

At a glance

- **Reception to Year 2:** all children can have free school meals automatically through Universal Infant Free School Meals. You may also be eligible for Targeted or Expanded free school meals.
- **From Year 3:** some children can get free school meals through Targeted or Expanded free school meals – you usually need to apply
- **Applying can help your school:** if you qualify for Targeted free school meals, your child's school will get extra funding (called pupil premium).

What are the benefits of applying?

- We will check your eligibility now and re-check on a weekly basis to see if you have become eligible
- This means your child can get free school meals as soon as the DWP make any changes to your record
- Your child's school may also get extra funding to help support their children

Types of free school meals

Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception to Year 2)

- Your child gets a free school lunch if they are in **Reception, Year 1 or Year 2**.
- **No application is needed** for Universal Infant meals.
- Even so, it can still be worth applying for **Targeted** or **Expanded** free school meals, because your child's school will receive extra funding if you qualify for **Targeted** meals.
- If you apply and qualify, you usually won't need to reapply when your child moves into Year 3 (unless your name changes).

Targeted free school meals

Targeted free school meals are for children whose parents/carers meet the government's eligibility rules.

- **Example** (not a full list): you may qualify if you are on **Universal Credit** and your household income is under **£7,400** a year (after tax and not including benefits).



Key points

- **You must apply.**
- If eligible, your child gets free meals and the school will get extra funding (pupil premium).
- Eligibility usually lasts until the **end of the school year**. We check again each year.

Expanded free school meals (from September 2026)

Expanded free school meals are for children whose parents/carers receive Universal Credit.

Key points

- **You must apply.**
- Eligibility usually lasts until the **end of the school year**. We check again each year.
- Schools do not receive extra funding through Expanded free school meals.

Transitional protection (ending 31 August 2026)

- Some children have had "transitional protection" since April 2018, which meant they kept free meals for a set period.
- This protection is planned to end in **September 2026**.
- Children will be checked again in **summer 2026** and then each year, in line with the new rules.

What happens after you apply

- We check your details with the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)**.
- If the DWP confirms that you are eligible, we will record this and let you and the school know.
- If we can't confirm your details, we may contact you for **more information**.
- We recheck eligibility regularly, including a check for all eligible applications **once each summer**.

