

Free School Meals Team
Customer Services
BCP Council Civic Centre
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY



Telephone: [01202 123222](tel:01202 123222)
Email: fsm@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

May 2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Free School Meal Eligibility Changes for the new Academic Year – 2026/27

Free School Meals Transitional Protection will be ending at the end of the current school year, and you will need to reapply if you meet the new criteria.

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 Academic Year, the Government plans to expand access to Free School Meals to all children and young people from households receiving Universal Credit, and there will be 2 categories of eligibility:

Eligible Targeted: this covers children in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less. These children will attract Pupil Premium and other disadvantage funding for their schools. Other education entitlements, such as the Holiday Activities and Food program (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of School Transport Assistance will be based on the **Targeted** Free School Meals.

Eligible Expanded: this covers children who are in households receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400. These children will be entitled to Free School Meals only.

Due to these changes, everyone will be required to reapply, from 1st June 2026. We strongly recommend applying online as early as possible to allow for your application to be processed in readiness for the new Academic Year. You can apply online via the BCP Council Free School Meals webpage: [Free school meals | BCP](#).

If you are unable to apply online, you can obtain an application form from either your child's school or by contacting us directly, our details can be found at the top of this letter. Please ensure that you complete application forms in full and in block capitals to avoid delays in processing.

Please note, applications for the next Academic Year, are unlikely to be processed within our standard 3-5 working day timeframe as a result of the number of applications we will be receiving during this time. Therefore, applicants may need to wait several weeks for a response.

Please note, if your child is currently receiving Free School Meals, their eligibility will continue to be protected until the end of the current school year regardless of the outcome of your new application.

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Once your application has been processed, you will receive a letter via email to inform you of the outcome. If you are eligible, we will confirm under which category you are eligible and advise what level of support your child will receive.

If you are eligible under the **Targeted** category, you will be entitled to Free School Meal support for the entire 2026/27 Academic Year, even if you have a change in circumstances.

If you are eligible under the **Expanded** category, you will also be entitled to Free School Meal support for the entire 2026/27 Academic Year, however, if you have a change in circumstances whereby you now meet the criteria for **Targeted** Free School Meals, please reapply so that we can reassess your eligibility and your child may then receive the additional support available within this category.

Please note, we do not process Free School Meal applications on behalf of all schools, therefore, if your child is transferring to a new school in September, please check how you should apply for Free School Meals. You can find a list of schools that we do not process applications for on the BCP Council Free School Meal webpage: [Free school meals | BCP](#). If your child's new school is listed on our webpage, please contact the school directly to find out how to apply.

Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF):

If you are a family with NRPF and your child is currently in receipt of NRPF Free School Meals, you do not need to reapply at this time, and from September 2026 your child will receive support under the **Targeted** category. We will contact you if you need to reapply in the future, however, as previously instructed you must inform us of any change in circumstances that mean you no longer meet the NRPF Free School Meal criteria.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Free School Meals Team