FREE SCHOOL MEALS

From September 2026, there will be three types of free school meals entitlement.

WHAT'S CHANGING

Since April 2018, around 22,000 children and young people in Wolverhampton have had free meals protected under Transitional Protection.

This has meant children have continued to be able to enjoy free meals (and additional support), even if family circumstances have changed.

Transitional Protection will cease at the end of this academic year (July 2026).

From September 2026, some children may no longer be entitled to free school meals. Some families may become eligible for free meals for the first time.

THE 3 TYPES OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS

1 TARGETED FREE SCHOOL MEALS (TFSM)

Equivalent to benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM)

Who qualifies

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit with annual household income under £7,400 (£616.67/month)
- Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – subject to separate criteria

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time
- ✓Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme
- ✓Other support that may be available at school (e.g. free school milk, where provided)
- ✓Free board and lodging on residential trips

Funding

- Schools do not receive specific funding for these meals*
- Schools receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these claims

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

2 EXPANDED FREE SCHOOL MEALS (EFSM)

New criteria from September 2026

Who qualifies

- Children and young people in families receiving Universal Credit
- No limit on annual household income

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to

- ✗HAF (unless through other criteria e.g. SEND, social care)
- ✗Other support linked to TFSM

Funding

- Schools do not receive specific funding for these meals*
- Schools will not receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these claims

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility will be checked in line with Government guidance
- Applicants confirmed as eligible remain eligible for the full academic year

* Government funding will be paid to schools between 2026 and 2029 towards the cost of increased FSM reported at Census

3 UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS (UIFSM)

Available since September 2014

Who qualifies

- All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 attending school, regardless of family circumstances

This gives access to

- ✓Free school meals at school during term-time

This doesn't give access to

- ✗HAF (unless through other criteria e.g. SEND, social care)
- ✗Other support linked to TFSM

Funding

- Schools receive Government funding towards the cost of these meals (based on average uptake recorded at the October and January Census dates)
- Schools do not receive FSM Pupil Premium funding for these children, unless they are also recorded as TFSM

Eligibility checks

- Eligibility checks are not required for UIFSM (eligibility should still be checked for TFSM/EFSM)

WHAT PARENTS/CARERS NEED TO DO

If you haven't already, please provide your details to your child's school

- Your child's school will let you know if they need any more information from you
- Your details are usually requested when your child starts or moves school
- Most parents/carers have already provided the details needed for checking

If you have any questions, please contact your child's school or visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals for more information

ANY QUESTIONS?

School meals arrangements vary from school to school. Please contact your child's school with any questions

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL