

## Upcoming Changes to Free School Meals

From September 2026, the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals will change. All households receiving Universal Credit will be included, but eligibility will be divided into two groups:

- **Targeted Free School Meals**  
For households receiving Universal Credit with an annual income below £7,400.
- **Expanded Free School Meals**  
For households receiving Universal Credit with an annual income above £7,400.

---

### What You Need to Do

- If your child already receives Free School Meals and you have applied through the Hampshire portal, you do not need to do anything.
- If you think your child may now be eligible, please submit an application through the Hampshire portal:  
[Free school meals | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)
- Please note: children eligible under the **expanded criteria** will only begin to receive Free School Meals from **September 2026**.

---

### If You Disagree with a Decision

If you have applied and believe the decision is incorrect, please contact your child's school. The school can contact Hampshire County Council on your behalf to request further advice.

---

### Important Information for Reception and Key Stage 1 Parents

All children in Early Years Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 already receive free meals under the Universal Infant Free School Meals scheme. However, we still encourage you to apply.

This is because schools receive **Pupil Premium funding** for children who qualify under **Targeted Free School Meal eligibility**. This funding helps support your child during their time at school.

---

### Transitional Protections (until August 2026)

Transitional protections have been in place since 1 April 2018 and will continue until the end of the 2025 to 2026 school year.

During this time:

- Any child who becomes eligible for benefits based Free School Meals will continue to receive them until July 2026.
- This will not change even if household income increases.

From **September 2026**, these protections will end. From this point, all families must meet the new eligibility rules for their child to receive Free School Meals.

---

For more information on Free School Meals please follow this link to the Government Website - [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK](#)

If you have any questions, please contact your child's school.

Kind regards,

**Paul Morgan**  
***Education Catering Contract Manager***