

Travel Assistance & Free School Meals Team
Education Planning & Infrastructure
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Dear Parent/Carer

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) – 2026/27

From the start of the 2026/27 academic year, the Department for Education (DfE) will remove all transitional protections for FSM. At the same time, eligibility criteria will be expanded to include **all** children from households receiving Universal Credit.

From September 2026, families will need to meet the updated criteria for their child(ren) to continue receiving FSM.

Eligibility Recheck

In line with these changes, the Local Authority will review all current FSM claims before the start of the new academic year, and annually thereafter. If you remain eligible your school will be informed and your child(ren) will continue to receive FSM.

Under the new criteria, FSM eligibility will fall into two categories:

- **Targeted** – for children in households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less. These children will attract pupil premium and other disadvantage funding for their schools. Other education entitlements, such as the holiday activities and food programme (HAF) and the ‘extended rights’ element of school travel assistance, will be based on targeted free school meals.
- **Expanded** – for pupils in households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings above £7,400. This provides FSM only.

If your child(ren) is/are no longer eligible following the review their FSM entitlement will end. A confirmation email will be sent to the email address you used for your Family Portal account when you made the FSM application. **As I am sure you can appreciate the FSM Team will be extremely busy during this period so please only contact the team for confirmation if your current email address does not match the one registered on your portal.**

New Claims

We encourage any parents who believe they may now be eligible but have not previously applied or who have had an application rejected previously, to visit our website and apply. The online application process is quick, confidential, and provides an immediate eligibility check.

Apply online: [Apply for free school meals | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Yours sincerely

Lisa Mullis

Admissions & Travel Assistance Manager
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