

Online Free School Meals



Online Application Form



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<https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/sims/>

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Introduction

This guide is designed for licence administrator (LA) and school staff who may be required to assist applicants in using the online application form.

The application form is split into a series of pages. Each of these pages represents a specific area of related data entry, e.g. applicant data; child data etc.

After the home (or launch) page, across the top of each of each page is a series of chevrons, indicating progress towards eventual completion. These chevrons have self-explanatory names:

- Declaration;
- Parent/Carer;
- Child;
- Submit; and
- End.

Data from each completed page will be saved until the applicant decides to either:

- Submit the application;
- Save the application details and to return later; or
- Cancel the application.

In general, the data entry pages are split into subsections. Each subsection has a generic heading at the top of the data entry area in **bold** text and the specific field value definition is indicated below the data entry area in normal text.

Required fields are indicated by an asterisk* after the subsection heading.

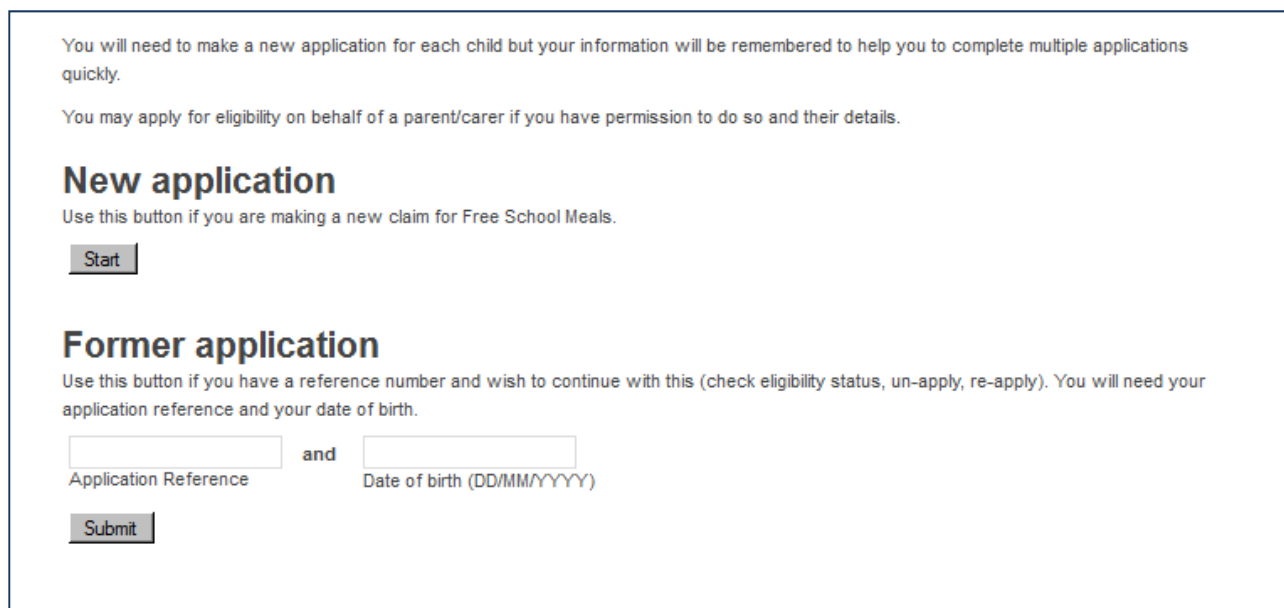
Please note that if the form is being completed on behalf of the applicant by a proxy, the values entered should be for the applicant and not the proxy.

Home Page

The Home Page is accessible from any browser at:

<https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/sims/>

The page that will be seen by the applicant will appear similar to Figure 1 below¹.



You will need to make a new application for each child but your information will be remembered to help you to complete multiple applications quickly.

You may apply for eligibility on behalf of a parent/carer if you have permission to do so and their details.

New application

Use this button if you are making a new claim for Free School Meals.

Former application

Use this button if you have a reference number and wish to continue with this (check eligibility status, un-apply, re-apply). You will need your application reference and your date of birth.

and

Application Reference Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)

Figure 1

This page gives the applicant the option to start a **New application** or open a previously completed one (**Former application**).

New Application

To start a new application, press the **[Start]** button.

Former Application

To continue with a previously saved application, the applicant will require the 6 character application reference number (previously provided by the system) and the applicant's date of birth as previously entered on that application. This option will be given for ALL submitted applications regardless of the outcome. Note this is different to a save and resume later option for incomplete applications.

