

24th September 2026

Re: expanded free school meals (FSM) eligibility and the pupil premium

Dear parent/carer,

Your child may qualify for free school meals, and we want to encourage you to register for them.

From September 2026, **all pupils in households receiving Universal Credit are eligible for free school meals**. Your household income doesn't matter - if you receive Universal Credit, your child can claim free school meals. We strongly encourage you to check if you're eligible under the new criteria. See below for more information on how to check if your child qualifies.

Children in reception, year 1 and year 2 will continue to receive free school meals through a different scheme. However, if they are also eligible for free school meals in line with the criteria below, we still really want you to register – see why below.

Your child may also get free school meals if you receive any of the benefits listed below and your child is younger than the compulsory age for starting school **and** in full-time education (or if part-time, they attend both before and after the lunch period).

Why register for free school meals?

Pupils who are registered for free school meals will get healthy, nutritious and balanced food at school that helps make sure they're ready to learn and thrive at school.

Registering your child for free school meals is also important because **the school might get extra 'pupil premium' funding from the government as a result** – for each eligible pupil, the school will get an extra **£1,550** in pupil premium funding in 2026/27.

If you prefer your child to have packed lunches, don't worry – they can still have this if they're registered for free school meals.

You can find more information about pupil premium on our website at <https://www.castlehillprimary.net/finance/pupil-premium>. You can see what we spent it on in the past academic year and how it will be spent this year. For example, we've use pupil premium funding for:

- Ongoing training of staff to ensure consistent classroom provision (e.g. classroom environment)
- Resources for academic interventions
- Staffing (including ongoing training) to provide specialist emotional & wellbeing interventions (e.g. ELSAs, TALA & Thrive practitioners)

Is my child eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium?

From September 2026, there will be 2 categories of free school meals:

Targeted FSM – your child may be eligible if you receive:

- Universal Credit **and** have an annual household income of **£7,400 or less**
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit

Your child might also qualify if you have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Pupils receiving targeted FSM:

- Can receive free school meals
- Will attract pupil premium funding for the school
- May be eligible for other support, such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme
 - Funded by the Department for Education, the HAF programme enables local authorities to provide free healthy food and enriching activities during school holidays for children who receive benefit-related FSM.
 - Further information is available via the FAQs: [Hampshire Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) frequently asked questions | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council](#)
 - If there are any queries, the HAF team can be contacted at: connect4communities@hants.gov.uk (please include *FAO HAF* in the subject line)
 - Families in Basingstoke and Deane can visit the [Basingstoke and Deane HAF Booking Site](#) to find local schemes, book places or add their names to the waiting list or you can forward the attached flyer to your families.

Expanded FSM – your child is eligible if you receive:

- Universal Credit **and** have an annual household income of **over £7,400**

Pupils receiving expanded FSM:

- Can receive free school meals
- Will not attract pupil premium funding for the school, nor be eligible for other support that's based on targeted FSM

How do I register?

Applications for Free School Meals should be submitted using the following link

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/freeschoolmeals>

Full guidance on existing criteria can be found on the GOV.UK website: Free school meals: guidance for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK

For information on registering for free school meals if you are a household with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), see the FAQs on the following pages.

More information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mrs Lund or Miss Harding by emailing the school at admin@castlehillprimaryschool.net for their attention.

You can also find more information at www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lund



Assistant Headteacher/Inclusions Lead

Miss Harding



Acting Assistant Headteacher & Inclusions