

Free school meals are expanding – what parents need to know



From September 2026, more children will be able to get free school meals. If your family receives Universal Credit, your child will be entitled to a free, nutritious school meal every day.

What do I need to do?

- Check if you receive Universal Credit and whether your child is currently receiving a free school meal. If they are not, please apply.

Have ready:

- the benefit claimant's date of birth and National Insurance Number

Who can get free school meals?

From September 2026, all children whose families receive Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals. The current £7,400 household income cap is being removed.

When does this start?

The new rules will begin at the start of the 2026/27 school year (September 2026).

How will this help families?

Families who receive Universal Credit could save up to £495 per year for each child on school lunches. For families with more than one child, this can make a real difference to day-to-day household budgets.

Why should I apply?

Applying means your child can receive a free, healthy meal every school day, supporting their health, wellbeing and learning. Even if your child sometimes chooses packed lunches, registering still matters. It helps schools understand what support pupils may need and can unlock other help, such as support with trips or activities.

Will this affect me or my child negatively?

No. Applying for free school meals:

- does not affect your benefits or immigration status
- does not mean your child has to take a school meal if they do not want to
- does not label or single out your child
- does not reduce support for other pupils

Schools treat this information confidentially.

How do I apply?

You will need to apply if your child is not currently receiving free school meals.

Applying usually only takes a few minutes by visiting lancashire.gov.uk/schools and clicking on free school meals.

If you need help applying, your school office can support you.





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