¹ The text that appears on this page is customisable by the local authority.

Legal Declaration

The Legal Declaration page will appear similar to Figure 2 below².

1. Declaration 2. Parent/Carer 3. Child 4. Submit 5. End

I am in the receipt and can provide the relevant proof of one of the following benefits :

1. Income Support
2. Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
3. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
4. Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
5. the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
6. Child tax credit with an annual gross income into the household that is no more than £16,190, provided you are not entitled to working tax credit. If you are entitled to any part of working tax credit there is no eligibility with the exception of working tax run-on as shown below
7. Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
8. Universal Credit

I agree that you will use the information provided to process my claim for free school meals and will contact other sources as allowed by law to verify my initial, and ongoing, entitlement.

I agree that the information may be used to ensure accuracy of records across the local authority and the check against fraud.

I agree that you can inform the school(s) attended by my child of their initial and ongoing entitlement to free school meals.

You may be aware of our [Privacy Policy](#).

To complete an application you will need to provide:

1. Your own name and date of birth
2. Contact details
3. National Insurance Number or National Asylum Seekers Number
4. Child's name and date of birth
5. School your child is attending/will attend.

[Yes, continue](#)

[Go back to homepage](#)

Figure 2

This page contains the detail of the information that is required for the completion of the application and information about the process, security and accuracy of the claim. The page also provides hyperlinks to the appropriate site **Privacy Policy**.

The applicant should press the **[Yes, Continue]** button to confirm agreement with this declaration and proceed with the application. (If an applicant is unwilling to do this then the application cannot proceed.)

² The text that appears on this page is customisable by the local authority.

Applicant Information

Figure 3 below shows the Parent/Carer data entry page.

The screenshot displays the 'Parent/Carer' step of a five-step application process. The steps are: 1. Declaration, 2. Parent/Carer (current), 3. Child, 4. Submit, and 5. End. A warning message states: 'The system will cease to work if no response or activity is detected for a 40 minute period. If this happens anything you have not saved will be lost.'

Name *

Title: Firstname: Lastname:

Unique Identification Number *

National Insurance Number: OR National Asylum Support Service reference number:

Personal information *

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY): Relationship to the child:

Contact information

Email: Telephone (Landline): Telephone (Mobile):

☒ Yes, I would like email to be my primary communication channel for free school meal entitlement

[Why use electronic communication ?](#)

Address information *

Enter a postcode: [List of demonstration postcodes](#)

Addresses:

☐ **Manual Address Data**

Flat Number/Name **:

House Number/Name **:

Street Name *:

Locality:

Town/City *:

Postcode:

** One at least of Flat or House Number/Name is required.
* Required.

Figure 3

The following lists the data subsections, the fields within each subsection and their data requirements:

Name*

Title	A drop down list is provided which includes all commonly used titles. If the applicants preferred title is not in the list then "Other" should be selected and a further box will appear for free text entry.
Firstname	The full given first name of the applicant should be entered - not common contractions.
Lastname	The full legal surname (derived from family, clan or marital association) of the applicant (as written) should be entered.

Note: As the first three characters of this name will be used as a reference by the Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), the accuracy of the **Lastname** field is of critical importance.

Unique Identification Number*

One of **National Insurance Number** (also known as NI Number or NINO) or **National Asylum Support Service reference number** (also known as NASS number) **must be provided**.

National Insurance Number

The following validation is applied to this field:

The format of all valid National Insurance Numbers is two prefix letters, six numeric digits, and one suffix letter, e.g. *AB123456C*.

Neither of the first two letters can be **D, F, I, Q, U** or **V** and the second letter also cannot be **O**. Additionally, the prefixes **BG, GB, NK, KN, TN, NT** and **ZZ** are not allocated.

After the two prefix letters, the six digits are issued sequentially from *00 00 00* to *99 99 99*.

The suffix letter is either **A, B, C** or **D**.

Where applicants enter any alphabetical characters in lowercase the system will automatically amend them to UPPERCASE when the field is exited.

Note: As the National Insurance Number, if provided, will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of this field is of critical importance.

National Asylum Support Service reference number

The following validation is applied to this field:

The format of the number is YY/MM/NNNNN.

YY = Two digit Year (with a leading zero where appropriate) between 00 and 99

MM = Two digit Month (with a leading zero where appropriate) between 01 and 12

NNNNN = Sequence number with leading zeros in the range 00001 and 99999

Note: As the National Asylum Support Service reference number, if provided, will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of this field is of critical importance.

Personal Information*

The following items are required:

Date of Birth In the format DD/MM/CCYY, where:
 DD = Two digit Day (with a leading zero where appropriate)
 MM = Two digit Month (with a leading zero where appropriate)
 CC = Two digit Century (for current applicants should be **19**)
 YY = Two digit Year (with a leading zero where appropriate)
 For example, the Queen's birthday would be 21/04/1926.
 This field is validated against calendar values.

Relationship to the child A drop down lists is provided listing the government approved list of relationships. (There is an "Other Contact" option but no supplementary box will appear if this value is selected.)

Note: As the applicant's date of birth will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of the **Date of Birth** field is of critical importance.

Contact Information

Email Email addresses are checked against the standard email address format, i.e. *local-part@domain-name*.

Telephone (Landline) The telephone number may be entered in either of two formats:
 (a) standard 11 digit UK telephone number format, which will always start with a leading zero, e.g. 02071835700; or
 (b) standard international telephone number format, which will always start with a plus-sign, e.g. +442071835700.
 As the system does not use this number in any automated process it does not matter if applicants introduce spaces into the number and if the system stores the numbers in this way.

Telephone (Mobile) The telephone number may be entered in either of two formats:
 (a) standard 11 digit UK telephone number format, which will always start with a leading zero, e.g. 02071835700; or

(b) standard international telephone number format, which will always start with a plus-sign, e.g. +442071835700. The default setting for the use of text messaging services is "Off", i.e. the system will not automatically generate text messages. By default, therefore, it does not matter if applicants introduce spaces into the number. If, in the future, automatic text messaging were to be allowed then spaces would be automatically deleted from entries.

After the email and telephone data entry boxes there is a tick box which allows the applicant to select Email as the primary communication channel. (If, in the future, automatic text messaging were to be allowed then an option to select SMS text messaging as an additional communication channel would be displayed.)

Below the tick box is a link which, when clicked, explains some of the advantages of selecting the electronic communication option.

Address Information*

Postcode validation is supplied via National Address Lookup (NAL) data supplied by SDA. Applicants should enter their postcode in the box provided. If the postcode is found then the system will generate a drop down lists of residential addresses³ attached to that postcode. The applicant should select the appropriate address from the list. If the postcode is not found, the applicant has two options:

- (a) If the applicant is sure that the postcode entered is correct then it is likely to be a very recent postcode which has not been included in the NAL. In these circumstances, the applicant needs to enter the address data manually – see below; or
- (b) The postcode has been entered incorrectly. In this circumstance then the postcode should be re-entered correctly.

Manual Address Entry

If the applicant does not know his/her postcode (or the postcode previously entered was not found) then the address needs to be entered manually. To do this the applicant should click the tick box titled "Manual Address Data".

The following information should be provided:

At least one (or both) of **Flat Number/Name** and **House Number/Name**.

"Flat Number/Name" can be any smaller part of a building, including an apartment or room in a hostel. To avoid confusion the full text should be entered, e.g. "Ground Floor Flat", "Flat 1", "Room 101" etc.

"House Number/Name" can include both a number and a name, e.g. "Rose Cottage, 1". For residents of high-rise blocks, the name of the particular block should be entered here, not in "Flat Number/Name", e.g. "Washington House".

³ The underlying database normally only contains properties which have been classified as being residential or bed and breakfast/boarding houses/hostels/hotels.

Street Name*

A Street Name must be entered.

Locality

This is an optional field which may contain extra details such as district or parish area information or, if the postal town is provided (see below), the name of the town or settlement.

Town/City*

The Town/City of the address must be entered. This may be the town or city that is commonly understood in the area or the official postal town (as defined by the Royal Mail).

Postcode

The postcode, if known, should be provided for those applicants who reside outside of the LA area.

The following validation will be applied.

In general, the format is one of "A9 9AA", "A99 9AA", "A9A 9AA", "AA9 9AA", "AA99 9AA" or "AA9A 9AA", where A is an alphabetic character and 9 is a numeric character⁴.

