

Free School Meals Upcoming Changes

May 2026

Dear Parent / Carer:

We write to you today to update you changes that are due to take affect from **1st September 2026**.

New Criteria:

Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Meet criteria set out for families with no recourse to public funds.

Changes:

The changes that will take effect on the **1st of September 2026** for benefit related Free School Meals are:

- **FSM Eligibility Protection Ending:** Previously Central government had started an initiative on the 1st of April 2018 that any benefit related free school meals eligibility would be protected, this was referred to as transitional protection, this meant that eligibility would continue while Universal Credit was being rolled out. The transitional protection that has been in place since 01/04/2026 will end on 31/08/2026.
- **Universal Credit Eligibility Changes:** From the 01/09/2026 FSM eligibility is expanding to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit regardless of household earnings. There will be 2 categories of eligibility for families in receipt of Universal Credit. The 2 categories are:
 1. **Universal Credit Targeted FSM Eligibility:** Children from households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less (the existing threshold for FSM prior to the expansion), will be eligible for targeted FSM. In addition to receiving free meals, pupils eligible for targeted FSM will attract pupil premium and other disadvantage funding for their schools. Other education entitlements that have previously been linked to eligibility for FSM, such as the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.
 2. **Universal Credit Expanded FSM Eligibility:** Children from households in receipt of Universal Credit, with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400 will be entitled to expanded FSM (meals only).

What to Do Next?

You will have to re-check your child's eligibility for Free school meals before the 1st of September 2026. If your child is currently in receipt of benefit related free school meals this will automatically end of August 2026. Please confirm the information that your child's school holds for you on their database or if you have not provided your child's school with your information, please provide your child's school with the following information so that the school can carry out an FSM eligibility check for you. You need to provide or confirm the following details:

Your Full Legal Name

Your Date of Birth

Your National Insurance or Asylum Number

Alternatively, you can visit the Slough Borough Council website and submit a claim online, this will be processed and an outcome will be emailed to you, the results and information will be shared with your child's school.

Slough Borough Council is committed to supporting and helping all our families. If you are a Slough Borough Council resident and you are facing financial difficulty, please call our customer services team on 01753 475111 who will be able to advise you of any additional help available in your circumstances. Families living outside of Slough Borough Council please contact your Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

FSM Administration