



Primary and Secondary Headteachers

**Children's and Adults' Services –
Hounslow House
7 Bath Road
Hounslow TW3 3EB**
Your contact: School Admissions

Date: 15.06.2026

By email

Subject: Free School Meals (FSM) Changes from September 2026 – Action Required

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to inform you of important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility from September 2026 and to outline the role of schools in ensuring all eligible pupils are identified and recorded.

1. Expansion of FSM Eligibility

From September 2026, FSM eligibility will be extended to all families in receipt of Universal Credit. This means a significant increase in the number of pupils entitled to free school meals.

As a result:

- More families will be eligible for support.
- Schools should expect an increase in FSM registrations and uptake.
- It is essential that eligible pupils are correctly identified to ensure they receive their entitlement and that schools receive the funding available to support disadvantaged pupils.

However, targeted FSM criteria remain in place for pupil premium purposes. Pupils from households on Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less will continue to attract pupil premium and wider disadvantage funding.

From the 2026/27 academic year, the Ever 6 FSM measure will be based on targeted FSM eligibility and will continue to be used for funding and accountability purposes.

2. School Responsibilities

As part of these changes, schools will play a key role in ensuring FSM eligibility is identified and recorded accurately.

Schools are best placed to undertake eligibility checks as they already hold the information required to support the process and maintain regular contact with families.

Schools will be expected to:

- Complete FSM eligibility checks for pupils on roll.
- Ensure new starters are checked as part of admissions and enrolment processes.
- Promote FSM registration and eligibility checks to families.
- Maintain accurate FSM records and update these where circumstances change.
- Support families in providing the information required to complete eligibility checks.
- Maximise pupil premium funding by ensuring eligible pupils are identified.

This will help ensure:

- Eligible pupils receive their entitlement without delay.
- Schools receive the full funding available to them.
- Census and disadvantage data remains accurate and robust.

3. Information Required

To support eligibility checking, schools should ensure they hold the following information:

For parents/carers:

- Full name
- Address
- National Insurance Number or National Asylum Support Service (NASS) Number

For pupils:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- School attended

4. FSM Eligibility Checking Process

The Department for Education has introduced a new FSM Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), available through DfE Sign-in.

Schools should undertake eligibility checks:

- For all new pupils joining the school.
- During annual data collection exercises to identify newly eligible families.
- Prior to the October census to support accurate pupil premium and disadvantage funding returns.

The outcome of an eligibility check will remain valid for the academic year.

5. Local Authority Support

Whilst schools will lead on eligibility checking and registration activity, the Local Authority is committed to supporting schools through this transition.

Support available will include:

- Guidance and process documentation.
- Training and briefing sessions.
- Advice on the use of the FSM Eligibility Checking Service.
- Communication materials to support engagement with families.
- Ongoing support from the Admissions and Placements Service.
- Monitoring and reporting to help schools understand their FSM profile and maximise pupil premium funding.

We will continue to work collaboratively with schools to ensure eligible children and young people receive the support they are entitled to and that schools are able to maximise available funding.

Further advice and guidance will be shared in the coming weeks, please see link below, or feel free to contact me for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities/free-school-meals-guidance-for-local-authorities-local-authority-maintained-schools-academies-and-free-schools>

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Admissions and Transitions Team