At the end of this page there are the options to:

Save and Continue	This will save the applicant's current data and move to the next page of the form.
Save and resume later	This will save the applicant's current data and create a reference so that he/she can resume their application later. (See below for resumption of application.)
Back	This will return the applicant to the legal declaration page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the screen. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

⁴ More precisely, the system utilises the government standard validation patterns defined as:
(GIR 0AA|[A-PR-UWYZ]([0-9][0-9A-HJKPS-UW]?|[A-HK-Y][0-9][0-9ABEHMNPRV-Y]?)[0-9][ABD-HJLNP-UW-Z]{2})

Child's Information

Figure 4 shows the data input page for information about the child that the application will affect in relation to the receipt of free school meals.

1. Declaration 2. Parent/Carer 3. Child 4. Submit 5. End

The system will cease to work if no response or activity is detected for a 40 minute period. If this happens anything you have not saved will be lost.

Child's name *

Firstname Lastname

Child's details*

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) -- Select -- Gender

School *

-- Choose a school --

Statement *

☐ I confirm that I have parental responsible for the child and that the child lives with me.

OR

☐ I confirm that I have completed this application on behalf of the parent/carer with his/her full knowledge or have the legal status to do so. I confirm that the parent/carer for whom I have given details has parental responsible for the child and that the child lives with the parent/carer.

Save and continue Save and resume later Back

Figure 4

The following lists the fields and their data requirements:

Child's Name*

Firstname The full given first name of the child should be entered -not common contractions.

Lastname The full legal surname (derived from family, clan or marital association) of the child (as written) should be entered.

Child's Details*

Date of Birth In the format DD/MM/YYYY. This field is validated against calendar values.

Gender The sex of the child. (Male or Female)

School*

A pre-defined drop down list is provided by the LA. This list includes all schools which have been approved to use the OFSM service. In cases where the school is has not been approved to use the OFSM service, the system will not allow the application to

proceed and will direct the applicant to the school to complete the application. In such cases, all previously entered data will be deleted.

The school that the child attends should be selected - this will be the school where the free school meal will be provided, if eligibility is confirmed.

Statement*

The statement consists of two options, one of which must be selected to confirm the applicant has the legal right to make the application. These options (indicated by radio buttons) are:

I confirm that I have parental responsibility for the child and that the child lives with me.

OR

I confirm that I have completed this application on behalf of the parent/carer with his/her full knowledge or have the legal status to do so. I confirm that the parent/carer for whom I have given details has parental responsibility for the child and that the child lives with the parent/carer.

One of these options must be selected to proceed.

At the bottom of the page there are the options for continuation, indicated by buttons as follows:

Save and Continue	This will save the current data from the application and move to the next page of the form (Submit Application).
Save and resume later	This will save the current data from the application and create a reference so that the application can be resumed in the future. (See below for resumption of application.)
Back	This will return the applicant to the previous page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the form. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

Application Submission

Figure 5 shows the submit application page:

1. Declaration 2. Parent/Carer 3. Child 4. Submit 5. End

The system will cease to work if no response or activity is detected for a 40 minute period. If this happens anything you have not saved will be lost.
After you click the 'Submit' button we will check your eligibility. This process may take a few seconds.
Check all the details below and submit.

Parent/Carer	
Date of Birth	
National Insurance Number	
Email	
Address	
Child in benefit	
Date of birth	
Gender	
Parent/Carer's relationship	
School	

SUBMIT Save and resume later Back

Figure 5

This page is a review of the data that has been captured on the previous pages.

At the bottom of the page there are 3 options:

SUBMIT This will save the current data from the application and submit it to the ECS for checking.

Save and resume later This will save the current data from the application and create a reference so that the application can be resumed in the future. (See below for resumption of application.)

Back This will return the applicant to the previous page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the form. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

After submission to the ECS there are three possible outcomes:

Found The ECS has confirmed the eligibility to free school meals.

Not Found The ECS has **not** confirmed the eligibility to free school meals.

Service Down The ECS is unavailable at the current time.

These outcomes are described in more detail in the next three sections.

ECS Return - Found

Figure 8 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a "Found" result:

The eligibility check has confirmed that the parent/carer meets the eligibility criteria.

Your application reference is [REDACTED]. The reference can be used to re-apply later and for any other communication with the Local Authority about Free School Meals.

You may [print your application](#) . You can make an [application for another child](#) .

The child's school will be notified as soon as possible.

Application Reference	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]
<i>An email has been sent to this email address.</i>	
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]
School	[REDACTED]

[Go back to homepage](#)

Figure 6

This confirms that the applicant is eligible to claim for free school meals for their child. The applicant should make a note of the application reference and the school and the LA will be notified automatically of the outcome.

