

Changes to Free School Meals for the 2026/27 Academic Year

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to let you know about changes to free school meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026/27 academic year.

What is changing?

Expanded entitlement for families on Universal Credit

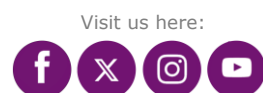
From the start of 2026/27 academic year, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of earnings.

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 who do not have access to public funding 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.



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 2025/26 academic year.

This means:

- Some children may **no longer be eligible** from the start of the 2026/27 academic year if their family does not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit.
- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status.

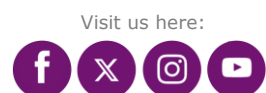
What you need to do

If your child currently receives free school meals:

- In most cases, you do not need to reapply.
- Your child's school or the local authority will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility.
- In some cases, your child's school or the local authority may contact you to confirm your details.
- If your child is starting a new school in September 2026, your local authority will be in touch to confirm whether you need to confirm your details or reapply.
- If you are unsure, please contact your school or local authority for advice.

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 your local authority / school.





The Sutton Academy

Together Students Achieve

Principal: Mr P Willerton

Not sure?

Your child could be entitled to free school meals if you or your partner receives one of the qualifying benefits listed: -

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed part of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit

If you already receive free meals for a child and just want to add another child, or if you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support and do not currently claim free school meals, please contact 01744 676666 or email educationbenefits@sthelens.gov.uk

The two links below will direct you to an eligibility checker and the St Helens Council FSM website page and will allow parent/cares to apply online for free school meals and receive an instant decision.

<https://fsm.lgfl.net>

<https://sthelens.gov.uk/article/1865/Applying-for-free-school-meals>

If your child is eligible for free school meals, the academy will receive extra funding for your child's education when you apply. This funding is called Pupil Premium, and the money can be used by the academy to help with the cost of trips and to fund additional staffing to support our students.

Please contact us at the email address below if you would like help with completing your application. We can then arrange a convenient time for you to come to the academy and sit with a member of staff on a computer, who will support you with the process.

contact@thesuttonacademy.org.uk

Yours sincerely



Mr P. Willerton
Principal

Our Values:



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