

Free School Meals Information for New Starters to Reception



Application Process

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

What's Changing in September 2026

What This Means for You

If your child was in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium under economic reasons, their entitlement ends 31-8-26 as they then start school. You will need to apply for Free School Meals (FSM).

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Families who may have older children who were on FSM - Transitional protections will end 31-8-2026 for ALL children.

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 1st August 2026, All parents should apply using the online form via website.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeal. 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.

Please apply after 1st August 2026 for your child starting school in September 2026.

If you don't apply, or do not qualify for FSM, and your child is in reception, year 1 or year 2 they will continue to receive Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) under government policy, but will not be entitled to any additional funding and benefits.

Need More Information?

Please check out the website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeal

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