

Dear Parent/Carer,

### **Changes to Free School Meals Guidance from September 2026**

We are writing to inform you of changes to the Free School Meals guidance that will take effect from September 2026.

#### **Free School Meals expansion:**

From September 2026, there will be 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals –

- **Eligible targeted:** this covers children in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less.  
**The children eligible under the ‘Targeted’ category will benefit from Holiday Activities and Food provision (HAF)**

Children **may** also be eligible for Targeted Free School Meal’s if their household is in receipt of one of the below benefits:

- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - The guarantee element of Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (provided you’re not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
  - Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
  - No Recourse to Public Funds
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- **Eligible expanded:** this covers children who are in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400.  
**The children eligible under the ‘Expanded’ category will not benefit from Holiday Activities and Food provision (HAF)**

**Transitional protection has ended:**

- If your child has previously been in receipt of benefits-based Free School Meals, you will need to re-apply before September 2026. Your child **will not** automatically continue to receive Free School Meals from September 2026; we must process a new eligibility check.

**Universal Free School Meals:**

- Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will automatically receive a universal free school meal regardless of the family income.
- However, families with children in these year groups should make an application for benefits-based free school meals if they meet the criteria listed above. If you are eligible for targeted free school meals, additional funding is available to the school.

For further information, or to make an application for Free School Meals, please visit the Swindon Borough Council website, or ask your school office for a paper application form.

Yours sincerely,

Free School Meals Team

Swindon Borough Council