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FAO Head teacher – REMINDER: Free School Meals and School Clothing grant online applications

Dear Colleagues,

Further to our letter to you in August, we wish to remind you of the improved online application process for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants. Despite the introduction of the new online application, we have seen a significant increase in paper applications at the start of this term.

As you may know, the online application process is now held within the Citizen's portal where parents and guardians can also complete the school admissions process.

Link to Citizen's portal:

https://emsonline.cumbria.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2fCitizenPortal_LIVE

As you will appreciate, the start of a new term is a very busy period for us processing a high volume of applications. We carry out an audit each term to ensure applicants are still eligible to receive Free School Meals and Clothing Grants according to information held by the Department of Work and Pensions.

If during the audit, applicants are found to be ineligible they will be contacted via email or letter to notify them of this and we encourage you to support them to provide us with the required information in a timely manner. Parents/guardians are required to log in to the [Citizen's Portal](#) and re-apply if they believe they are still eligible.

Free school meals and clothing vouchers are available if parents/guardians are receiving one of the qualifying benefits detailed on our webpages www.cumbria.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals.

By using the new online process we are able to enhance our customer service by providing the following benefits:

- Parents/guardians are able to check eligibility without waiting for a phone call/email from the Service Centre
- Enables the Service Centre to issue vouchers in a more timely manner; a postal application takes twice as long to process as an online application
- Reduces the risk of duplicate applications being submitted for the same child
- Reduces the risk of application forms and supporting documentation getting lost in the post
- Provides the Service Centre with an audit trail of applications

We'd like you to support us in encouraging parents/guardians to [apply online](#) and reminding them of the need to check the eligibility criteria before submitting an online application to avoid disappointment and unnecessary applications.

Again, we ask for your support and commitment in disseminating this message to your parents/guardians, if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the team using the details at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully,
Alison Graham
Operations Manager – Service Centre