

Coastal Learning Partnership
Heathlands Primary Academy
Andrews Close
Springwater Road
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH11 8HB



01202 806155
office@coastalpartnership.co.uk
www.coastalpartnership.co.uk

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Dear Parents/Carers,

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 new applications will need to be made for those who meet the new criteria.

From the start of the 2026/27 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 and will **not** attract Pupil Premium and other disadvantage funding for their schools.

Schools within Coastal Learning Partnership already use an online checking system called Online Free School Meals (OFSM) to verify eligibility of pupils. This system runs regular checks using the data you have provided to capture any changes to eligibility statuses and ensure your child(ren) receive meals and funding they may be entitled to. Therefore, **if you have already provided your DOB and National Insurance Number to your child's school, there is no action for you to take at this time. You will receive a notification via email if your child's eligibility status changes.**

Please note, these new statuses come into effect from the new academic year, so 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 any changes you are notified of.

If you are unsure whether your child's school holds the data required from you to make an application for Free School Meals, please contact your school office team and they will be happy to check this for you.

On behalf of Coastal Learning Partnership