

4 June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

IMPORTANT: CHANGES TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS ELIGIBILITY FROM SEPTEMBER 2026

We are writing to inform you of upcoming changes to the Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility criteria. Starting from the 2026/27 academic year (1 September 2026), the Department for Education is extending entitlement to include all children from households receiving Universal Credit.

New Categories of Free School Meals

From September 2026, there will be two distinct categories for benefits-based free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM:** This remains based on the existing threshold for households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less. These pupils receive free meals and also attract "pupil premium" and other disadvantage funding for their schools.
- **Expanded FSM:** This is a new category for pupils in households receiving Universal Credit who do not qualify for the targeted threshold. These pupils will receive **meals only** and will not qualify for associated benefits such as pupil premium, free HAF activity clubs, or low-income transport.

Other Qualifying Benefits

Children in Year 3 and above continue to be eligible if their parents or carers receive any of the following:

- Universal Credit - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) (your yearly income must be below £7,400 after tax; your monthly income cannot be over £616.67)
- Income Support - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- The Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Child Tax Credit - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) (your yearly income must be below £16,190)

Important Action & Requirements

- ❖ **How to Apply:** Families should apply online via the East Sussex County Council website Free school meals | East Sussex County Council. **If your child is already receiving FSM, please do not reapply.**
- ❖ **Eligibility Note:** Children must be in school both before and after lunchtime to receive free meals.
- ❖ **Transitional Protection:** Any pupil whose parent no longer meets the criteria will continue to receive meals only until the end of the 2025/2026 school year.



Distinguished School



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Headteacher: Ms Caroline Barlow B.A. (Hons)

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Please do not hesitate to contact office@heathfieldcc.co.uk if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher