



Friday, 3rd July 2026

Dear parent/carer,

SUBJECT: Free School Meals - Changes from September 2026

I am writing to let you know about important changes to free school meal eligibility from September 2026, which may mean that more families can now receive support.

From September 2026, the government is extending entitlement to free school meals to include all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit.

Eligibility for free school meals from September 2026 onwards will be based on whether a family is in receipt of any of the benefits listed below:

- Universal Credit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of Pension Credit

Eligibility may be granted to families in receipt of the above benefits; however, **all families who think they may be eligible need to apply for free school meals before September 2026.**

Please note that any previous protections that applied to children already in receipt of free school meals will no longer apply from September 2026 - pupils previously stayed on free school meals for the duration of secondary school if they became eligible for these at any point, and this is no longer the case.

Why it is important to apply and register for free school meals

Registering for free school meals can provide benefits beyond school lunches. Eligibility may also help our school to access additional funding to support teaching, resources and pastoral care for your child and others.

How to apply for free school meals

To apply for free school meals, you need to follow one of three steps:

- If your family is registered with North Yorkshire Council as currently being in receipt of free school meals, **YOU DO NOT NEED TO APPLY**. Your child's eligibility will be automatically re-assessed before September 2026 - this is to support the change in arrangements.
- If your family is not in receipt of free school meals now, but you may be eligible under the new expanded scheme, **PLEASE APPLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** to ensure that, if you are eligible, your child/children receive their free school meal from September 2026.
- If your child is moving out of North Yorkshire, you will need to apply through your new local authority.





RISEDALE
A family of learners

RISEDALE SCHOOL

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Please note that under the new rules, parents and carers will need to re-apply for free school meals before the start of each academic year. Once approved, entitlement to free school meals is awarded for the full academic year, regardless of any changes in circumstances during that academic year.

What do you need to do next?

You will need to apply for free school meals through your local authority. As most of our pupils live in North Yorkshire, here is the [link](#) to apply via the North Yorkshire website. Applying is quick and confidential. **The message from school is that we would advise all families to apply if they feel they may be eligible, unless your family is already registered with North Yorkshire Council as eligible for free school meals.**

If you would like to speak to a member of our finance team for support with applying, please contact finance@risedale.org.uk. We understand discussing finances can feel difficult and all conversations will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs L Greenwood
Headteacher.

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL WEBSITE LINK:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/free-school-meals>

