

## Important Update: Free School Meals

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently updated its guidance on Free School Meals (FSM), with important changes coming into effect from September 2026.

Please read the following carefully to understand how this may affect your child.

What's Staying the Same - until August 2026

**If your child has been eligible** for Free School Meals at any time between April 2018 and August 2026, they will continue to receive FSM until 31/08/2026.

Protections were introduced to support families and ensure children receive a free school meal regardless of any financial change in circumstances during the rollout of Universal Credit and this will remain in place until the end of the August 2026.

### What's Changing in September 2026

#### What This Means for You

Transitional protections will end 31-8-2026. Every family will have to be re-checked under the 2 new criteria for FSM entitlement.

**From September 2026 onwards**, to qualify for Free School Meals your household must be receiving Universal Credit to be entitled, regardless of the household income.

There will be two types of Free School Meals:

- Targeted Free School Meals - for families under current £7,400 income threshold. This also helps schools receive extra funding (Pupil Premium).
- Expanded Free School Meals - for families receiving Universal Credit above the threshold. Children will still receive a free meal, but schools will not receive additional funding.

**From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2026**, All parents should apply using the online form via website. [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals). The EWB team will check FSM eligibility and inform the school of entitlement for the whole school year. At the start of each school year, this entitlement will be reassessed.

Any applications made before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2026 will still be processed under the current DfE guidelines and thresholds.

EWB Team will work closely with schools to ensure that eligible children continue to receive their meals without disruption.

### **Need More Information?**

Please check out the website at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals).

If you have any questions please email the Education Welfare Benefits Service (Free School Meals Team) on [ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or 01223 703200