

July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to let you know about important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility announced by the Department for Education. These changes mean that many more families will be entitled to receive support from September 2026.

Free school meals provide children with a nutritious meal during the school day and play an important role in supporting health, wellbeing and learning.

Changes to FSM eligibility

There will now be two categories of benefits-related free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM** - This applies to pupils from households receiving Universal Credit with annual earned household income of £7,400 or less.
- **Expanded FSM** - This is a new category for pupils in households that receive Universal Credit but do not qualify for Targeted FSM because their income is above £7,400.

Who will benefit from Expanded FSM?

From September 2026, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to a free school meal each day. This change removes the current £7,400 income threshold and is expected to benefit more than half a million additional pupils across the country.

What if your household income is £7,400 or less?

Families with earned household income of £7,400 or less may qualify for Targeted FSM, which provides additional support beyond a free school meal. This can include funding towards educational visits, school uniform, milk and other support provided by the school.

Does this affect Universal Infant Free School Meals?

No. All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 attending state-funded schools will continue to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM). However, even if your child already receives UIFSM, it is still important to check whether you qualify for FSM under the new criteria, as this may enable the school to access additional funding and support.

How will children benefit?

In addition to the financial savings for families, free school meals help to ensure children receive a healthy, nutritious meal during the school day, supporting:

- concentration and learning in the classroom;
- physical health and development;
- overall wellbeing.

The Government is also reviewing the School Food Standards to ensure schools continue to receive the most up-to-date nutritional guidance.



When will these changes take effect?

The new eligibility criteria will come into effect from 1 September 2026. Eligibility will be confirmed for one academic year at a time and will be reviewed annually.

How to apply

If your child already receives benefits-related Free School Meals (not Universal Infant Free School Meals), you do not need to take any action. Bradford Council has advised that it will automatically identify families eligible for both Targeted FSM and Expanded FSM and will provide this information to schools before the start of the autumn term. The Council will also contact families whose entitlement may be affected by the ending of transitional protections.

Parents who wish to apply under the new Expanded FSM criteria can do so using the following link: [Free School Meals | Bradford Council](#). As Appleton Academy processes our own FSM applications, once you have checked your eligibility, you can also email yours and your child's details to info@appletonacademy.co.uk and a member of staff will be in touch.

Please note that Bradford Council has advised us that there is currently an issue with the online eligibility checker. We understand that this should be resolved by the end of July 2026. If the application form is not yet available, please check the webpage regularly for updates.

If you have any questions, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Appleton Academy