

## **School Access Module (SAM) – Free School Meals**

The Synergy School Access Module (SAM) allows you to view the free school meals eligibility of students 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 student'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 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**

Transitional protection arrangements introduced in the 2018 to 2019 academic year continue to apply. 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 March 2025 and then until the end of their phase of education (i.e. primary or secondary). This applies to students who were eligible for free school meals in school prior to moving into the school sixth form.

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 school nursery child **must** be accessing a funded session as part of their early years free entitlement before and after the lunch break of the same day. If the parent/carer meets the eligibility 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 from out of area schools or schools within Shropshire LA who don't have a service level agreement with us**

The SAM portal will **only** show details of free school meals claims where applications have been submitted to us. 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).

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'

## Home

To view applications, use the drop down list below. Select the Admissions Round, then press the → **Round Summary** button. Alternatively, select Round Management to view all Rounds.

School:

Admissions Round:

[→ Round Summary](#)

[⚙ Round Management](#) [👁 View FSM Eligibility](#)

On this next screen you will see the names of **all** students 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 SAM portal. If a pupil isn't on that main list, it means we don't know the pupil attends the school.

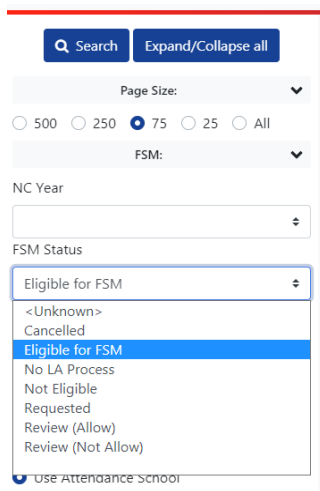
To view students with FSM eligibility you will need to filter the information in the drop-down menu on the left hand side of the screen – details below).

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.

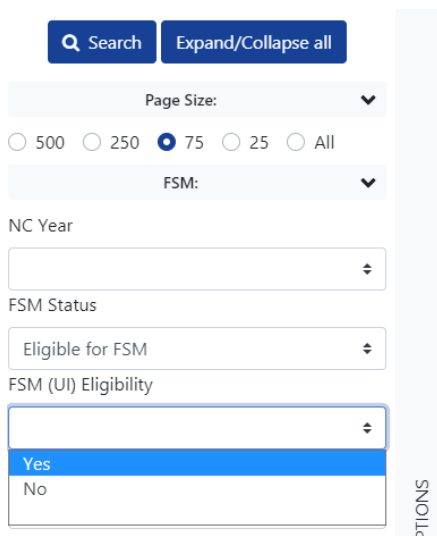
The screenshot shows the 'Pupil FSM Eligibility' interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with various filters: Page Size (500, 250, 75, 25, All), FSM, NC Year, FSM Status, FSM (UI) Eligibility, Status Start Date on or after, and School Options (Use Attendance School, Use Accepted Preference School if no Attendance exists, Use Accepted Preference School Attendance As At, Admissions Entry Academic Year). The main area displays a table with columns: Pupil Name, DOB, NC Year, Address Line 1, Status, UI Status, and Status Start Date. Above the table, it indicates 'There are records matching the current selection. Showing pupils 1 to of' and a 'Full Screen' button.

## Filter and view functions

To view students 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 students displayed will be those Eligible for FSM.



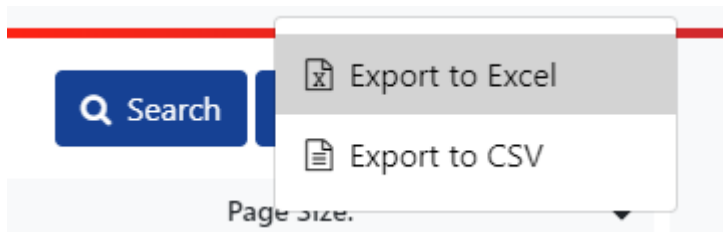
For infant and primary schools you can also filter to see students who are entitled to UI (Universal Infant Free School Meals), when viewing this information it will show students who are also entitled to benefits-related free school meals, as well as also those who haven't applied (students within the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



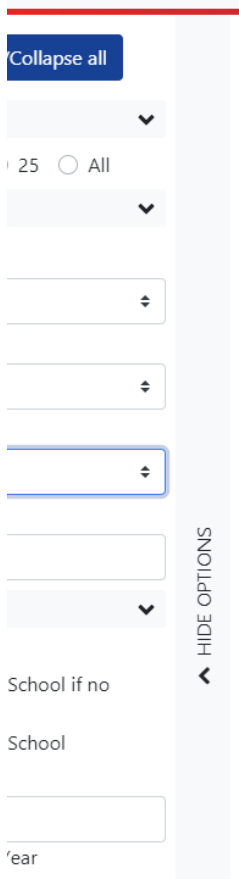
**Please note** - you won't receive a notification when a student becomes eligible. You can use the '**Status Start Date on or after**' filter function to search between dates. You can decide how often you would like to check the portal for new applications, but it is recommended that schools check the portal at least once a week. 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.

Status Start Date on or after


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 students 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/carer has applied by looking at the student'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

- <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:

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 Search

Expand/Collapse all

Page Size: >

FSM: >

School Options: >

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 Search

**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 search interface for FSM eligibility. At the top, there is a dropdown menu labeled 'School Options:' with a downward arrow. Below this are 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 the radio buttons is a text input field containing the date '25/08/2020'. Underneath the date field is the label 'Admissions Entry Academic Year' followed by a dropdown menu with a double-headed arrow. At the bottom of the form is a blue button with a magnifying glass icon and the text 'Search'.

*Updated September 2024*