



Thursday 11th June 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

IMPORTANT ACTION REQUIRED - FREE SCHOOL MEALS – NEW ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR 2026 - 2027

From the start of the 2026 - 2027 academic year, the Government plans to expand access to Free School Meals to all children and young people from households receiving Universal Credit.

From 1 September 2026, all children with a parent/carer who receives any level of Universal Credit can have free school meals. **The application window opened on 1st June 2026 and all parents/carers must apply.**

There will be two categories of eligibility:

Eligible Targeted: this covers children in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less. **These children will attract Pupil Premium, access to free holiday clubs and other disadvantage funding for their schools.** Eligibility for Free School Meals will start from the date of approval and will be eligible until 31st of August 2027. **At Hayeswood First School pupils who receive this funding receive further support from the school. To receive this support for 2026 - 2027 applications must be completed before the end of term.**

Eligible Expanded: this covers children who are in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400. **These children will be entitled to Free School Meals only** and Eligibility for FSM will start from 1 September 2026 and be eligible until 31st August 2027.

NB: Due to these changes, everyone currently eligible for Free Schools will be required to reapply to continue to be eligible for Free School Meals. The current arrangement for FSM will end on the 31st August 2026. If you think you are eligible, we strongly recommend applying online as early as possible to allow for your application to be processed in readiness for the new academic year.

You can apply online via the Initio Learning Trust Free School Meals Application: [Free School Meals Application](#). You will need your National Insurance number or Asylum Seekers' Service number to apply. You may also need to upload your benefit documents to prove your entitlement. If one or more of your children already get free school meals and you have a younger child starting school, you will still need to apply for that child. Most applications will receive an instant reply. If you are uploading a Universal Credit statement, please upload all pages of your latest statement, including the total deductions.

If your child is currently receiving Free School Meals, their eligibility will continue to be protected until the end of the current school year regardless of the outcome of your new application. If your child is moving to a new school, the new free school meals award will transfer across with their record.





Most applications will receive an instant reply. If you have any further queries regarding Free School Meals or Pupil Premium funding, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Headteacher