

## 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 note that these changes do **not** affect the entitlement to Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) for children in Early Years and Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2). All pupils in these year groups remain entitled to a free school meal every day, and no application is required for them to access this provision.

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 household income.

### What Is Changing?

There will be two types of income assessed FSM:

- **Targeted FSM**, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400.00 or less, and
- **Expanded FSM**, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit.

### What This Means for Your Family

- **No income cap:** If your household receives Universal Credit, your child will be eligible for Free School Meals.
- **Financial savings:** Families could save up to £505 per child each 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 across the country are already preparing for the increased number of children who will be eligible to receive meals.

As your school's catering provider, we are fully prepared to support this fantastic new initiative and are excited to provide even more pupils with access to our nutritious, balanced and enjoyable school lunches every day.

Remember – this means a free school lunch every day of the school year for eligible pupils.

### Do Parents Need to Apply?

**Yes.** Although eligibility will be extended to all families receiving Universal Credit, parents, guardians and carers will still need to apply for Free School Meals so that entitlement can be made.

Applications are expected to open before the start of the 2026/27 school year. Applicants will typically need to provide their National Insurance number and Universal Credit reference number.

Please note that, under the new arrangements, all FSM claims will be rechecked annually by Suffolk County Council to confirm continued eligibility.

Therefore, if you have not previously applied for Free School Meals and believe you may be eligible under the new criteria, please submit an online application via the Suffolk County Council website, "apply for free school meals".

If you are unsure or have any questions regarding the new eligibility criteria, please contact the Free School Meals Team at [reeschoolmeals@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:reeschoolmeals@suffolk.gov.uk)