eligible.
- Pupils' eligibility also continues should the pupil transfer from one Hackney school to another.
- At secondary transfer, schools automatically receive a report from the Admissions team listing the pupils currently eligible for free school meals so that they are able to identify the remaining parents to explain the benefits of applying for free school meals. For transfer in 2019 onwards, the free school meal status will also be shown in a field added to the allocation notification.
- In the case of in-year admissions, a field is added to the allocation notification report indicating whether the pupil is currently in receipt of free school meals to help schools identify the parents of children not on the list who may be eligible.

The table below compares the Hackney average eligibility, against the inner London; London wide and national eligibility. It can be seen that the level of eligibility in Hackney remains significantly higher than the national, London and inner London average, although the gap is narrowing **although free school numbers are decreasing.**



Hackney is also higher than other inner London boroughs as shown in the table below:

	Percentage known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals 2013	Rank	Percentage known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals 2018	Rank	overall difference
INNER LONDON (5)	32%		20%		-12.3%
Camden	37%	4	25%	4	-12.2%
<i>Hackney</i>	34%	6	26%	2	-7.6%
Hammersmith and Fulham	35%	5	21%	6	-13.7%
Haringey	26%	10	14%	12	-12.1%
Islington	46%	1	26%	3	-20.1%
Kensington and Chelsea	31%	8	21%	7	-10.4%
Lambeth	34%	7	21%	5	-12.0%
Lewisham	25%	13	14%	11	-10.4%
Newham	29%	9	12%	13	-17.2%
Southwark	26%	11	20%	9	-6.6%
Tower Hamlets	43%	2	30%	1	-12.4%
Wandsworth	26%	12	15%	10	-10.2%
Westminster	36%	3	20%	8	-15.9%

Source of data: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers> and relates to those pupils eligible and claiming.

[No data is available to include the total eligibility i.e. those that would be eligible but don't claim.](#)

Regarding those that are eligible and don't claim, there is less incentive for these parents to apply if their child automatically receives a free school meal but as shown in the above table Hackney does well compared to other LAs.

HLT will continue to emphasize in its published information the benefits (to the school) of parents applying for free school meals and will continue to assist schools to identify parents who have not applied.

The transition to an on-line application system

Hackney Learning Trust's decision in to introduce an on-line system to apply for free school meals in 2017 was taken in accordance with the Council's policy regarding the promotion of on-line services. The paper application continues to be available to those parents who do not have an email address or are unable to visit Hackney Learning Trust's 2nd floor reception for help with completing the form.

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