Important Update: Free School Meals

The Department for Education (DfE) has updated its guidance on Free School Meals (FSM), with important changes coming into effect from **September 2026**. Please read the following carefully to understand how this may affect your child.

From September 2026

From the 2026/2027 school year, there will be two types of FSM eligibility:

- **Targeted FSM** - this continues to be based on the current eligibility threshold. It applies to pupils in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less. Pupils in this group will attract Pupil Premium funding for their school and will qualify for additional support, such as the Holiday and Activities Food Programme.

- **Expanded FSM** - This is a new category for pupils whose households receive Universal Credit but do not meet the criteria for Targeted FSM. Pupils in this group will be eligible for free school meals only.

Transitional protections are ending

Children who were previously assessed as eligible for FSM had their eligibility protected. This meant they could not lose their FSM, even if the household was no longer eligible. These protections are ending in September, meaning some children may lose their existing eligibility.

Annual eligibility Checks

We will recheck the eligibility of all children on an annual basis. **Parents already in receipt of benefits related FSM do not need to reapply**, as your eligibility will be rechecked and confirmation of this will be sent to your school before the end of the summer holiday.

No Recourse to Public Funds

Due to these changes, all households that qualify as **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)** and receive FSM **must reapply** or you will lose your entitlement.

Applying for FSM

If you have not previously applied for Free School Meals and believe you may be eligible under the new expanded criteria, please submit an online application via the Suffolk County Council website: Apply for free school meals - Suffolk County Council.

Need More Information?

If you have any questions or are unsure whether you meet the new eligibility criteria, please contact us at: **freeschoolmeals@suffolk.gov.uk**

August 2026

Free School Meals
Are you entitled?
Suffolk County Council

August 2026