

Headteacher

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17th July 2026

Dear Parents/Carers/Guardians

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
- 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, the local authority may contact you to confirm your details
- If your child is starting school in September, staff at the school will be in touch to confirm whether you need to confirm your details or reapply.

If your child does not currently receive free school meals you may now be eligible under the expanded criteria:

- You will need to contact the school to arrange for an eligibility check to be carried out. Please do not contact the school before the start of the new academic term (September 2026) as the new eligibility checking system is not live yet.
- If your eligibility to FSM is confirmed by the school you will need to submit an application to the local authority who will be responsible for processing your application. You can make an application online through the form below. Please wait until the start of the academic year (September 2026) before completing this form to allow for the changes to be made:

<https://eforms.lbbd.gov.uk/free-school-meals>

Yours sincerely

Michael Kaitell



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For and on behalf of Hunters Hall Primary School