

Hawthorn Community Primary School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Changes to Free School Meal Eligibility from September 2026

We would like to make you aware of important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility announced by the Department for Education.

From the start of the 2026 – 2027 school year all children whose families receive Universal Credit and who attend maintained schools, academies or free schools will be able to get a free school meal.

In the future, there will be two types of free school meals based on benefits:

- **Targeted Free School Meals** – This will stay the same as now. It is for pupils whose families receive Universal Credit and have yearly earnings of £7,400 or less.
- **Expanded Free School Meals** – This is a **new** type. It is for pupils who do not qualify for Targeted FSM but whose families still receive Universal Credit.

From **1st July 2026**, parents who are in receipt of Universal Credit will be able to apply for Expanded FSM through the parent portal on the North Northamptonshire Council website. Children who are eligible will be entitled to receive a free school meal from the start of the 2026/2027 academic year.

Although the government has announced this new guidance, and a new checking system will start in June (with checks suggested from 1 June), local authorities and schools need time to make sure their systems are ready. This will help them record and report family information correctly.

Because of this, we are asking all families who want to check if they are eligible, and apply for September 2026 under the new guidance, to do so from **1 July 2026**.

- If your child goes to a school in **North Northamptonshire**, please apply using the Parent Portal:
<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/parent-portal>

As national arrangements change, some families may need to reapply or may see changes to their eligibility status in the future. We therefore encourage all parents and carers currently receiving Universal Credit to complete a new application to ensure records are up to date and entitlements can be assessed correctly.

We would also like to make you aware that the current transitional protection arrangements for free school meals are due to come to an end. Transitional protection was introduced to ensure that pupils who became eligible for free school meals would continue to receive them during the rollout of Universal Credit, even if family circumstances later changed. Therefore it is necessary to re-apply via the parent portal using the link provided above from **1st July**.

Kind regards,

Emma Jacox

Head Teacher