



## Upcoming Changes & Expansion to Free School Meals (FSM)

Dear Parents, Guardians and Carers,

We are writing to inform you about important national changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility that will come into effect from the start of the 2026/27 school year.

**Please be aware this does not change the entitlement of everyone in Early Years and Key Stage One (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) to be entitled to Universal Free School Meal (UFSM). All pupils in these three years are entitled to a Free School Meal daily and you do not need to complete any forms to enable your child to access this.**

The UK Government has confirmed that, from September 2026, all children in England whose households receive Universal Credit will be entitled to Free School Meals, regardless of their overall household income.

### What is Changing?

Under current rules, families must earn below £7,400 per year (after tax and not including benefits) to qualify for free school meals. From September 2026, this earnings threshold will no longer apply — any family receiving Universal Credit will be eligible. This change is expected to support over half a million additional pupils across England.

### What This Means for Your Family

- No income cap: If your household receives Universal Credit, your child will be eligible.
- Financial savings: Families could save up to £505 per child per year on school lunches.
- Support for wellbeing: Access to a nutritious daily meal has been shown to improve children's health, concentration, and learning outcomes.

### When Will This Happen?

The new entitlement will begin at the start of the school year in September 2026. Schools nationwide are preparing now to accommodate the increased number of children who will receive meals. We, as your school's caterer, are fully prepared to support this fantastic new initiative and are keen to support even more pupils with access to our exciting and nutritionally balanced lunches each day. Remember this a free lunch every day of the school year.

### Do Parents Need to Apply?

Yes. Although eligibility will cover all families on Universal Credit, parents, guardians and carers will still need to apply for free school meals so the school can process and confirm entitlement. Applications are expected to open before the start of the 2026 school year, typically requiring your National Insurance Number and Universal Credit Reference Number. The new rule also means that you will need to apply each year for free school meals as the once registered rollover will stop.