

Free School Meals (FSM) Changes – FAQs for Parents

1. What is changing with Free School Meals?

The Government is changing how Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility works.

From summer 2026:

- Eligibility will be **checked each year**.
 - FSM will be awarded for **one full school year at a time**.
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2. Will my child lose their Free School Meals straight away?

No. All current FSM entitlements will continue until the **end of the 2025–26 school year**.

3. What happens after that?

- All families will have their eligibility checked between **1 June and 31 August 2026**.
- Schools will receive updated information and will **inform families of the outcome**.

If your child is eligible at the start of the academic year (1 September), they will receive FSM for the **whole of the 2026–27 school year**.

4. Do I need to do anything now?

No. There is nothing you need to do at this stage.

Sheffield City Council will:

- recheck all current FSM claims, and
- assess any new applications.

You will be contacted if any action is needed.

5. Who needs to be checked?

The check will apply to:

- Children who already receive FSM.
 - Families applying for the first time.
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6. Why are these checks important?

Children must have a valid eligibility check:

- To continue receiving Free School Meals.
 - To ensure schools receive the correct funding to support pupils.
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7. How will I know if my child is still eligible?

Schools will receive updated eligibility information and will inform you if there are any changes.

The check will confirm:

- Whether your child is eligible.
 - The type of FSM they will receive (Targeted or Expanded).
 - When the check took place.
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8. What are 'Targeted' and 'Expanded' Free School Meals?

From 1 September 2026 there are two types of FSM:

Targeted FSM – includes:

- Free school meals.
- Additional support such as:
 - Pupil Premium funding for schools.
 - Free school milk.
 - Holiday Activities and Food (HAF).

Expanded FSM

- Free school meals only.

Both types provide free meals during the school day.

9. How long will my child be entitled to Free School Meals?

If your child is eligible at the start of the school year, they will receive FSM for the **full school year** even if your circumstances change during that time.

10. Should I request a recheck for my child?

No. If your child is already receiving FSM, you do not need to request a recheck.

Requesting a recheck at the wrong time could:

- mean your child is found no longer eligible, or
- change their entitlement (for example, from Targeted FSM to Expanded FSM).

This could affect the level of additional support your family receives.

11. Can I apply for free school meals for another child (e.g. a sibling)?

Yes. You can apply for siblings or other children at any time. This will **not affect** other children in your household who already receive FSM.

12. How do I know if I might be eligible?

You may be eligible if your family receives:

- Universal Credit.
- Certain benefits (e.g. income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit).
- Support under asylum or immigration arrangements.
- Support as a family with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Some families may also qualify based on their earnings while receiving Universal Credit.

13. Will more families be eligible in the future?

Yes. From September 2026, eligibility is being expanded so that more families receiving **Universal Credit** will qualify.

14. Why is this change happening?

The Government is updating the system:

- To align with Universal Credit.
 - To make eligibility clearer and more consistent on a yearly basis.
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15. Where can I get help?

Further information and support are available from:

- Your child's school.
 - Sheffield City Council <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schools-childcare/school/school-meals>
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Key message

We want to make sure that every child who is entitled to Free School Meals continues to receive them. Please look out for updates from your child's school.