

Secondary parent and carer letter

[School name]

[Date]

Dear parents and carers,

Could your child receive free school meals from September 2026?

We are writing to let you know about an important national change to free school meals.

From September 2026, more children and young people will be able to receive a free meal at school. This is because free school meal eligibility is expanding to include children from households receiving Universal Credit.

Many more families may now be eligible, so we are asking parents and carers to apply if they think this could apply to them.

Applying is worth checking. It could save your family money each week and help make sure your child can have a meal in school if they want one.

Please apply if any of these apply to you

Please apply if:

1. Your household receives Universal Credit
2. Your household receives another qualifying benefit
3. Your child used to receive free school meals, but you are not sure whether they will still be eligible from September 2026
4. Your circumstances have changed and you think your child may now be eligible
5. Your young person is in sixth form or school based post 16 provision and you think they may be eligible

You do not need to work out whether your child qualifies. You only need to apply. The eligibility check will do the rest.

Your child will not be treated differently

Children and young people who receive free school meals are not treated differently in school.

Information shared as part of a free school meal application is handled carefully and used to check eligibility.

If your child is eligible, they will use the school meal system in the usual way. **[Insert brief detail about cashless catering, lunch cards, biometric systems or account credit, if relevant.]**

Your child can still bring a packed lunch if they prefer. Registering simply means they can have a free school meal when they want one.

Why applying matters

There are two types of benefits based free school meals from September 2026.

Some pupils will meet the criteria for Targeted free school meals. This means they can receive a free meal and the school may receive additional funding to support pupils.

Other pupils will meet the criteria for Expanded free school meals. This means they can receive a free meal, but this does not automatically bring additional school funding.

You do not need to decide which category applies. The check will confirm this.

How to apply

Applying should only take a few minutes.

Apply here: [insert school application link]

Paper form available from: [insert school office or named contact]

If you would like help, please contact: [insert name, role, email address and telephone number]

Please apply by: [insert date, if the school wishes to include one]

Schools can begin checking eligibility from **1 June 2026**. Where a child is found to be eligible, the free meal entitlement will apply from the start of the 2026 to 2027 school year.

We can help

If you are unsure whether to apply, please apply or contact us. We will be happy to help.

You can contact **[insert name]** by:

Telephone: [insert number]

Email: [insert email address]

In person: Please speak to the school office.

Thank you for taking the time to check whether your child may be eligible.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Role]

[School name]