



Dear parent/carers,

We would like to draw your attention to the new regulations regarding the expanding FSM programme. The new eligibility will take effect in September 2026. All families receiving [Universal Credit](#) will become eligible for free school meals. This has been made a legal requirement through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

We would therefore like to share the following updates from the [Department for Education](#).

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

- **Targeted FSM**, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are 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

Ending transitional protection

Transitional protections still apply until the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year. This means that all pupils eligible for free school meals under the benefits-based criteria before the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year should continue to receive this entitlement until the end of this academic year.

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, transitional protections for free school meals will end. Households must meet the FSM eligibility criteria from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year to continue receiving provision.

How do I apply for free school meals?

It's important to note that while eligibility will be automatically granted to all Universal Credit recipients, families will still need to actually apply to receive free school meals. If you are unsure of your eligibility for FSM and wish to check or apply, please do so [here](#).

We hope you find this information useful as we continue to support all of our students here at Dane Court. If you have any concerns regarding the changes, please don't hesitate to contact us, or the Free School Meals Team at Kent County Council via kentfsmenquiries@kent.gov.uk.

Kind regards,

Mr M. Jones

Executive Headteacher