

Friday 19th June 2026

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Dear Parents and Carers

Changes to Free School Meal (FSM) Eligibility

We are writing to let you know about some upcoming changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that may affect your child from 1 September 2026.

On 11 May, the Department for Education announced changes to how FSM eligibility will work in the future, linked to Universal Credit. These changes will affect both families who currently receive FSM and those who may be eligible but are not yet claiming.

Since April 2018, any child who became eligible for FSM has continued to be eligible, even if their family's circumstances later changed. **This protection will come to an end at the end of the 2025–26 school year – on 31 August 2026.**

Because of this, all FSM eligibility will need to be checked again between the summer and autumn term by Sheffield City Council. This applies to:

- pupils who currently receive FSM, and
- families who would like to apply for FSM for the first time.

This will then become an annual process, with regular eligibility checks.

We encourage you to have a look at the new criteria below to see if your family may be eligible for FSM.

Targeted FSM (with additional Pupil Premium funding for schools):

- If you receive Universal Credit and your household income is £7,400 a year or less.
- If you receive support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- If you receive Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guaranteed element of Pension Credit.
- If your family has no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Expanded FSM (free school meals only):

- If you receive Universal Credit and your household income is above £7,400.

All current FSM arrangements will remain in place until 31 August 2026.

If you are not already receiving FSM but think you might be eligible, you can apply online for free school meals at <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schools-childcare/school/school-meals>.

Please note you do not need to apply if you are already receiving income-based free school meals in a Sheffield school, we will be in touch if anything has changed.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) entitles all children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 at state-funded schools in England to a free, hot lunchtime meal.

Applying for **Free School Meals (FSM)**, even though your child already receives a free lunch through **Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)**, is highly recommended because it can unlock crucial extra funding and additional benefits for your child.

If you are on Universal Credit with an income of less than £7,400 applying ensures the following benefits for your child and the school:

- **Extra Funding:** Your child's school receives additional **Pupil Premium** funding to provide extra support and resources in school.
- **Holiday Support:** You gain access to free holiday clubs and food vouchers through the **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme**.
- **Free Milk:** FSM entitles your child to free school milk after they turn five, whereas UIFSM does not

If you are on Universal Credit but with an income over £7,400 this still entitles you to a free school meal which is particularly important if your child is in or moving to Year 3 or above.

Our priority is to make sure that every child who is entitled to free school meals continues to receive them, so please look out for further updates.

Yours sincerely,

Ecclesall Primary School