

Free school meal eligibility

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to inform you about important changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that will take effect from September 2026.

What is changing?

The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that from the start of the 2026/27 school year:

- All children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals.
- This is a national change and will mean that many more children are eligible.

End of transitional protection

Some children currently receive free school meals under “transitional protection” rules.

- These protections will end at the end of the 2025/26 school year.
- From September 2026, all children must meet the current eligibility criteria to continue receiving free school meals.

Two types of Free School Meals

From September 2026, the DfE has introduced two categories:

Targeted Free School Meals

Your child will be in this group if:

- Your household receives Universal Credit, and
- Your earned income is £7,400 or less per year

Your child will receive:

- Free school meals
- Additional funding support for the school (such as Pupil Premium)

Expanded Free School Meals

Your child will be in this group if:

- Your household receives Universal Credit, and
- Your income is above £7,400

Your child will receive:

- Free school meals only

(They will not receive additional funding linked to FSM)

Checking eligibility

The DfE has confirmed that:

- Eligibility will be checked regularly, including annually.
- Checks will take place before the start of each school year where possible.

What you need to do

- If you receive Universal Credit, your child is likely to qualify from September 2026.
- Please make sure the school has your up-to-date information.

You completed a free school meal form from when your child started with us, the database will notify the school office if you start to qualify.

You don't need to log into any portals to check eligibility. We will contact you and inform you if your child qualifies.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Kind regards,
Mrs Howard
Academy Manager