

EXPANDING FREE SCHOOL MEALS: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Free school meals provide vital nutrition for children during the school day. The Government have recently announced (June 2025) that many more families will be eligible. Here's what parents need to know;

Who will benefit from the expanded free school meals?

Over half a million additional pupils will become eligible for Free School Meals under the new eligibility criteria. The change means that all households receiving Universal Credit, above the current £7,400 income cap, will qualify for this support.

When will these changes take effect?

The new eligibility will take effect in September 2026. Families receiving Universal Credit will be able to access free school meals starting from the 2026/27 school year. This will give schools time to prepare for the increased number of meals they'll need to provide.

I don't currently claim free school meals – what does this mean for me?

If you think you might be eligible for free school meals either now or when the changes take effect in September 2026, you can submit a claim by following the link to the Application Form.

The Information you provide will be used to check if you are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and, if you are on Universal Credit, that your earnings do not exceed the current threshold. If you claim Universal Credit, your earnings will be assessed from up to three of your last Universal Credit assessment periods.

How do I apply for free school meals?

Free School Meals can be claimed by Parents or Guardians of pupil's who are on a low income. Please click on the link below:

[Click here to apply](#)

It's important to note that while eligibility will be automatically granted to all Universal Credit recipients from September 2026, families will still need to actually apply via the OFSM platform and be verified as eligible to receive the benefit.