A free school meal can be provided for the child as soon as is practicable for the school.

ECS Return - Not Found

Figure 9 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a “Not Found” result:

1. Declaration 2. Parent/Carer 3. Child 4. Submit 5. End

The eligibility check has not confirmed that the parent/carer meets the eligibility criteria. It may not mean that the parent/carer is not entitled to free school meals for their children.

Inaccurate information ?

1. Check that the parent/carer's details are accurate. For example, a first name rather than a surname has not been used.
2. Check that the parent/carer's information show the details of person in receipt of the qualifying benefits.
3. If there is more than one person in the household in receipt of the qualifying benefits, check the eligibility of both.

Parent/Carer	
Date of Birth	
National Insurance Number	
Email	
Address	
Child in benefit	
Date of birth	
Gender	
Parent/Carer's relationship	
School	

Accurate information ?

In some circumstances the data used to for the eligibility check may not be up to date due to the inherent time it takes for the other Government Departments to process benefit claims. If you have entered all information correctly and believe that your child should be eligible for Free School Meals you should contact the school named in the application with the appropriate documentary evidence of benefit and they will be able to confirm your eligibility status.

[Save and contact school](#)

[Go back to homepage](#)

Figure 7

The ECS has NOT found data that would confirm that the applicant is eligible to claim for free school meals for their child. The application data will be held by the LA and the school.

The applicant should make a note of the application reference and if they wish to dispute this outcome they should contact their child's school. When contacting schools, applicants should quote the reference number given and present original copies of any supporting evidence. If the school, having seen the physical evidence, agree that the application should be deemed eligible, they are able to record this decision in the Back-Office system – see separate guide.

ECS Return - Service Down

If the ECS is unavailable at the time of submission the following screen will appear:

1. Declaration **2. Parent/Carer** **3. Child** **4. Submit** **5. End**

The eligibility check cannot not be done because the service is down.

But your application has been saved and the eligibility check will be done as soon as possible.

Please note the reference of the application : [REDACTED]. The reference can also be used to re-apply later or for any other communication with the Local Authority about Free School Meals.

You may print your application . You can make an application for another child .

Application Reference	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Telephone :	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]

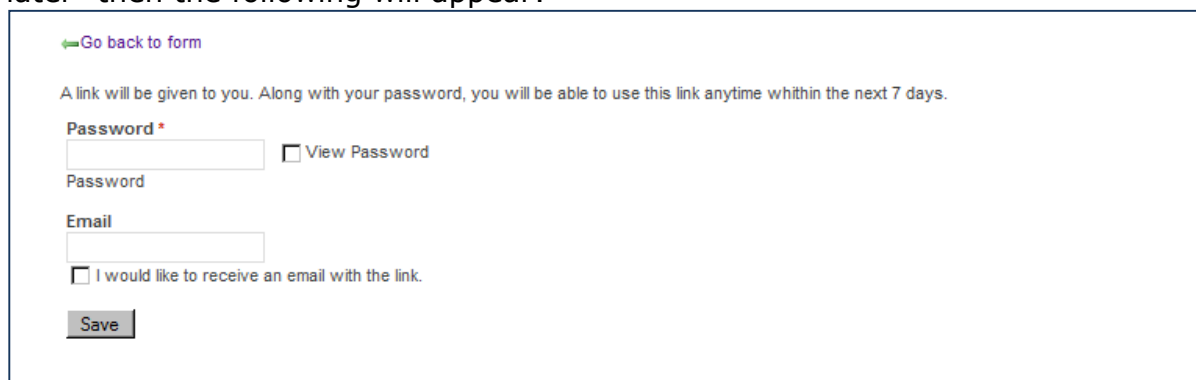
Figure 8

The ECS may not be functioning due to essential maintenance being carried out. If this screen appears the applicant should take a note of the application reference number.

Applications will be automatically resubmitted when the ECS becomes available and all parties informed of the outcome.

