

St. Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs A Rainbow



18th June 2026

Changes to Free School Meals (from September 2026)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Department for Education has now published its long-awaited updated guidance on Free School Meals (FSM), confirming significant changes from September 2026.

We are writing to inform you about important national changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that will take effect from September 2026. These changes may affect your child's eligibility, either now or in the future.

What is changing?

From September 2026 all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be eligible for Free School Meals, regardless of income. This means many more families will be able to access Free School Meals. There will be two categories of Free School Meals:

- 1. Targeted Free School Meals – for lower income families (linked to Pupil Premium)**
- 2. Expanded Free School Meals – for other households receiving Universal Credit**

Please note: the above is not to be confused with Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) - all government funded schools are required to offer free meals to all pupils in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2, regardless of income.

End of current protections

At present, once a child qualifies for Free School Meals, they usually keep that entitlement even if family circumstances change, this is called Transitional Protection. This protection will continue until the end of the 2025/26 school year. From September 2026, eligibility will be based on your current circumstances. This means some children may gain or lose eligibility depending on changes to household income or benefits.

Important: You still need to apply!

Even if you receive Universal Credit, Free School Meals are not automatically given. You must still apply through school. If you think your child may be eligible, we strongly encourage you to apply.

Why apply?

Registering for free school meals can:

- Provide free, nutritious lunches for your child.
- Help the school access additional funding to support pupils.



- Ensure you receive any related support you may be entitled to.

What should you do now

- If your child already receives free school meals – please complete the registration form
- If you think you may be eligible – please complete the registration form
- If your circumstances change, please notify the school at your earliest convenience

The online registration form can be found using this link - [Free School Meal Eligibility - St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School – Fill out form](#)

You only need to complete this online form once. Subsequent rechecks of your eligibility will be carried out annually to assess whether you continue to be eligible for free school meals.

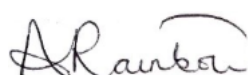
Should you move your child to a new school, your child's new school may proactively assess whether you continue to be eligible for free school meals. You should contact the school if you have a change in financial circumstances.

These changes are designed to help more families access free school meals. We encourage all parents who may be eligible to apply and ensure they receive the support available. We want to make sure that we are providing your child with the best education and support we can. Healthy school food can help pupils establish healthy habits for life and help to improve pupils' readiness to learn.

Please contact Miss Elmer in the school office if you require a paper registration form or wish to discuss this confidentially.

We are committed to ensuring that the personal and sensitive information that we hold about you is protected and kept safe and secure, and we have measures in place to prevent the loss, misuse or alteration of your personal information. We will use the information you provide to assess entitlement to Free School Meals. The information may also be shared with other Council departments to offer benefits and services.

Kind Regards,



Mrs Rainbow
Headteacher

