

Service Level Agreement 2023-2024

Southampton Schools

Free School Meals

1. Introduction

This Service Level Agreement (SLA) is between the school governing body and the Data, Intelligence, and Insight Team (known as the 'Data Team') on behalf of Southampton City Council.

This Service Level Agreement is for the period 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024. Any services brought during the SLA period outlined above will be charged at the full rate as outlined in this document.

Schools have a responsibility to submit accurate Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility for their pupils on a termly basis with the statutory school Census. This can be quite a time-consuming task for school staff and an inconvenience for parents/carers to provide this evidence regularly. The FSM SLA offered by the Data Team provides a comprehensive service that streamlines eligibility checking and helps ensure schools receive the maximum possible funding through FSM6 Pupil Premium allocations.

2. Service Options

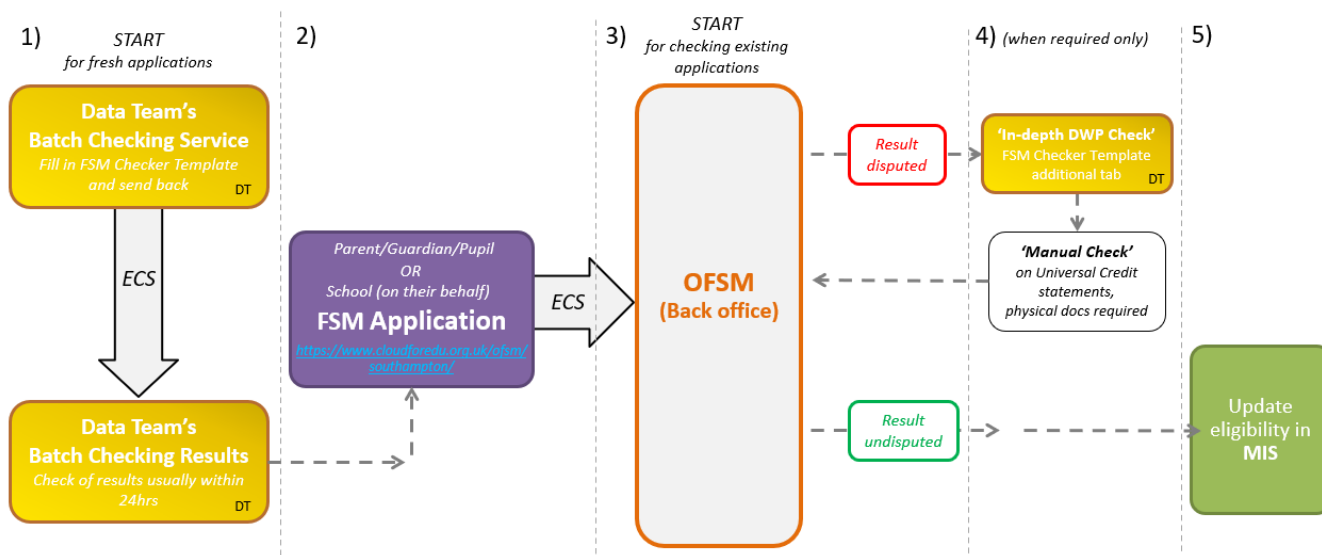
The Data Team offer the FSM eligibility checking service to schools. Schools have the responsibility of ensuring permissions are given for these checks to be completed by the team.

The FSM eligibility checking will be completed either by:

Free School Meal Checking Service Level Agreement	
The availability of an online checking tool for parents/carers of the pupils in subscribing schools, with the results being accessible to schools. Regular re-checks will take place via the automated system.	✓
Batch checks: The Data Team will run a routine through the DfE's Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), which will return either a True or False result for each claimant. These results will be passed back to the school through a secure means. Batch checks will be performed on a termly basis with a maximum submission of 2 batches a term. Schools must ensure data is formatted correctly and essential data items are not missing to avoid resubmissions of the same data which will count as a submission. If the form submitted is not in the correct format it will not be processed.	✓
The Data Team will carry out additional manual checks via the DfE to scrutinise the DWP and HMRC records where there is reasonable doubt that the False eligibility returned via a batch check should be True. Additional information needed to action these manual checks will be requested at that time and will need to be collated by the school.	✓
Follow up using in-depth DWP checks if a parent insists their child is eligible for FSM.	✓
Producing documentation or e-mails, notifying schools of any changes to the OFSM system.	✓
Sharing of good practice amongst schools in aspects such as Universal Credit rollout, transitional protection and Universal Infant Free Meals.	✓

Telephone, e-mail support and at least one webinar to assist schools in understanding FSM eligibility and best practice use of the OFSM checking system.	✓
Appraising schools of any changes to FSM criteria and methodology.	✓
Assessing of evidence provided by the parent in order to determine eligibility when a False has been returned by the ECS system. <i>This remains the responsibility of the school to access evidence and make the final decision in these cases.</i>	✗

The diagram below outlines the basic FSM checking process which starts with schools sending completed batch checking templates to the Data Team (1) or schools / parents completing an online application (2). This populates the schools online FSM checking website with individual eligibility check results (3). Disputed results can go through an in-depth DWP check and / or a manual check of paperwork completed by school staff. The final stage of the process is to ensure a schools Management Information System has been updated with any new FSM start dates ahead of the next Census to ensure funding.



To complete batch checks the school must securely send the following data items to the Data Team to check eligibility: Child's Name, National Insurance Number of Claimant, NASS Number (if applicable), Date of Birth of Claimant, Surname of Claimant. This data needs to be in the correct spreadsheet template format prior to being sent to the team by a secure means.

The OFSM system is completely paperless and follows the SCC principle of residents, or in this case schools on behalf of residents (parents), being self-serving by accessing this service online, getting an immediate response and is accessible 24/7.

3. Pricing

£2.60 per child attending your school that is eligible for free school meals as at the Autumn 2022 census.

Example: A school has 115 pupils eligible for FSM as at the Autumn 2022 census.

Cost of FSM SLA 2022/23 = 115 x £2.60 = £299

4. Service Contact

Any queries, concerns or complaints about the overall operation of the scheme should be addressed to:

Dan King – Dan.King@southampton.gov.uk	Head of Data, Intelligence and Insight	023 8083 2493
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