

June 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

Changes to FSM/PP for the 2026 to 2027 academic year

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit attending a local authority maintained school, academy or free school will be entitled to receive a free meal.

Going forward, there will be 2 categories of benefits-related free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM**, which continues to be based on the current threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less. These pupils can claim a free school meal daily during term time, they will be able to access the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Scheme and schools will be able to claim an additional amount of funding (pupil premium) to support the students educational attainment.
- **Expanded FSM**, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit, will now be able to claim a free school meal daily, during term time only; but NO additional support or funding can be claimed through the pupil premium element.

Children may also be eligible if their household meets any of the following criteria -

- - a parent receives support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- - the household is in receipt of income related Employment and Support Allowance
- - the household receives the guarantee element of Pension Credit
- - the household meets the criteria for families with no recourse to public funds

Ending Transitional Protections

Transitional protections for free school meals have been in effect since 1 April 2018. This has meant that pupils becoming eligible for free meals under the benefits-based criteria have retained their entitlement, even if their household circumstances have changed.

Transitional protections apply until the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (31st July 2026).

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, transitional protections for free school meals will end.

Households must meet the new FSM eligibility criteria from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year to continue receiving their FSM provision.

To summarise:

- Free school meal eligibility is being extended to all families receiving universal credit, which may result in some families becoming eligible for the first time.
- Eligibility is checked on an annual basis, which may result in some families currently receiving free school meals no longer being eligible for one next year.
- All families will need to check their eligibility from 1st July 2026 to access Free School Meals for their children from September 2026
- The changes do not affect the Universal Infant Free School Meal Scheme, so children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will continue to receive free meals as usual and low-income families can still apply for additional support through Key Stage 1 Pupil Premium.

How to apply for Free School Meals for 2026/27

Applications cannot be made until **1st July 2026**. The application platform within the parent portal has been suspended to allow the system changes and testing to take place.

Once everything is running as it should, the platform can be accessed as normal via <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/parent-portal>. We estimate this will take a few weeks and do ask for your patience please.

We recommend applying in July once the system is live, if possible, as this will give more time for applications to be processed, ensuring that eligible learners receive free school meals from the start of the September term.

Free School Meals

North Northamptonshire Council