



Free School Meals

From September 2026, there will be three types of free school meals entitlement

Since April 2018, around 25,000 children and young people across Northamptonshire have had free school meals protected under transitional protection.

This has meant children have continued to be able to enjoy free school meals (and additional support), even if family circumstances have changed. This transitional protection will cease at the end of the current academic year (July 2026).

From September 2026, some children may no longer be entitled to free school meals. Some may have a different entitlement, whilst some families may become eligible for free school meals for the first time.

The 3 Types of free school meals

1

Targeted Free School Meals (TFSM)

Equivalent to current benefits related free school meals (FSM)

Who Qualifies:

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit with annual household income under £7,400 (£616.67 a month)
- Families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) - subject to separate criteria

This gives access to:

- ✓ Free school meals at school during term-time
- ✓ The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)
- ✓ Other support that may be available at school
- ✓ Parent allowance for costs such as uniform, trips and books

Funding:

- Schools will receive Government funding for these meals
- Schools receive Pupil Premium funding for these recipients

Eligibility checks:

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

2

Expanded Free School Meals (EFSM)

New criteria from September 2026

Who Qualifies:

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit
- No limit on annual household income

This gives access to:

- ✓ Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to:

- ✗ The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) for the 26/27 academic year
- ✗ Other support that may be available at school
- ✗ Parent allowance for costs such as uniform, trips and books

Funding:

- Schools do not receive specific funding for these meals*
- Schools will not receive Pupil Premium funding for these recipients

Eligibility checks:

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

*Government funding will be paid to schools between 2026 and 2029 towards the cost of increased FSM recipients

3

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

Been in place since September 2014

Who Qualifies:

All children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 attending school, regardless of family circumstances

This gives access to:

- ✓ Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to:

- ✗ The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) for the 26/27 academic year
- ✗ Other support that may be available at school
- ✗ Parent allowance for costs such as uniform, trips and books

Funding:

- Schools receive Government funding towards the cost of these meals (based on average uptake)
- Schools will not receive Pupil Premium funding for these recipients, unless eligible for TFSM

Eligibility checks:

- Eligibility checks are not required for UIFSM, just contact your school
- If unsure about TFSM or EFSM then you should still check your eligibility via the local authority checker

What you need to do next -

If you haven't already you can check your updated eligibility via your local authorities FSM checking service via either:

- North Northamptonshire Portal: <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/parent-portal>
- West Northamptonshire Portal: <https://forms.westnorthants.gov.uk/xfp/form/839>

If you have any questions please contact your local authority or child's school.

