

1 June 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

Free School Meals Eligibility from September 2026

You may be aware that from 1 September 2026 there will be changes to the eligibility criteria of Free School Meals (FSM). This letter sets out these changes and the importance to make sure we have the necessary details from you to do a new eligibility check.

New criteria:

Free school meals are available to children 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 1 September 2026 for benefit related Free School Meals are:

- **FSM Eligibility Protection Ending:** previously, as of 1 April 2018 any benefit related free school meals eligibility was protected, this was referred to as transitional protection and meant that eligibility would continue while Universal Credit was being rolled out. The transitional protection that has been in place since 01/04/2018 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 two 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, children eligible for targeted FSM will attract pupil premium and other 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?

All children in receipt of Free School Meals will require a re-check of eligibility as current eligibility comes to an end on 31 August 2026. Re-checks will then be carried out annually.

Maiden Erlegh Trust works with Slough Borough Council to carry out these eligibility checks for our parents, and we are able to carry out these re-checks on your behalf. To do so, we need to ensure we have the required information from you, which includes:

- Parent full legal name
- Parent date of birth
- Parent National Insurance Number or Asylum Number

Alternatively, you can visit the Slough Borough Council website and submit a check request online, this will be processed and the results will be shared with the school. This can be done via the following link: <https://www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/244>.

Annual re-checks will be required, and so we recommend that you provide the school with your details so that we can carry out the routine checks on your behalf. Please see below for how to provide your information.

Re-checks for next academic year will be carried out in the week commencing 15 June. Therefore, if your child is currently in receipt of Free School Meals it is crucial that you do the below by Friday 12 June.

How do I share my details for the re-check with my child's school?

Your information can be submitted using our online form, which can be found on the link below:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/jsfFNLEj8H>



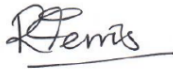
Does my child have to eat the free school meals?

No. Children who are registered for free school meals do not have to eat them. If you are eligible but you want your child to have packed lunches, you should still register because the school will receive the funding which can support your child in other ways.

Please ensure you provide the school with your details by Friday 12 June to allow us to process the re-check of Free School Meals eligibility. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Thank you in advance for your support with providing your details.

Yours sincerely



Richard Ferris
Headteacher

