

Who's is this letter for?

Any claimant who has a benefits-related Free School Meals Claim that has been eligible during or after April 1st 2018. (note that claimants with Devon County Council FSM claims made after April 1st 2025 have already been emailed with information of their claim extending. Please contact freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk if you did not receive this.)

PLEASE IGNORE: if you are eligible for FSM only under the UIFSM scheme (all ks1 children without a benefits-related claim).

PLEASE IGNORE: if you are eligible for Free School Meals under the NRPF criteria. These claims are not Transitionally Protected.



Free School Meals - Claim Update to Families for 2025/26

Dear Parent/Carer,

We're writing to provide an important update regarding your child's Free School Meals (FSM) entitlement under Transitional Protection.

You may have previously been informed that:

- Children in Year 6 or Year 11 would need to reapply for FSM as they move to a new phase of education.
- Transitional Protection would end at the end of a phase (e.g. moving from primary to secondary school).

We'd like to clarify that this is no longer the case.

What's Changed?

Since 1 April 2018, families receiving FSM under the benefits-based criteria have been protected under Transitional Protection, meaning they continued to receive FSM even if their income rose above the eligibility threshold. This was originally due to end in March 2025.

However, the Department for Education has now extended this protection until the end of the 2025/26 school year.

This means:

- Your child will continue to receive Free School Meals until July 2026, regardless of any changes in your household income or if they move to a new school phase (e.g. from Year 6 to Year 7, or Year 11 to Sixth Form).
- This also applies if your child moves in or out of the local authority.
- Claims are only protected until July 2026 instead of the child's end of phase.

What happens after July 2026?

From the 2026/27 academic year, the current protections will end. At that point:

- All FSM claims will be reassessed.
- Only households that meet the new eligibility criteria will continue to receive FSM.
- The new criteria will allow all families receiving Universal Credit to apply for FSM, regardless of income.

If your household does not meet the new criteria at that time, your child's FSM entitlement will end.

What does this mean for me?

- If your child is in year 6 or year 11: You will now not need to be rechecked or reapply before your child starts at their secondary school or sixth form. The Free School Meals entitlement will be valid until July 2026 when they finish years 7 and 12.
- If your child is still in their current phase of education (Primary or Secondary including attached sixths forms): Your child will no longer be protected until their end of phase. The protections will last until July 2026, after which, you will be checked for eligibility before they start their new school year in September 2026. These will be assessed under the new Universal Credit criteria - mentioned above.

We hope this update provides clarity and reassurance. If you have any questions or need support, please don't hesitate to contact us at freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk, by phone at 0345 155 1019 or visit our website at [School meals – Education and Families](#).

Best Wishes,
Free School Meals Team