

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School



Kingsland Gardens, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN2 7BH



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Tuesday, 02 June 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Changes to Free School Meal Eligibility from September 2026

We are writing to inform you about upcoming changes to the Free School Meals (FSM) scheme, which will come into effect from September 2026.

Under the new government criteria:

- Free school meal eligibility is being extended to all families receiving Universal Credit, which may result in some families becoming eligible for the first time.
- Eligibility will be checked on an annual basis, which may result in some families currently receiving free school meals no longer being eligible.
- All families will need to check their eligibility in July 2026 to access Free School Meals for their children from September 2026.
- These changes do not affect the Universal Infant Free School Meal Scheme. Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will continue to receive free school meals as usual.

New Eligibility Criteria for Free School Meals from September 2026

From September 2026, any child living in a household receiving Universal Credit will be eligible for Free School Meals, regardless of household income. Applications for the 2026/27 academic year can be made from July 2026 onwards. Families will need to reapply each year.

Children may also be eligible if their household meets any of the following criteria:

- A parent receives support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The household is in receipt of Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- The household receives the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit.
- The household meets the criteria for families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).



Website

www.olicatschools.org

**Chief Executive Officer
(CEO)**

Mrs Catherine Burnham

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How to Apply for Free School Meals for 2026/27

Applications cannot be made until **1 July 2026**. We will share further details about the application process closer to this date.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/help-cost-going-school/free-school-meals-and-pupil-premium>

We recommend applying during July where possible, as this will allow sufficient time for applications to be processed and systems to be updated, ensuring that eligible pupils receive free school meals from the start of the September term.

How Will Eligible Pupils Access Their Free School Meals?

There are no changes to the way Free School Meals are currently provided.

Parents will continue to select meals through **MCAS (My Child At School)**, but no payment will be required for eligible children.

We will provide further information about these changes nearer the time. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C Dodds

Headteacher