Changes to Free School Meals from September 2026

Important Information for Families

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has announced changes to Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility that will take effect from **1 September 2026**. These changes are expected to make more children eligible for free school meals.

What's Changing?

More Families Will Qualify

Under new national rules, **all families receiving Universal Credit** with children attending state-funded schools (including nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, and sixth forms) will be eligible for Free School Meals.

Two Types of Free School Meal Eligibility

Expanded Free School Meals

For children in households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings **above £7,400**.

Children will:

- Receive free school meals.

Targeted Free School Meals

For children in households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings **of £7,400 or less**.

Children will:

- Receive free school meals.
- Help their school receive additional Pupil Premium funding.
- Potentially qualify for additional support programmes, including Holiday Food and Fun (subject to scheme criteria).

Important Change: Annual Eligibility Checks

The transitional protections that have been in place since 2018 will end. This means children will need to be reassessed under the new eligibility criteria before the start of each academic year to continue receiving free school meals.

What's Staying the Same?

There are **no changes** to:

- Universal Infant Free School Meals

- The Mayor of London's Primary Free School Meals programme

If your child attends a primary school and you do **not** receive Universal Credit, your child will still be entitled to a free school lunch.

What Do Families Need to Do?

If your child already receives means-tested free school meals:

- The council will automatically recheck eligibility under the new rules.
- The council will contact you if further information is needed.
- Schools will be informed of the outcome before the new school year.

If your child does not currently receive means-tested free school meals but you think you may now qualify:

- Apply through the Royal Greenwich website.

Need Help?

If you have questions about Free School Meals eligibility, contact the Royal Borough of Greenwich Pupil Benefits Service:

📧 pands.benefits@royalgreenwich.gov.uk
📞 020 8921 2530

Key Date to Remember

🗓️ **1 September 2026** – New Free School Meals eligibility rules begin.