CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS

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Please ask for: Family Information Service

Date: 6th July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

Free school meals changes from the start of 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.

What is changing?

Expanded entitlement for families on Universal Credit
From the start of academic year 2026 to 2027, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of earnings.
Going forward, there will be two types of eligibility:

- **Targeted FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning £7,400 or less (includes free meals and additional support such as pupil premium).
  Other educational entitlements such as the Holiday Activities and Food program (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.
- **Expanded FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning above £7,400 (free meals only)

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 but we encourage all families to apply for free school meals in case you are entitled but are not aware. You can apply online via: https://www.solihull.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/free-school-meals-and-universal-infant-free-school-meals

End of transitional protections
Since 2018, some children 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. (July 2026).

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
- Solihull Council will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility
- In some cases, Solihull Council may contact you to confirm your details
- If your child is starting a new school in September in an area different to your primary school i.e.: moving from a Birmingham primary school to a Solihull secondary school, you will need to apply to Solihull Council for a free school meals check as your details will not be passed on automatically. You can apply here: https://www.solihull.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/free-school-meals-and-universal-infant-free-school-meals
- If your child is moving from a Solihull primary school to a Solihull secondary school, **you do not** need to reapply as Solihull council already hold the details required to carry out a new free school meals eligibility check.
- If you are unsure, please contact Solihull Council for advice via edfreesm@solihull.gov.uk

If your child does not currently receive free school meals

- You may now be eligible under the expanded criteria
- You will need to apply through Solihull Council on our online portal: https://www.solihull.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/free-school-meals-and-universal-infant-free-school-meals

Not sure?
If you are unsure whether you need to apply or if your circumstances have changed, please contact: Solihull Council's Family Information Service by email edfreesm@solihull.gov.uk

They will be able to advise and support you.

Please note: If you child is eligible for a Free School Meal in September 2026 you will keep your eligibiltiy for a full academic year even if your financial circumstances change, so your child will continue to receive a free school meal until the end of July 2027. Your eligibility will then be rechecked automatically annually and you and your child's school will be notified of any changes before the start of the next academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Rosie Ratcliffe
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