

DE/2026-054– Freedom of Information Request

Request:

I am requesting data on free school meal eligibility and uptake in Northern Ireland.

Please provide the following for each academic year from 2018/19 to the most recent available:

1. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals
2. The number of pupils registered to receive free school meals

Please break this data down by:

- School
- Local government district (or postcode area, if available)

If possible, please also include:

- Total enrolment per school (to allow calculation of proportions)

Department Response:

Thank you for your request for information about the available data on free school meal eligibility and uptake in Northern Ireland. Your request was received on 24th March 2026, and the Department is dealing with it under the terms of the above legislation.

Please provide the following for each academic year from 2018/19 to the most recent available:

1. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals
2. The number of pupils registered to receive free school meals

Please break this data down by:

- School
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If possible, please also include:

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The Department does not hold information on the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Determining eligibility would require access to information on parental receipt of certain benefits, which is not available to the Department. However, the Department does hold data on pupils who have been assessed and confirmed as entitled to free school meals through the Education Authority's free school meal entitlement process.

Under the legislation, the Department is not required to provide information that is already available in a form accessible by the public. The information you requested is available by academic year and school type on the Department of Education's website at:

[School enrolments - school level data | Department of Education.](#)

Free school meal entitlement data can be found on the *FSME* tab of each school-level data file. A breakdown by local government district can be found on the *Reference* tab of each file. All school-level files are in excel format, as requested.

If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you may be able to use facilities at your local public library, or you can request a paper copy by contacting me.