



Free School Meal (FSM) Changes for the 2026 to 2027 Academic Year

We are writing to let you know about changes to free school meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, **all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit** will be entitled to receive free school meals for the academic year.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credits and did not previously qualify for free school meals you will need to complete an online application to confirm your entitlement to start receiving free meals from September. It only takes a few minutes to apply on the Bristol City Council's website using the link below:

<https://parent.bristol.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/fsmapplication#h1>

If you need any support to apply please contact the school office team.

Further information regarding the changes

Going forward, there will be 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM** - pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less
- **Expanded FSM** - pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit.

Families with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible for Targeted FSM subject to meeting separate criteria.

All pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 will also continue to be entitled to free school meals under the universal infant free school meals policy regardless of family circumstances.

Ending transitional protections

Since 1st April 2018, some children under the benefits-based criteria have continued to receive free school meals, even if their family circumstances changed during the rollout of Universal Credit. This is referred to as transitional protections.

Now that entitlement is being expanded to all families on Universal Credit, these protections will end at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (31st August 2026). All pupils eligible for free school meals under the



benefits-based criteria before the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year will continue to receive this entitlement until the end of this academic year (31st August 2026).

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year (September 2026), transitional protections for free school meals will end. Households must meet the FSM eligibility criteria from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year to continue receiving provision. If your child currently receives free school meals the local authority will verify that they still qualify. If you no longer qualify the local authority will contact you.

This means:

- Some children may **no longer be eligible** from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year if their family does not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit
- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status

What you need to do

If your child currently receives free school meals:

- You do not need to reapply for the next academic year (2026-2027)
- The local authority will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility.
- In some cases, your child's school or the local authority may contact you to confirm your details.
- If your child is starting a new school in September, they will be in touch to confirm whether you need to confirm your details or reapply.
- If you are unsure, please contact your school or local authority for advice.

If your child does not currently receive free school meals

- If you are in receipt of Universal Credit you may now be eligible under the expanded criteria
- You will need to apply on the Bristol City Council's website using the link below

<https://parent.bristol.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/fsmapplication#h1>

- Rechecking eligibility



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Going forward FSM eligibility will be monitored by schools and local authorities on an ongoing basis, through annual rechecks.

Rechecks should confirm that pupils in receipt of FSM continue to meet the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, and the category of eligibility they fall under (either targeted or expanded).

Checks should be completed ahead of the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year. This is to allow all pupils to be ready to receive FSM from the start of the school year. Pupils will not attract FSM funding if they do not have a valid recheck of eligibility ahead of the October census each year.

If you are unsure whether you need to apply, if your circumstances have changed, or if you have any questions please contact the school office in person, telephone 0117 3772990 or email info@mpa.clf.uk who will be able to advise and support you.

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