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Could your child receive free school meals from September 2026?

June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

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

From September 2026, more children 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 healthy meal in school. Please apply, even if your child already gets a free meal

If your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2, they already receive a free school meal through the universal infant free school meals scheme. However, if your household receives Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit, please still apply.

This is because your child may need to be recorded in a different way. Some successful applications may also help the school receive additional funding to support pupils. This depends on the eligibility category confirmed by the check.

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 is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 and already receives a free meal, but your household receives Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit
4. Your child used to receive free school meals, but you are not sure whether they will still be eligible from September 2026
5. Your circumstances have changed and you think your child may now 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 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 can still bring a packed lunch if they prefer. Registering simply means they can have a free school meal when they want one.

How to apply

Please see the school office for an application form and speak to them if you need any help.

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.

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

Kindest regards,

Mr D Foster
Headteacher
Forestdale Primary School