EATON BANK ACADEMY

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6th July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Changes to Free School Meals from September 2026

From 1 September 2026, eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) will be expanded. This means that **all children living in households receiving Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals**.

Your child may qualify for Free School Meals if you receive one of the following benefits:

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit (see details below)

The Two Free School Meal Categories

From September 2026, there will be two types of Free School Meals:

Targeted Free School Meals

- For pupils in households receiving a qualifying benefit, including Universal Credit, with an **annual earned income of £7,400 or less**.
- Eligibility includes additional funding, such as Pupil Premium.

Expanded Free School Meals (NEW)

- For pupils in households receiving Universal Credit with an **annual earned income above £7,400**.
- Eligibility provides free school meals only and does not include additional funding such as Pupil Premium.

What You Need to Do

If you are eligible to apply for NEW expanded Free School Meals

If you receive Universal Credit but do not currently qualify for Free School Meals because your annual earned income is above £7,400, you may be eligible under the new criteria from September 2026.

Applications can be made through the Cheshire East Council website from 1 August 2026.

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-meals/free_school_meals.aspx

Under the new arrangements, eligibility will be checked annually, and if your application is successful, your entitlement will remain valid for the full academic year.

If your child already receives Free School Meals

If your child is already receiving Free School Meals**, you do not need to submit a new application for September 2026**.

Cheshire East Council will write to you to confirm whether your entitlement will continue or whether it has ended following the conclusion of the transitional protection arrangements. Please note that the transitional protections introduced in 2018 will end in July 2026. From September 2026, all eligibility will be reassessed under the new national criteria.

From September 2026, the Ever 6 FSM measure will apply only to pupils eligible for Targeted Free School Meals. Pupils eligible under Expanded Free School Meals will not be included in the Ever 6 measure.

For further information, please visit the school website.

Kind regards

Miss Messham

School Business Communications Manager