



Registered Address: Canford Heath Infant School, Learoyd Road, Poole, BH17 8PJ
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Company Number: 09484306

27th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

FREE SCHOOL MEALS - DO NOT IGNORE

We are writing to inform you about important national changes to **Free School Meal (FSM)** eligibility that will come into effect from **September 2026**.

What is changing?

From the start of the **2026/27 academic year**, the Government is expanding eligibility for Free School Meals. **All children from households receiving Universal Credit will qualify**, regardless of household income. This removes the current earnings threshold of £7,400 per year.

The Department for Education estimates that **over 500,000 additional pupils** across England will become eligible for free school meals as a result of this change.

Why is this changing?

The Government aims to ensure that more children can access a nutritious daily meal, support family budgets, and reduce child poverty. It is expected that these changes will help lift around **100,000 children out of poverty nationwide**.

End of transitional protection

You may be aware that some children have continued receiving FSM under “transitional protection,” even if family circumstances changed. This transitional protection **will end in August 2026**, and families will need to **reapply** under the new Universal Credit-based system.

This means:

- Children currently receiving FSM **will not automatically continue** unless their family receives Universal Credit and completes a new application.
- All families who may be eligible are strongly encouraged to apply.

How to apply

Even though eligibility will be based on Universal Credit, **it is not automatic**. Families will still need to apply through the local council. Applications generally require:



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Canford Heath Junior School

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Ad Astra Infant School

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Haymoor Junior School

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- Your **National Insurance number**
- Your **child's details**
- Confirmation of Universal Credit (usually checked electronically)

We expect that councils will open FSM applications from **summer 2026**, ahead of the new school year.

What this means for your child

If your household receives Universal Credit, your child may become newly eligible for FSM, which could save up to **£495 per year per child** on school meals.

Children receiving FSM will continue to access the same high-quality meal options as all pupils.

Next steps

We will share further information once the Department for Education and local authority provide updated guidance. In the meantime, please:

- Look out for application instructions from the council in summer 2026.
- Contact the school office if you have questions or need support with applying.

Thank you for your attention. These changes should bring significant support to many families and ensure more children receive a nutritious daily meal to help them thrive at school.

Kind regards,



Mrs Kate Carter
Chief Executive Officer
Teach Trust



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