Resume Later - Save

If at, any point during the application, the applicant selects to "Save and resume later" then the following will appear:



[Go back to form](#)

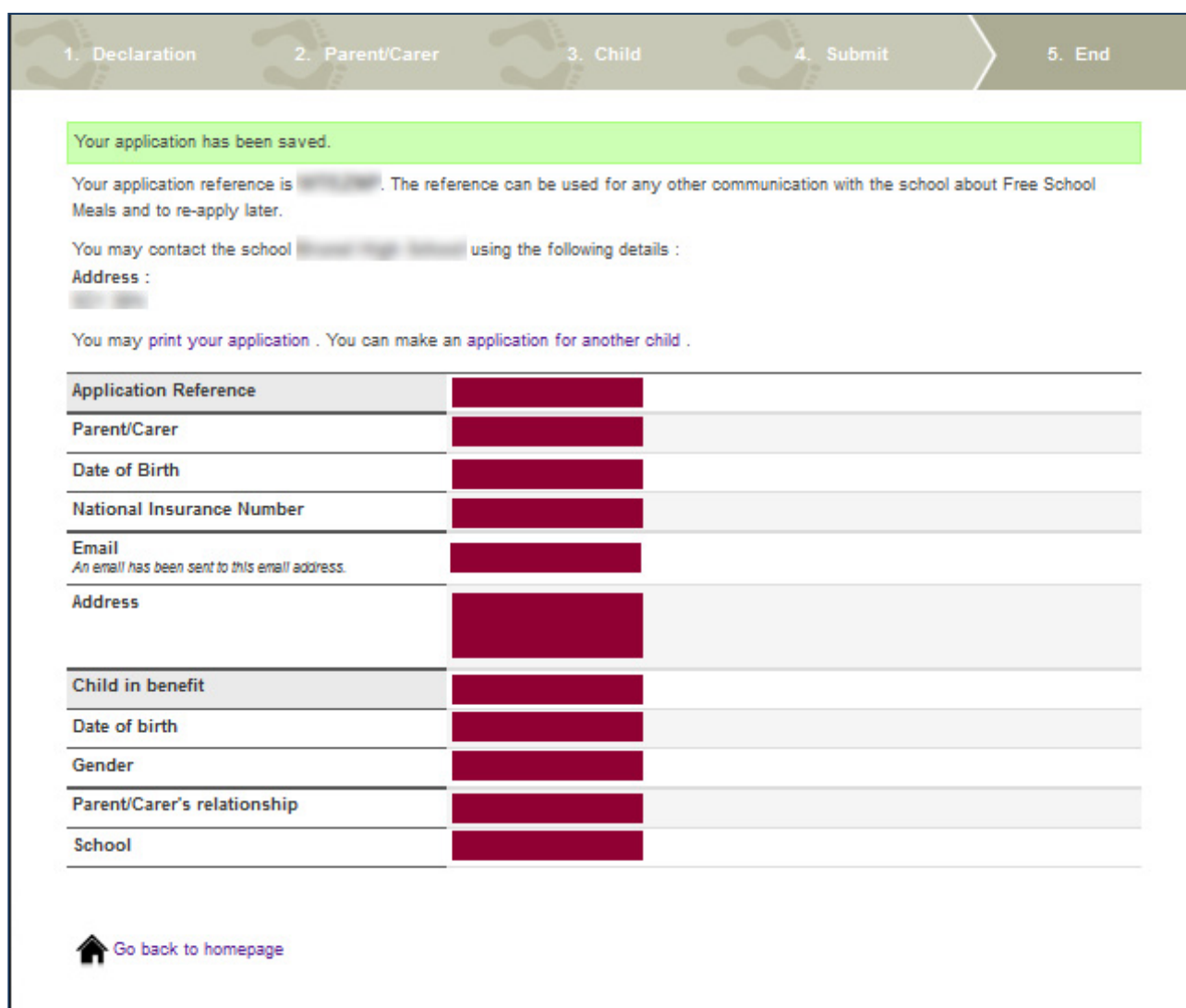
A link will be given to you. Along with your password, you will be able to use this link anytime within the next 7 days.

Password *

 ☐ View Password

Figure 9

The applicant will be asked to supply a password and, if they wish to be emailed the link, an email address and a check box to confirm this. After clicking **[Save]** the following will appear:



1. Declaration 2. Parent/Carer 3. Child 4. Submit 5. End

Your application has been saved.

Your application reference is [REDACTED]. The reference can be used for any other communication with the school about Free School Meals and to re-apply later.

You may contact the school [REDACTED] using the following details :

Address :
[REDACTED]

You may [print your application](#) . You can make an [application for another child](#) .

Application Reference	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]
An email has been sent to this email address.	
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]
School	[REDACTED]

[Go back to homepage](#)

Figure 10