

School Access Module (SAM) – Free School Meals

The Synergy School Access Module (SAM) allows you to view the free school meals eligibility of pupils in your school and it is a live link to the administration system used by the Council. As soon as an application is processed you will be able to view a pupil's free school meals eligibility status.

The information you will see in the SAM portal for free school meals is for viewing only, you won't be able to edit information.

We strongly advise schools to check their SAM portal at least weekly to check for any new applications. You will also need to regularly cross-reference the free school meals information held on SAM against the school's own management information system and report any differences/update records accordingly.

Transitional protection

Under the Free School Meal protections policy that was introduced on 1 April 2018, a pupil who was free school meals eligible on 1 April 2018, or who has become eligible under the benefits/low-earnings criteria since then, will continue to receive free meals, even if their household income exceeds the eligibility threshold, up until the end of the school year in 2025/26 (July 2026). This applies to students who were eligible for free school meals in school prior to moving into the school sixth form.

From the start of the 2026/27 school year, the Department for Education will introduce new eligibility criteria meaning that all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive a free meal – the DfE will release further information about the changes closer to that time.

The current transitional protections, apply on an individual pupil basis – they don't apply on a family basis. For example, if an older sibling has protected free school meals eligibility, it doesn't mean that younger sibling will. The parent/carer needs to meet the eligibility criteria at the time of the application for the younger sibling.

School Nursery Children and Free School Meals

The child must be a registered pupil of the school. To be eligible for benefits-related free school meals the parent/carer needs to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits **and** the pupil must be receiving full-time education or must be receiving education both before and after the lunch period of the same day.

If the parent/carer meets the eligibility (income/benefit) criteria by being in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits, the pupil will appear on your School Access Module (SAM) showing as being eligible for Free School Meals **but** school will need to check if the pupil meets the additional criteria regarding the qualifying sessions attended.

Pupils transferring between schools within Shropshire LA who have a service level agreement with us

If a pupil has existing benefits-related free school meals eligibility and is transferring between state-funded schools in Shropshire LA where **both** schools use Shropshire Council for their free school meals application process, the existing free school meals entitlement will transfer across to the new school as soon as the pupil's

attendance information has been updated (the parent/carers doesn't need to re-apply).

If you have completed a 'Starters and Leavers' Form for School Admissions to update a pupil's attendance, this information is updated in Synergy (SAM) the following Monday.

Pupils transferring from out of area schools or schools within Shropshire LA who don't have a service level agreement with us

We only hold details of a pupil's free school meals eligibility where an application has been submitted to us (for example we don't have access to applications that have been submitted to different LA areas or to schools who don't have a service level agreement with us).

When a pupil transfers schools, the only information that transfers with a pupil regarding possible free school meals eligibility is from school to school via the CTF.

If you receive a CTF and there is an open FSM period (FSM start date with no end date), this is an indication that the pupil may have transitional protection but there are a few more things that school will need to check before continuing the pupil's eligibility (please contact us for further information about this process).

Viewing information on the SAM Portal

Log in using your Username and Password (your username will start with the letters SCH).

The first screen you will see is the 'Home' screen.

To view information relating to Free School Meals please select View '**FSM Eligibility**'

On this page you will see the names of all pupils in your school who are known to the LA as attending your school. As long as a pupil is on this main list, it means that any existing information we hold in relation to free school meals for a pupil on that list will show on your portal and also when a new free school meals application is received for a pupil, the free school meals result/information would then show on your portal. If a pupil isn't on that main list, it means we don't know the pupil attends the school.

If you have completed a 'Starters and Leavers' Form for School Admissions to update a pupil's attendance, this information is updated in Synergy (SAM) the following Monday.

To view pupils with FSM eligibility you will need to filter the information in the drop-down menu on the left hand side of the screen – details below.

Across the top of the screen you will see Pupil Name, DOB, NC Year, Address Line 1 (this is student address), Status, UI Status (UIFSM) and Status Start Date.

