



8 June 2026

Dear Parent / Guardian

## **Free School Meals Eligibility from September 2026**

You may be aware that from 1 September 2026 there will be changes to the eligibility criteria of Free School Meals (FSM). This letter sets out these changes and the importance of making sure we have the necessary details from you to do a new eligibility check.

### **New criteria:**

Free school meals are available to children 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
- Are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Meet criteria set out for families with no recourse to public funds.

### **Changes:**

The changes that will take effect on the 1 September 2026 for benefit related Free School Meals are:

- **FSM Eligibility Protection Ending:** previously, as of 1 April 2018 any benefit related free school meals eligibility was protected, this was referred to as transitional protection, and meant that eligibility would continue while Universal Credit was being rolled out. The transitional protection that has been in place since 01/04/2026 will end on 31/08/2026.
- **Universal Credit Eligibility Changes:** From the 01/09/2026 FSM eligibility is expanding to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit regardless of household earnings. There will be two categories of eligibility for families in receipt of Universal Credit. The 2 categories are:



1. **Universal Credit Targeted FSM Eligibility:** 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, children eligible for targeted FSM will attract pupil premium and other funding for their schools. Other education entitlements that have previously been linked to eligibility for FSM, such as the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.
2. **Universal Credit Expanded FSM Eligibility:** children from households in receipt of Universal Credit, with annual household earnings exceeding £7,400 will be entitled to expanded FSM (meals only).

## What to do next?

All children in receipt of Free School Meals will require a re-check of eligibility as current eligibility comes to an end on 31 August 2026. Re-checks will then be carried out annually. Maiden Erlegh Trust works with Slough Borough Council to carry out these eligibility checks for our parents, and we are able to carry out these re-checks on your behalf. To do so, we need to ensure we have the required information from you. This includes:

- Parent full legal name
- Parent date of birth
- Parent National Insurance Number or Asylum Number

Alternatively, you can visit the Slough Borough Council website and submit a check request online, this will be processed and the results will be shared with the school. This can be done via the following link: <https://www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/244>. Annual re-checks will be required, and so we recommend that you provide the school with your details so that we can carry out the routine checks on your behalf. Please see below for how to provide your information.

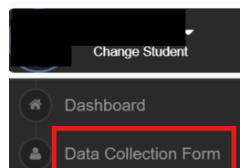
Re-checks for next academic year will be carried out in the week commencing 15 June. Therefore, if your child is currently in receipt of Free School Meals it is crucial that you do the below by Friday 12 June.



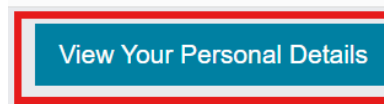
## How do I share my details for the re-check with my child's school?

Details can be shared with the school via the MyChildAtSchool (MCAS) App. Login to your account:

1. Click on 'Data Collection'



2. Click on 'View Your Personal Details'



3. Scroll down to 'Other Details' and enter the required information into the boxes provided and click 'Submit Changes' to save. This will then share the information with the school to carry out your eligibility re-check.

A screenshot of the 'Other Details' form in the MCAS app. The form has a blue header. Below the header, there are three input fields: 'Parent or Guardian DOB' (with a date picker icon), 'Parent or Guardian NASS Number', and 'Parent or Guardian NI Number'. Each of these input fields is highlighted with a red rectangular box. At the bottom right of the form, there is a green button labeled 'Submit Changes' with a white arrow icon, also highlighted with a red rectangular box. A red arrow points from the right side of the form towards the 'Submit Changes' button.

*If you have more than one child at the school, please ensure you enter your details on each child by selecting 'change student' and following the above instructions.*

### Does my child have to eat the free school meals?

No. Children who are registered for free school meals do not have to eat them. If you are eligible but you want your child to have packed lunches, you should still register because the school will receive the funding which can support your child in other ways.

Please ensure you provide the school with your details by Friday 12 June to allow us to process the re-check of Free School Meals eligibility. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Thank you in advance for your support with providing your details.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'S. Gibbs'.

**S Gibbs (Mrs)**  
Headteacher

