

Dear Parents and Carers

## Changes to Free School Meal Eligibility

We are writing to let you know about some upcoming changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that may affect your child from 1 September 2026.

On 11 May, the Department for Education announced changes to how FSM eligibility will work in the future, linked to Universal Credit. These changes will affect both families who currently receive FSM and those who may be eligible but are not yet claiming.

Since April 2018, any child who became eligible for FSM has continued to be eligible, even if their family's circumstances later changed. **This protection will come to an end at the end of the 2025–26 school year – on 31 August 2026.**

Because of this, all FSM eligibility will need to be checked again between the summer and autumn term by Sheffield City Council. This applies to:

- pupils who currently receive FSM, and
- families who would like to apply for FSM for the first time.

This will then become an annual process, with regular eligibility checks.

We encourage you to have a look at the new criteria below to see if your family may be eligible.

### **Targeted FSM (with additional Pupil Premium funding for schools):**

- If you receive support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- If you receive Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guaranteed element of Pension Credit.
- If your family has no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

All current FSM arrangements will remain in place until 31 August 2026.

If you are not already receiving FSM but think you might be eligible, you can apply online for free school meals at <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schools-childcare/school/school-meals>.

**Please note you do not need to apply if you are already receiving income-based free school meals** in a Sheffield school, we will be in touch if anything has changed.

Our priority is to make sure that every child who is entitled to free school meals continues to receive them, so please look out for further updates.

Yours sincerely