The screenshot shows the 'Pupil FSM Eligibility' screen. On the left, there is a sidebar with filters: 'Page Size' (500, 250, 75, 25, All), 'FSM' (dropdown), 'C Year' (dropdown), '3M Status' (dropdown), '3M (UI) Eligibility' (dropdown), 'Status Start Date on or after' (date picker), and 'School Options' (checkboxes for 'Use Attendance School', 'Use Accepted Preference School if no Attendance exists', 'Use Accepted Preference School Attendance As At', and a date '25/08/2020' for 'Admissions Entry Academic Year'). The main area shows a table with columns: Pupil Name, DOB, NC Year, Address Line 1, Status, UI Status, and Status Start Date. The table is currently empty, and a 'Full Screen' button is visible above it.

Filter and view functions

To view pupils with FSM eligibility, you need to look at the selections within the tool bar on the left-hand side of the screen, under FSM Status, select '**Eligible for FSM**' and then select '**Search**'. The list of pupils displayed will be those Eligible for FSM.

Q Search Expand/Collapse all

Page Size: ▼

☐ 500 ☐ 250 ☒ 75 ☐ 25 ☐ All

FSM: ▼

AC Year

FSM Status

- Eligible for FSM
- <Unknown>
- Cancelled
- Eligible for FSM**
- No LA Process
- Not Eligible
- Requested
- Review (Allow)
- Review (Not Allow)

☒ Use Attendance School

For infant and primary schools you can also filter to see students who are entitled to UI (Universal Infant Free School Meals), when viewing this information it will show students who are also entitled to benefits-related free school meals, as well as also those who haven't applied (students within the age category for UIFSM).

Q Search Expand/Collapse all

Page Size: ▼

☐ 500 ☐ 250 ☒ 75 ☐ 25 ☐ All

FSM: ▼

AC Year

SM Status

- Eligible for FSM

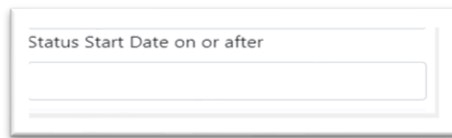
SM (UI) Eligibility

- Yes**
- No

CTIONS

Please note - you won't receive a notification when a pupil becomes eligible. You can decide how often you would like to check the portal for new applications, but it is strongly recommended that schools check their SAM portal at least once a week.

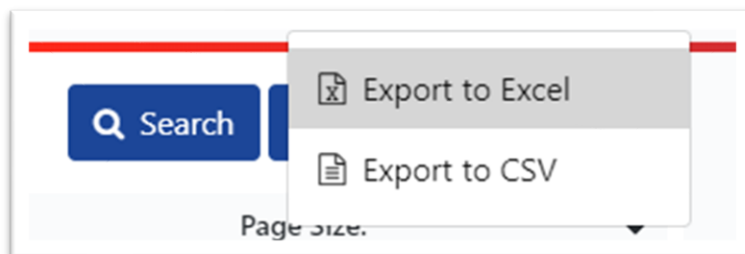
You can use the '**Status Start Date on or after**' filter function to search between dates.

A screenshot of a filter input field. The text 'Status Start Date on or after' is displayed above a text input box. Below the input box is a horizontal line.

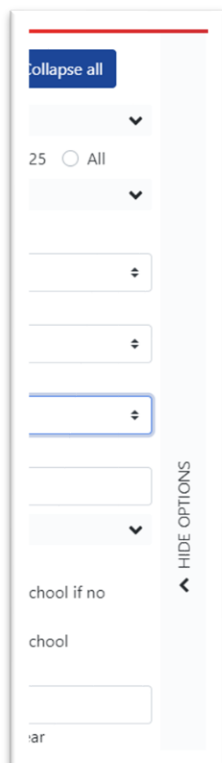
Within the search box if you type in the date that you last checked (then click 'search') it will return a search of new applications received since that date.

Once you have filtered for pupils who have the status 'Eligible for FSM', you can also click 'Status Start Date' twice (which is shown along the top toolbar) and it will put the list into an order by 'status' start date.

At the top of the main screen you will see '**Actions**', when this is selected it allows you to export a list into Excel or CSV.



To expand the view of the screen you can click 'Hide Options' and that removes the side toolbar, to bring back the tool bar you click 'Show Options'



This selection below allows you to view the number of pupils on the page, once selected you will then need to also click 'Search'.

Page Size:

▼

☐ 500 ☐ 250 ☒ 75 ☐ 25 ☐ All

You are able to see if a parent/carers has applied by looking at the pupil's eligibility status.

No FSM applications made

To undo your search selection and refresh your screen you can select the home button which will then take you back to the first screen (after log-in) or you can unselect your search option using the blank selection (within the drop-down list) then click Search (example below).



or

NC Year

▼

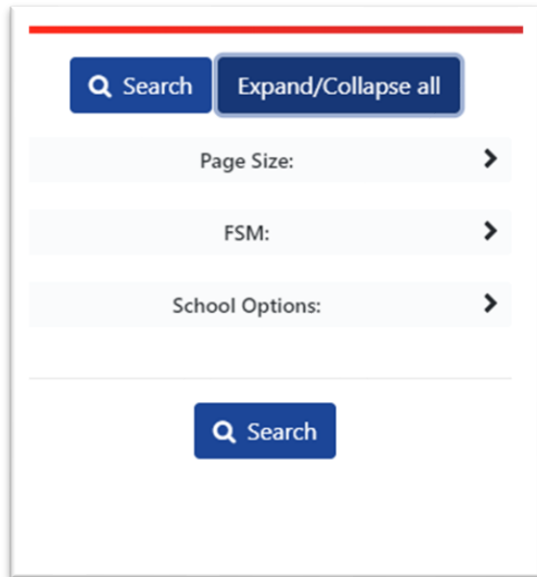
FSM Status

Eligible for FSM

▼

<Unknown>
Cancelled
Eligible for FSM
No LA Process
Not Eligible
Requested
Review (Allow)
Review (Not Allow)

When you select '**Expand/Collapse all**' it narrows down the display of the side bar like this:

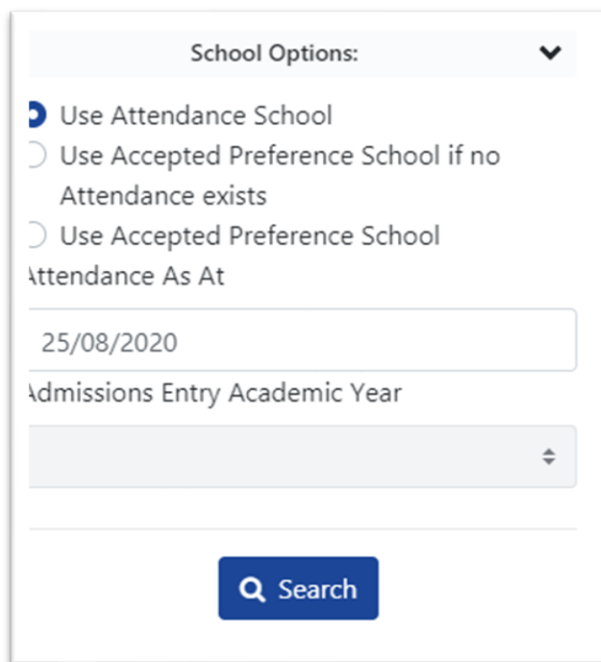


September intakes – applicable to junior and secondary schools (the information is available to check from July each year)

Through the SAM portal there is a way for you to see which pupils are due to transfer to your school in September who currently have free school meals eligibility. The information relates to pupils who are transferring from other Shropshire LA schools where we do their free school meals eligibility checks. Pupils transferring from out of area schools or schools where we don't process their applications won't be included.

Instructions:

- Log into the School Access Module
- Select 'View FSM eligibility'
- Then from the list on the left hand side of the screen select:
- NC Year: 6 (or NC Year 2)
- FSM status: Eligible for FSM
- School options: Use accepted preference school as at (today's date)
- Press search once to validate the search
- Press search again – it then provides a list of Y6 (or Y2) students in that group who are eligible.



The screenshot shows a dropdown menu titled 'School Options:' with a downward arrow. The menu is open, displaying three radio button options: 'Use Attendance School' (which is selected), 'Use Accepted Preference School if no Attendance exists', and 'Use Accepted Preference School Attendance As At'. Below these options is a date input field containing '25/08/2020'. Underneath the date field is a label 'Admissions Entry Academic Year' followed by a greyed-out dropdown menu. At the bottom of the form is a blue button with a magnifying glass icon and the text 'Search'.

Updated August 2025