

Free School Meals from September 2026

From September 2026, free school meal eligibility is expanding. All children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals.

We strongly encourage all families in receipt of Universal Credit to apply – even if your income has increased, your child may now qualify.

Applying is quick and easy via the [Online FSM Application](#) (OFSM).

End of Transitional Protection

Temporary protections, which allowed children to continue receiving free school meals without rechecking eligibility, will end at the close of the 2025–2026 academic year.

From September 2026, all families will need to meet the current eligibility criteria to continue receiving free school meals.

Families who are currently receiving free school meals do not need to take any action at this stage. Eligibility will be automatically rechecked, and schools will confirm eligibility from September 2026.

New FSM Categories from September 2026

Two types of benefit-based free school meals will be introduced:

- **Targeted Free School Meals**
Your child may qualify if your household receives Universal Credit and has an annual earned income of £7,400 or less (after tax, excluding benefits).
- **Expanded Free School Meals**
Your child may qualify if your household receives Universal Credit.