

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Important System Changes for September 2026

Lancashire County Council is expanding the Free School Meals program. The previous household income limits are being completely removed. Starting in September 2026, **all families who receive Universal Credit are eligible to receive free school meals** for their children.

This change means many children at our school who were previously refused or who have never qualified before will now be entitled to a free, healthy lunch every day.

ALREADY GETTING FREE SCHOOL MEALS?

ACTION NEEDED: YOU MUST REAPPLY

- **All current families must submit a new application** through the Lancashire County Council portal before September 2026.
- If you do not complete this renewal application, your child's meals **will stop automatically** at the end of the summer term.
- Applications for the new term open officially on **1st June 2026**.

WHO OUGHT TO APPLY?

You should complete the application process if any of the following apply to your household:

- ✓ You currently receive **Universal Credit** (regardless of your yearly earnings).
- ✓ Your child does not currently receive free meals at school.
- ✓ You applied in the past but were refused because your household income was too high.
- ✓ Your household income or benefits status changed recently.
- ✓ Your child already gets Free School Meals and you need to renew for the next school year.



WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THRESHOLDS?

Your application will organize your support tier based automatically on your net annual earnings:

YOUR UNIVERSAL CREDIT STATUS	WHAT YOUR CHILD RECEIVES	EXTRA SCHOOL BENEFITS
Earning £7,400 or less per year	✓ Free School Meals every day	Pupil Premium Funding: The school receives extra funds directly to support your child's learning, classroom help, and general wellbeing.
Earning more than £7,400 per year	✓ Free School Meals every day	Standard daily free school meals allocation only.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO APPLY?

- ✓ **Financial Relief:** Provides your child with a free hot, healthy meal every day, saving your family hundreds of pounds a year.
- ✓ **Fully Confidential:** The application is entirely private. Other students will not know who receives free meals.
- ✓ **No Risk to Benefits:** Claiming this support will **NOT** lower or impact any other benefits or Universal Credit payouts you receive.



HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted online directly through the **Lancashire County Council Free School Meals Service**. The form takes only a few minutes to fill out.

To complete your application, make sure you have:

- Your National Insurance (NI) Number
- Basic household details & address
- Details of your current Universal Credit statements

 **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF):** If your current immigration status prevents you from claiming standard benefits, your child may still be eligible under separate guidelines. Please reach out to the school office for a confidential paper application form.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR APPLICATION?

If you find online forms confusing, or if English is not your first language, please do not worry. Come into the school office or give us a call— **Mrs. Firfire** is completely happy to guide you through each step and help you complete the paperwork successfully.