

# CHANGES TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS



LIGHTHOUSE  
SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



From September 2026, more families will be eligible for Free School Meals



Applying could save you up to £495 per child, per year, on school lunches

## FREE SCHOOL MEAL EXPANSION

More families may be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) from September 2026, when families receiving Universal Credit will be able to access free school meals. There will be two types of Free School Meal eligibility from September 2026:



### TARGETED FSM

Continues to be based on the existing £7,400 income threshold.



### EXPANDED FSM (NEW)

Applies to meals only. Covers pupils whose households are in receipt of Universal Credit



**IMPORTANT:** While eligibility to Expanded FSM will be automatically granted to all recipients of Universal Credit, families will still need to apply to receive this benefit.

## RECHECKS FOR ALL PUPILS CURRENTLY IN RECEIPT OF FSM

Since 2018, there has been a Free School Meal transitional protection policy to ensure that children didn't lose their free school meals if their family's income increased. This meant that free school meals entitlement has been typically locked in until the end of the child's current phase of education (e.g. end of primary or secondary school).

**This protection is ending at the end of the 2025-26 academic year.**

This means that all existing pupils in receipt of free school meals will need to have their entitlement rechecked before the start of September 2026. If your family's earnings exceed the FSM threshold, your child(ren) will lose their eligibility and pay for school meals from September 2026.



In most cases, these rechecks will be automatic and no action will be required by parents



### NORTH SOMERSET SCHOOLS ONLY

Anyone who was awarded FSMs over 2 years ago would have applied via an old system. These parents/carers will need to reapply via their North Somerset Citizen's account.



## ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS THAT BENEFITS PUPILS

Pupil Premium is extra funding given to schools for every child whose family is entitled for Targeted Free School Meals. This money makes a big difference to schools and the eligible pupils. It is often used for extra resources, school trips and additional staff. Pupil Premium will continue to be paid to schools for those pupils who have been covered by the transitional protection arrangements outlined above.

FIND OUT MORE: [WWW.LSP.ORG.UK/FSM-CHANGES](http://WWW.LSP.ORG.UK/FSM-CHANGES)