St Michael's
CofE Primary Academy

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1st July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to let you know about changes to free school meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

What is changing?

Expanded entitlement for families on Universal Credit

From the start of academic year 2026 to 2027, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of earnings.

Going forward, there will be two types of eligibility:

- **Targeted FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning £7,400 or less (includes free meals and additional support such as pupil premium).
  Other educational entitlements such as the Holiday Activities and Food program (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.
- **Expanded FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning above £7,400 (free meals only)

Families with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible for Targeted FSM subject to meeting separate criteria.

All pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will also continue to be entitled to free school meals under the universal infant free school meals policy regardless of family circumstances.

End of transitional protections

Since 2018, some children have continued to receive free school meals, even if their family circumstances changed during the rollout of Universal Credit. This is referred to as transitional protections. Now that entitlement is being expanded to all families on Universal Credit, these protections will end at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

This means:

- Some children may **no longer be eligible** from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year if their family does not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit
- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status

What you need to do

If your child currently receives free school meals:

- In most cases, you do not need to reapply
- Your child's school or the local authority will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility
- In some cases, your child's school or the local authority may contact you to confirm your details
- If your child is starting a new school in September, they will be in touch to confirm whether you need to confirm your details or reapply.
- If you are unsure, please contact your school or local authority for advice.

If your child does not currently receive free school meals

- You may now be eligible under the expanded criteria
- You will need to apply through your local authority / school

Not sure?
If you are unsure whether you need to apply or if your circumstances have changed, please contact:

- Your local authority, or
- Your child's school

They will be able to advise and support you.

Yours sincerely,

City of Wolverhampton Council Free School Meals

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

From September 2026, there will be three types of free school meals entitlement.

WHAT'S CHANGING

Since April 2018, around 22,000 children and young people in Wolverhampton have had free meals protected under Transitional Protection.

This has meant children have continued to be able to enjoy free meals (and additional support), even if family circumstances have changed.

Transitional Protection will cease at the end of this academic year (July 2026).

From September 2026, some children may no longer be entitled to free school meals. Some families may become eligible for free meals for the first time.



THE 3 TYPES OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS

1 TARGETED FREE SCHOOL MEALS (TFSM)

Equivalent to benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM)

Who qualifies

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit with annual household income under £7,400 (£616.67/month)
- Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – subject to separate criteria

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time
- ✓Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme
- ✓Other support that may be available at school (e.g. free school milk, where provided)
- ✓Free board and lodging on residential trips

Funding

- Schools do not receive specific funding for these meals*
- Schools receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these claims

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

2 EXPANDED FREE SCHOOL MEALS (EFSM)

New criteria from September 2026

Who qualifies

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit
- No limit on annual household income

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to

- ✗HAF (unless through other criteria e.g. SEND, social care)
- ✗Other support linked to TFSM

Funding

- Schools do not receive specific funding for these meals*
- Schools will not receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these claims

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

* Government funding will be paid to schools between 2026 and 2029 towards the cost of increased FSM reported at Census

3 UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UIFSM)

Available since September 2014

Who qualifies

- All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 attending school, regardless of family circumstances

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to

- ✗HAF (unless through other criteria e.g. SEND, social care)
- ✗Other support linked to TFSM

Funding

- Schools receive Government funding towards the cost of these meals (based on average uptake recorded at the October and January Census dates)
- Schools do not receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these children, unless they are also recorded as TFSM

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility checks are not required for UIFSM (eligibility should still be checked for TFSM/EFSM)

WHAT PARENTS/CARERS NEED TO DO

If you haven't already, please provide your details to your child's school

- Your child's school will let you know if they need any more information from you
- Your details are usually requested when your child starts or moves school
- Most parents/carers have already provided the details needed for checking

If you have any questions, please contact your child's school or visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals for more information

ANY QUESTIONS?

School meals arrangements vary from school to school. Please contact your child's school with any questions

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL