



Healthy Lunch Policy

2026-2027



‘Every child who attends our school can expect, and will receive, an excellent standard of education - one that enables them to shine as individuals, make a positive contribution and reach their full potential. ’

Healthy Lunches

Lunch boxes and water bottles

Children may bring a packed lunch in a suitable plastic container, which is placed on the class trolley until required at lunchtime.

Please keep in mind, when sending dairy products such as cheese or pots of yoghurts, that the lunch boxes are stored in the classroom – please provide a spoon if you send a yoghurt. No hot meals should be provided in case of spillage.

All empty containers and paper will be replaced in the box along with uneaten food to enable you to monitor your child’s appetite.

The children have a maximum of 30 minutes to eat their lunch.

As part of a healthy diet, sweets are not allowed in school and only a small biscuit that is part of the meal is acceptable.

We **do not** allow any drinks to be brought (including flavoured water, smoothies, juice or hot drinks) as water is provided in school. Water bottles are provided for the children in the classroom and glasses of water will be provided in the hall with their dinner.

We only allow any other drinks if there is a medical reason (confirmed by a doctor’s letter) stating why the child cannot drink water.

School Meals

We follow the Government guidelines around Healthy School Dinners. These stipulate that: food served in all maintained schools and academies in England must meet school food standards so that children have healthy, balanced diets.

These standards make sure that school lunches always include:

- one or more portions of fruit and vegetables every day
- one or more portions of starchy food, such as bread or pasta every day
- a portion of food containing milk or dairy every day
- a portion of meat or poultry on 3 or more days each week
- oily fish once or more every 3 weeks

They severely restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, as well as low quality reformed or reconstituted foods.

Universal Infant Free School Meals

Since September 2014, state funded schools in England have been required by law] to provide free lunches to pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2, who are not otherwise entitled to benefits-related free school meals. Like other school meals, universal infant free school meals must meet school food standards in maintained schools; similarly academies and free schools are required to comply with the standards.

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal when a claim for the meal has been made on their behalf and their eligibility, or protected status, has been verified by the school where they are enrolled or by the local authority.

Changes for the 2026 to 2027 academic year

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit attending these schools will be entitled to receive a free meal.

We have made this a legal requirement through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and intend to lay additional regulations extending this duty to maintained nursery schools.

Going forward, there will be 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM**, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less
- **Expanded FSM**, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit

Eligibility criteria for free school meals

The Education Act 1996, as amended, places a duty on maintained schools, academies and free schools to provide free school meals to pupils of all ages that meet the criteria. This includes pupils in school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools.

Eligibility for free meals is primarily based on being in receipt of certain benefits. Specific eligibility criteria for benefits-based free meals are set out in the following section of this policy. In this policy, 'free school meals' (FSM) refers to meals provided to pupils whose households receive certain benefits.

In addition to meeting eligibility criteria set out in the Education Act, pupils attending school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools must be receiving full-time education, or if part time, must be receiving education both before and after the lunch period.

All pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools are entitled to free meals under the universal infant free school meals policy.

Who is eligible for benefits-based free school meals

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, FSM eligibility is expanded to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit regardless of household earnings. Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal where both:

- a claim for this support has been made
- their eligibility has been verified by the school where they are enrolled or by the local authority

Households may also be entitled to a meal if they:

- are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit

Targeted FSM

Children from households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less (the existing threshold for FSM prior to the expansion), will be eligible for targeted FSM. In addition to receiving free meals, pupils eligible for targeted FSM will attract pupil premium and other disadvantage funding for their schools.

Pupil premium and other disadvantage funding is currently allocated in respect of pupils who are recorded in school census returns as eligible for FSM, or have been recorded as eligible for FSM in the past 6 years (referred to as Ever 6 FSM). From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, Ever 6 FSM will be based on targeted FSM. This cohort is also used for accountability purposes.

Households qualifying for free meals because they are in receipt of support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 will also be eligible for targeted FSM.

Households in receipt of Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guarantee element of Pension Credit or households with families with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible for targeted FSM.

Expanded FSM

Children from households in receipt of Universal Credit, with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400 will be entitled to expanded FSM (meals only).