Blue Coat
Church of England School
& Music College

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July 2026

Dear Parent or Carer,

Changes to free school meals from the 2026 to 2027 academic year

We are writing to let you know about changes to free school meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

What is changing?

Expanded entitlement for families on Universal Credit

From the start of academic year 2026 to 2027, **all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of earnings**.

Going forward, there will be two types of eligibility:

- **Targeted FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning £7,400 or less (includes free meals and additional support such as pupil premium).
  Other educational entitlements such as the Holiday Activities and Food program (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.

- **Expanded FSM**: for households in receipt of universal credit earning above £7,400 (free meals only)

Families with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible for Targeted FSM subject to meeting separate criteria.

End of transitional protections

Since 2018, some children have continued to receive free school meals, even if their family circumstances changed during the rollout of Universal Credit. This is referred to as transitional protections.

Now that entitlement is being expanded to all families on Universal Credit, these protections will end at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

This means:

- Some children may **no longer be eligible** from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year if their family does not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit

- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status

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What you need to do

If your child currently receives free school meals:

- In most cases, you do not need to reapply
- Your child's school or the local authority will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility
- In some cases, your child's school or the local authority may contact you to confirm your details
- If your child is starting a new school in September, they will be in touch to confirm whether you need to confirm your details or reapply.
- If you are unsure, please contact your school or local authority for advice.

If your child does not currently receive free school meals

- You may now be eligible under the expanded criteria
- You will need to apply through your local authority / school

Please click on the following link from the Coventry City Council Website to apply - Free School Meals – Apply for Free School Meals

Not sure?

If you are unsure whether you need to apply or if your circumstances have changed, please contact:

- Coventry City Council via telephone: 0247683 3773 or email freeschoolmeals@coventry.gov.uk
- or Email school – schooloffice@bluecoatschool.com

Yours sincerely,

Mrs L Wright
Headteacher