

Stanhope Barrington C of E  
Primary School



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Dear Parent/Carers

10<sup>th</sup> July 2026

**Re: FSM changes from September 2026**

Free [school](#) meals provide vital nutrition for children during the school day. The government announced that many more families will be eligible. Here is what all parents need to know.

**Who will benefit from the expanded free school meals?**

Over half a million additional pupils will become eligible for Free School Meals under the new eligibility criteria. The change means that all households receiving [Universal Credit](#), above the current £7,400 income cap, will qualify for this support.

This expansion builds upon the existing provision which already covers:

- 2.1 million disadvantaged children
- 90,000 low-income students in Further Education
- Around 1.3 million infants under the Universal Infant Free School Meals programme
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**When will these changes take effect?**

The new eligibility will take effect in September 2026. Families receiving Universal Credit will be able to access free school meals starting from the 2026/27 school year. This will give schools time to prepare for the increased number of meals they'll need to provide.

**How will this help families financially?**

This expansion will provide significant financial relief for families. If your household receives Universal Credit, you could save up to £495 per year per child on school lunches. For families with multiple children, these savings can make a substantial difference to household budgets.

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## How do I apply for free school meals?

Any parent can apply by providing us with their National Insurance Number to check their eligibility.

It is important to note that while eligibility will be automatically granted to all Universal Credit recipients, families will still need to apply to receive the free school meals.

We have currently received an updated list of children eligible for FSM from September.

If your circumstances have recently changed, please contact the office and we can run another check to confirm whether you are eligible.

Yours sincerely,

*Mrs Sofia Gurbillon*

Mrs S Gurbillon  
School Business Manager