

Dear Parent/Carer,

Changes to Free School Meals from September 2026

I am writing to inform you about important national changes to Free School Meals eligibility (FSM) which will take effect from September 2026.

What is changing?

From September 2026, free school meals will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit, with the removal of the previous £7,400 income cap. This change means that many more children will be entitled to receive a free, nutritious meal each school day, helping to ease pressure on family budgets and ensure pupils are ready to learn.

At the same time, the current “transitional protection” arrangements that have been in place since 2018 will end in August 2026. This means if you no longer qualify for free school meals or if your household circumstances change, eligibility will no longer continue automatically

This is separate to the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) scheme which is still in place for children up to the age of 7, but we would strongly encourage you to check eligibility for benefit related FSM.

What this means for families:

Families receiving Universal Credit may now qualify for Free School Meals even if household earnings are above the current £7,400 threshold.

Some families who currently receive Free School Meals under transitional protection may no longer qualify if they are no longer receiving Universal Credit.

Eligibility checks must be carried out annually by schools.

What you need to do if your child currently receives benefit-based FSM at school:

If your child is currently already eligible for and receiving benefit-based free school meals, you will need to complete [this form](#) as soon as possible so we can check your eligibility. Schools will need to do this check at least annually from now on which is why we are collecting certain data from you. You do not currently have to re-apply for free school meals.

If you do not complete the form, FSM may stop when your child returns in the new academic year.

What you need to do if your child does not currently receive benefit-based FSM at school, but you believe you meet the criteria:

We encourage all families receiving any of the following benefits to apply for Free School Meals before September 2026. This is especially important for children who are moving from Year 2 into Year 3 as Universal Infant Free School Meals will no longer apply.

- Universal Credit (the £7,400 income cap will be removed from September 2026)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (with an annual household income of no more than £16,190 and not receiving Working Tax Credit)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Applying may also help schools access additional funding to support pupils.

If you believe you may now be eligible based on the changes in criteria above, please do the following:

- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> to apply for free school meals.
- **Complete this form** as soon as possible so we can check your eligibility.
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If you have any questions or need support with any of the above, please do contact the school office team – we will be happy to help you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Sharpe

Booth Wood Academy