Southend-on-Sea City Council – Free School Meals

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Introduction

The information we collect from you will be used to register your child for Free School Meals. We are the Data Controller for this information, which we share with schools to ensure your child can receive their free lunch.

Data Protection Information and The Law

Southend-on-Sea City Council is allowed to collect and use personal information. They follow the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR to keep your information safe and use it in the right way.

We use your information to check if your child can get free school meals. We also use it to help schools keep the right records and send the right information to the Department for Education. From the 2026 to 2027 school year, there are two types of benefits-based free school meals: Targeted FSM and Expanded FSM. We use the information to check which type applies.

Types of Information We Collect

We may use your name, address, date of birth, National Insurance number, National Asylum Support Service number, email address and phone number. We may also use your child's name, date of birth, school, year group and pupil number. We record the result of the free school meals check and the date it was checked.

Why We Are Allowed To Use This Information

The Law states that we process this information in order to perform a public task. This task is to provide free school meals to children who qualify. We may also ask for your consent to do future checks. You can withdraw that consent at any time. This will not change checks that have already been done.

Who We Share Your Information With

We may share information with your child's school, academy trust, the Department for Education, the free school meals Eligibility Checking System, other local authorities if needed, and Council staff who help run the service. We only share information when we need to and when the law allows us to.

How The Checks Work

We use the Department for Education Eligibility Checking System. This checks your details against government records. It tells us if your child can get free school meals. We may tell your child's school the result so they can arrange the meals and keep their records up to date.

How Long We Keep Your Information

We will keep your personal information safe and secure. Your information will be kept for seven years after it is no longer needed for the purpose it was collected. After that, we will carefully delete it following our retention policies.

Your Legal Rights

You have rights over the personal information you give us. These include:

- The right to see your information (this is called a Subject Access Request).
- The right to ask us to fix any mistakes in your information.
- The right to ask us to stop using your information in certain ways.
- The right to ask us to delete your information.
- The right to take your information somewhere else or to say no to how we are using it.

If you want to change your mind about giving permission, use your rights, or ask questions about how we use your personal information, you can email us at DataProtection@southend.gov.uk

If you're unhappy with how your data is handled, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. Visit their website at https://ico.org.uk to find out how.

For more details on how the Council uses personal data, please find out Privacy Notices on Privacy notices – Southend-on-Sea City Council