

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Subject: Expanded Free School Meals

I am writing to inform you about important changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility announced by the Department for Education, which will mean that many more families will qualify for this support.

Free school meals provide vital nutrition for children during the school day and play an important role in supporting health, wellbeing, and learning.

Who will benefit from the expanded FreeSchool Meals?

From September 2026, eligibility will be expanded so that all households receiving Universal Credit will qualify for Free School Meals. This change removes the current £7,400 income cap and is expected to benefit over half a million additional pupils nationwide.

When will these changes take effect?

The new eligibility criteria will apply from September 2026, meaning families receiving Universal Credit will be able to access Free School Meals from the 2026/27 school year.

How will this help families financially?

This expansion will offer significant financial support. Eligible families could save up to £495 per year per child on school lunches. For families with multiple children, this could make a considerable difference to household budgets.

How will children benefit?

In addition to the financial benefits, Free School Meals help ensure children receive nutritious meals during the school day, supporting concentration and learning in the classroom, physical health and development, and overall wellbeing. The government is also reviewing and updating the School Food Standards to ensure schools are supported with the latest nutrition guidance.

Currently receiving FSM

If you are currently receiving FSM your eligibility will be automatically checked by the Welfare and Benefits Service. You do not need to fill in the form below. Please be aware if your circumstances have changed and you no longer receive Universal Credit your child may lose their entitlement.

Principal Mrs L Pratt
Priesthorpe Lane, Farsley, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 5SG



Co-op Academy
Priesthorpe

How to apply

Although eligibility will be automatically available to all families receiving Universal Credit, parents/carers will still need to apply.

If you think the new criteria applies to you please contact the school to share your details for this to be checked including National Insurance numbers.

Providing this will act as consent for these details to be passed to the Welfare and Benefits Service. They will then be able check eligibility, and if confirmed, put your child's free school meal in place for September 2026.

Additional information can be found here following the link to your local authority;

- **Leeds residents:** [Apply for Free School Meals – Leeds City Council](#)
- **Bradford residents:** [Apply for Free School Meals – Bradford Council](#)

Changes to current allocation:

I am delighted to share that from Wednesday 1st July 2026 any unspent FSM allowances will roll forward to the following day Monday to Friday. Those eligible for FSM receive a daily allowance of £2.60.

For example: if a pupil only spends £1 of their allowance, the unspent £1.60 will roll forward to the following day. I am sure many of our pupils will benefit from this change.

If you have any questions regarding this change please do not hesitate to contact me via:
chris.mcardle@coopacademies.co.uk

Warm regards,

Chris McArdle

Assistant Principal