

Our Ref: Admin

12th June 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

Free School Meals – Important Changes from September 2026

We are writing to let you know about important national changes to free school meals (FSM) that may affect your child from September 2026. From the start of the 2026/27 school year, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to receive a free meal at school. This is a national change introduced by the Department for Education and means many more children will now qualify.

At the same time, the transitional protections that have been in place since 2018 will end at the end of the current school year. This means that from September 2026, eligibility for free school meals will be based on a family's current circumstances, and schools will need to check entitlement each year to confirm whether a child remains eligible.

What this means for families

If your household receives Universal Credit, your child will now qualify for a free school meal even if you have not qualified before or have been above the earnings threshold. The previous earnings threshold linked to Universal Credit is being removed for meal entitlement, which is expected to make over 500,000 additional children eligible nationally.

All eligible children will receive a free school meal. However, the national guidance now separates benefits-based FSM into two groups: Targeted FSM and Expanded FSM. This distinction is important for school funding and other linked support, although parents do not need to worry about those technical categories when applying — the key message is that if you think you may be eligible, please provide the information requested so we can check this for you.

What we need from you

To check eligibility, we need the following details for the parent or carer making the claim:

- Forename and Surname
- Date of Birth
- National Insurance number

We are now carrying out checks for the 2026/27 academic year. Please provide the required details via the Arbor Parent App using the attached guide.

Why this is important

These checks are needed not only to confirm your child's entitlement, but also to ensure the school receives the correct funding and records eligibility accurately. Guidance issued to schools highlights that pupils will not attract FSM-related funding unless eligibility has been confirmed and recorded correctly.

If we do not receive the required information, we may not be able to confirm your child's eligibility, and this could affect access to free school meals from September 2026.

If you do not have a National Insurance number your child may still be eligible for free school meals. This includes some families who:

- are seeking asylum
- have recently arrived in the UK
- have no recourse to public funds (NRPF)
- or are not eligible for benefits in the usual way.

If this applies to you, please contact the school directly. We will support you with the application.

What should you do now?

Please **provide your details via the Arbor Parent App as soon as possible**, even if your child has not qualified for free school meals before. We strongly encourage all families to complete this process because more children than ever may now be entitled to support. Schools are being encouraged nationally to accept new applications, promote awareness and complete eligibility checks before the end of the academic year and we therefore request you submit these details by the **end of Friday 3rd July 2026**.

If you need any help with this, please contact reception.

Yours sincerely
Admin
Armthorpe Academy

