

October 2022

FSM Eligibility Identification Service – Guidance for Schools

Education Systems and Data Team, Barnet with Cambridge Education, Education & Skills Service

We have established a data sharing and matching process to identify all FSM (Free School Meals) eligible pupils, including eligible children of families who may not have come forward before to claim FSM. To this end we are using the most recent data from Barnet's Revenues & Benefits Department on eligible households in Barnet and our schools' census data.

Signing up for the service

If you haven't already done so, please contact Carrie Waldren, your Traded Services contact, to let her know that you wish to buy into this service. At the same time, please send an email Karanjit Dhami to inform who in your school we should send the results file to.

Informing the parents and carers

At the beginning of each academic year (or before commencing the use of this service) you will have to notify the parents of this service. You can do this either by amending your Privacy Notice or by sending a letter to all parents and carers, informing them of this matching process and allowing them to opt out should they wish to. A letter template is included in this information pack.

Preparation of the Census return

Prepare your Census return and add all required information to your management information system. You do not have to check the FSM status of pupils - with two exceptions.

The exceptions:

- 1) A child wishes to take up FSM - you are required to check the FSM status before census day.
- 2) Pupils who are non-Barnet residents who may be eligible (and may or may not want to take up FSM) will have to be checked separately.

Data Delivery

Maintained Schools

Please submit your census return via COLLECT within 3 working days of the census day. Once you have uploaded your return to COLLECT, we will extract the basic data of pupils on roll: UPN, first and last name of pupil, date of birth, address data, FSM where it's known

Academy and Free Schools

In addition to uploading your return to COLLECT, you will have to send it to us securely (via USO-FX, for example) – we need to receive the data within 3 days of the census day. If you do not have a USO-FX account, please contact us. **Do not send personal information of pupils via unencrypted email or you will be in breach of the Data Protection Act.**

Results file – list of eligible pupils

Your Census data will then be matched against the Revenues & Benefits data to identify any pupils who may have been missed. Following the matching exercise, we will send you a list of identified eligible pupils at your school, as well as their FSM start dates, for you to enter onto your MIS. If you have a USO-FX account, we shall send it to the agreed contact via USO-FX, otherwise we shall use secure email to send it. Should you have to make changes to your MIS due to extra pupils having been identified as eligible, you will have to resubmit your census via COLLECT (or edit your return on COLLECT) and then process it as usual (i.e. resolve errors and answer queries).

IMPORTANT NOTES – PLEASE READ

Note 1: Scope of data

The London Borough of Barnet Revenues & Benefits department only holds data on Barnet residents. This means that schools with large numbers of non-Barnet resident pupils will have to additionally invite parents who may be FSM eligible to come forward as before to provide their NI number, date of birth and surname for us to conduct the search in the current fashion. These searches (whether bulk or individual) will be included in the price.

Note 2: Data quality

During the first test runs of matching it has become clear that the quality of the address data is problematic. We will be identifying these data quality issues and will provide you with some guidance on how you can improve your address data quality (over time) in order to aid and improve the matching process.

Note 3: Timeliness of databases

During the matching tests, a small number of schools queried the results of our matching. Pupils they knew to be eligible were not showing up on our list. Some of those could be explained by the fact that the pupils in question were non-Barnet residents (and please remember that non-Barnet residents will never show up on our results files). Another reason that eligible pupils may not be showing up, would be process time delays. It can take a couple of weeks from being accepted for benefits for this to be reflected accurately on the Benefits database(s). If you are ever concerned about individual cases of eligibility, please contact us directly.

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