

Monday, 29 June 2026

## Changes to Lunch Provision and FSM Eligibility 2026-2027

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following on from our previous letter we want to confirm the changes that are going to take effect from September 2026 regarding the criteria for free school meals and confirming what action you need to take. We are also making a change to how you book lunches on Arbor.

### Changes for the 2026 to 2027 Academic Year – FSM Eligibility

#### Universal Free School Meals

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will receive a universal free school meal.

Going forward, there will be 2 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 Protections

Transitional protections for free school meals have been in effect since 1 April 2018. This has meant that pupils becoming eligible for free meals under the benefits-based criteria have retained their entitlement, even if their household circumstances have changed. From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, transitional protections for free school meals will end.

Anyone already awarded free school meals who is attending a Somerset school will automatically be rechecked to see if they still qualify. Anyone who no longer qualifies will stop receiving free school meals from September 2026.

#### Rechecking Eligibility

Going forward FSM eligibility will be monitored by schools and local authorities on an ongoing basis, through annual rechecks. Rechecks will confirm that pupils in receipt of FSM continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

#### What we need you to do

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will receive a universal free school meal. There is no need to do anything. However, we would still ask you to apply as this may provide additional funding for the school.

If you do not currently receive Free School Meals, we strongly encourage you to complete an application using the link below.

<https://service.somerset.gov.uk/free-school-meals>

The form only takes a couple of minutes to complete. If you are unable to complete online, please come to the school office and collect a paper form.

If you think you may qualify for free school meals under the **new rules from September 2026**, please wait until August 2026 to apply.  
If you apply before August, we will check your eligibility using the current rules.

### **Booking Lunches on Arbor for September 2026**

From September 2026 you will need to pay in advance when booking lunches (if applicable) on Arbor. Therefore, all balances on meal accounts must be cleared before booking your child's lunch.

If your child, following your application, becomes eligible for FSM please note this will take effect from September 2026 therefore any balances owing from previous years will still need to be cleared.

We realise you will need to book lunches for the first week in September before you can make an application through Somerset County Council. If your child becomes eligible and you have been charged for lunches we will credit your account back (if required) which can be used against your child's account for trips, wraparound etc. Equally if your child is no longer eligible and you have booked meals you will be expected to pay for any meals taken.

If your child is ill (and you are eligible to pay for meals) a credit will be automatically generated on the meals account to be used at a future date.

The prices for the new school year are as follows:

KS2 paid meals - £2.90

KS3/4 paid meals - £3.00

Meals will be available on Arbor to book in July and bookings for the first week back in September will need to be booked by 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school office via email.

Thank you.

With best wishes,

Dawn-Marie Owens  
Extended Services Manager