SERC

Free School Meals SOP

SOP Number:
233-02-2017

Academic Year:
2025/2026 onwards

Date Of This Issue:
July 2025

Responsible Owner:
Senior Customer Services Officer:
Admissions

Summary of Contents

Free School Meals are available to students whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits. Eligibility is determined by the Education Authority (EA).

This Standard Operating Procedure outlines the process the College will follow when administering the school Meals system in conjunction with the EA.

Review Information (Responsible Owner):
First Created: November 2016

Last Reviewed: June 2025

Next Review: June 2026

Change Type at last Review:
No/Minor/~~Significant~~ (delete as appropriate)

Approval/Noting By:
CMT: 8 July 2025

Previous Reference (for control purposes):
164-09-2014 Free School Meals SOP
201-09-2015 Student Financial Assistance

Date of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening (Section 75):

Date of Last Accessibility Screening:
July 2025

Contents

1.0   Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

2.0   Background

Free School Meals are administered through Customer Services (CS) staff on each campus. The system is means tested and provides assistance in covering the cost of a school meal to eligible students on low incomes. Students will be deemed eligible by the Education Authority (EA), not the College.

3.0   Scope

This procedure applies to Customer Services staff and eligible students.

4.0   Procedure

4.1   Eligible Students

- Confirmation Sheets are received from the EA listing students who are eligible to receive free School Meals. CS staff check that the student is enrolled and that the student is on an eligible course.

- CS staff add student details to the Student Details worksheet within the School Meals Workbook. There is a separate worksheet for each of the four main campuses. These can be accessed from the Customer & Community Services Team Site > Funding > Shared Documents > School Meals.

4.2   School Links Students

- CS will not issue meal tickets to School Links students. These students will bring their own tickets from their Schools when they attend College. School Links students will not be recorded on SERC's School Meals Spreadsheets. The schools have been advised of this process.

4.3   New Students/ Changes in Eligibility

- Additional students may become eligible for School Meals throughout the year. This information is received in hardcopy lists from the EA. These students will be added to the student details tab on the workbook as and when approval is received.

- Some students may cease to be eligible for School Meals during the academic year. The student's record should be updated on the Student Details worksheet.

- The student's record should not be deleted from the spreadsheet as some students who cease to be eligible may become eligible again later in the year. The comments column will be used to record changes/updates to status.

4.4   Monthly Returns

- CCS staff are only involved in the issuing of the free school meals tickets. The catering facilitator will invoice the EA directly for reimbursement of dinner tickets.

5.0   Communication

- This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

- CCS will be briefed on the process prior to enrolment period each year.

- Information on student funding will be advertised and promoted on the College website and across SERC campuses, via plasma screens.

6.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	November 2016	Created
1.1	July 2023	Transferred to new Accessibility Template
1.2	June 2025	No changes required