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Dear Parent/Carer,

Do you receive Universal Credit? You will be entitled to Free School Meals from September. Please read this letter to find out what you need to do to claim this entitlement. If the form isn't completed by Friday, the 10th July, then you need to apply for it yourself. FSM can only be provided once a claim has been granted and school informed.

We are writing to inform you about important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility announced by the Department for Education, which will mean that many more families will qualify for this support.

Free school meals provide vital nutrition for children during the school day and play an important role in supporting health, wellbeing, and learning.

Who will benefit from the expanded Free School Meals?

From September 2026, eligibility will be expanded so that all households receiving Universal Credit will qualify for Free School Meals. This change removes the current £7,400 income cap and is expected to benefit over half a million additional pupils nationwide.

When will these changes take effect?

The new eligibility criteria will apply from September 2026, meaning families receiving Universal Credit will be able to access Free School Meals from the 2026/27 school year.

How will this help families financially?

This expansion will offer significant financial support. Eligible families could save up to £495 per year per child on school lunches. For families with multiple children, this could make a considerable difference to household budgets.

How will children benefit?

In addition to the financial benefits, Free School Meals help ensure children receive nutritious meals during the school day, supporting concentration and learning in the classroom, physical health and development, and overall wellbeing. The government is also reviewing and updating the School Food Standards to ensure schools are supported with the latest nutrition guidance.

How to apply

Although eligibility will be automatically available to all families receiving Universal Credit, parents and carers will still need to apply.

If you think the new criteria applies to your household and either parent/carers is in receipt of Universal Credit you will need to apply for Free School Meals using the online form on the Leeds City Council Website

