

Dear Parent/Guardian,

From September 2026 the free school meal qualifying criteria is being expanded.

This change means that all households receiving Universal Credit will qualify for free school meals – no matter their income

What's changing?

From September, there will be two categories of Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility under the Universal Credit criteria:

Eligible targeted: this covers children in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household 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.

Eligible expanded: this covers children who are in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400. Children will be entitled to free school meals only.

What happens next?

If you believe you are eligible, please apply through the [Devon Citizens Portal](#).

This is the quickest and easiest way to apply and will result in you getting an instant decision.

If you are found to be not eligible but believe you are, you can email evidence of your qualifying benefit to us at freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk. For claimants on Universal Credit, we would need to see the previous 3 months of Universal Credit statements to assess eligibility. If you have less than 3 months, please send however many you may have.

If you have any questions or need support, please don't hesitate to contact us at freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk, by phone at 0345 155 1019 or visit our website at [School meals - Children, families and education](#).

Best Wishes,

Free School Meals Team

