

Free School Meals – Frequently Asked Questions

What are Free School Meals (FSM)?

Free School Meals provide eligible pupils with a free school lunch during the school day. Eligibility is set by the government and schools/local authorities manage applications.

What has changed about Free School Meals?

From September 2026, eligibility rules are changing so that more families may qualify. Families receiving Universal Credit may now be eligible under the updated arrangements.

We encourage all families to check eligibility, even if you have not qualified before.

Who can apply for Free School Meals?

You may be able to apply if you receive Universal Credit or other qualifying benefits. Because eligibility rules can change and individual circumstances vary, we encourage all families who think they might qualify to apply.

My child already gets free meals in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 – do I still need to apply?

Yes, children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 receive Universal Infant Free School Meals automatically. However, registering for Free School Meals may provide access to additional funding and support for the school and your child.

Please note that even if your child currently receives free school meals, parents and carers will need to reapply each academic year 26/27 . Once approved, entitlement will be awarded for the full academic year, regardless of any changes in circumstances.

My child brings packed lunches – should I still apply?

Yes, even if your child usually brings lunch from home, registering may still unlock additional support and funding for school resources and pupil support.

I applied before and was refused. Should I try again?

Yes. Eligibility rules change and family circumstances change too. We encourage families to reapply if circumstances have changed or if you are unsure.

Will other children know my child receives Free School Meals?

No, applications are confidential and schools work hard to ensure children are not identified because they receive Free School Meals.

Will staff know my financial circumstances?

Only staff who need access to eligibility information for administrative purposes will usually see this information. Applications are treated confidentially.

How do I apply?

Applications are completed through our local authority system.

Apply here: [Free School Meals Application](#)

If you need help completing an application, please contact the school office.

How long does an application take?

Most applications are quick to complete and only take a few minutes. Processing times may vary depending on the local authority.

What information will I need to apply?

You may be asked for information such as:

- Your name and address
- Date of birth
- National Insurance Number
- Details relating to qualifying benefits

If I receive Universal Credit, does that automatically mean my child gets Free School Meals?

Families receiving Universal Credit are encouraged to apply because eligibility arrangements are changing from September 2026. Submitting an application is the best way to confirm entitlement.

Does registering help the school?

Yes, when families register for Free School Meals, schools may receive additional funding to support pupils through extra resources, interventions and wider support.

Can my child still have school meals if they have allergies or dietary requirements?

Yes, please contact the school office to discuss allergies, medical needs or dietary requirements so suitable arrangements can be made.