



FREE SCHOOL MEAL INFORMATION

Free School Meals Information for Parents

What Are Free School Meals?

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 automatically receive Universal Free School Meals. This is different from means-tested Free School Meals (FSM).

If your child qualifies for FSM based on your household income or benefits, the school receives additional funding called Pupil Premium. This funding helps us provide extra support for your child and contributes to wider school resources.

Even better — once your child qualifies for FSM, they continue to receive Pupil Premium funding for six years, even if your circumstances change. This means long-term support throughout their time with us.

Important Update – Changes Coming in 2026

The Government has announced that from **September 2026**, all families receiving **Universal Credit** will qualify for Free School Meals. This is not yet in place, so the **current eligibility rules still apply** until the new system begins.

We will keep parents updated as more details are released.

Current Eligibility Criteria

Your child may be eligible for Free School Meals if you receive any of the following:

- Universal Credit with a household income of less than £7,400 a year (after tax, excluding benefits)
- Income-Based Jobseekers' Allowance
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (without Working Tax Credit) and an annual income below £16,190
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' (paid for four weeks after you stop working)

How to Apply

1. **Visit the Website:** Go to the Lancashire County Council Free School Meals page.
2. **Check Eligibility:** Review the eligibility criteria to ensure you qualify.
3. **Complete the Form:** Fill out the online application form available on the website.

Online Application:

- Visit the [Lancashire County Council Free School Meals page](#).
- Follow the instructions to check your eligibility and complete the application form.

Apply by Post:

Download the application form from the Lancashire County Council website or request one from your child's school.

Download the application form:

- [Free school meals and pupil premium form](#) (PDF 939 KB)

Complete the form and send it to:

Please return completed forms to:

PO Box 100
Pupil Access Team
Lancashire County Council
County Hall
Fishergate Hill
Preston PR1 0LD

If you apply by post we will notify you by email, or post if you do not provide an email address.

Additional Information

Nursery Children

If your child attends a maintained nursery school or class for a full day, you may apply for FSM if you meet the eligibility criteria.

Universal Free School Meals vs. Means-Tested FSM

- **Universal Free School Meals:** All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 receive a free meal automatically.
- **Means-Tested Free School Meals:** Based on household income and benefits. Applying is still important even if your child already receives a universal free school meal.

Even if your child already gets universal free school meals, applying for Free School Meals if you're eligible is still important. Here's why:

1. **More Money for Your Child's School:** Schools get extra funding when more families apply for free school meals. This money helps pay for things like extra staff to support the children, school trips, and new equipment.
2. **Extra Benefits for Your Child:** If you qualify, your child might get free or cheaper school trips, uniforms, and after-school activities.

3. **Fair Funding for Schools:** Schools need to know how many students qualify for free meals to get the right amount of money. This helps them support all students better.
4. **Reducing Stigma:** When more families apply, it makes free school meals more common and helps reduce any embarrassment about receiving them.
5. **Healthy Meals:** Applying ensures your child gets nutritious meals, which are important for their health and learning.

In our school if your child is entitled to FSM then we receive additional funding which we use in the following ways: -

- Providing additional academic support for FSM children who need to boost progress or be challenged further
- Providing financial support towards additional costs of education such as trips
- Providing financial support to allow every FSM child one free (normally paid for) extra-curricular activity after school per week for the whole year.
- Providing financial support towards uniform and equipment
- Additional Educational needs resources

Applying helps your child and their school, so it's definitely worth doing if you think you might be eligible!

What to Do If Your Application is Denied

1. **Review the Decision:** Understand why your application was denied and verify all information provided.
2. **Appeal the Decision:** Contact Lancashire County Council to discuss the decision and provide any additional evidence if necessary. You can reach them through their contact page.
3. **Seek Alternative Support:** Speak with your child's school for additional support or look into local charities and food banks.
4. **Reapply:** If your circumstances change, such as a change in income or benefits, you can reapply for free school meals.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the application process, please contact us or the Lancashire County Council directly.