

# St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy

part of *St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Multi-Academy Trust*

*"Lord be thy word my rule."*

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Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

## **RE: Free school meal eligibility**

We are writing to inform you about important changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that will take effect from September 2026.

### **What is changing?**

The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that from the start of the 2026/27 school year:

- All children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals.

This is a national change and will mean that many more children are eligible.

### **End of transitional protection**

Some children currently receive free school meals under "transitional protection" rules.

- These protections will end at the end of the 2025/26 school year.
- From September 2026, all children must meet the current eligibility criteria to continue receiving free school meals.

### **Two types of Free School Meals**

From September 2026, the DfE has introduced two categories:

#### **Targeted Free School Meals**

Your child will be in this group if:

- Your household receives Universal Credit, and
- Your earned income is £7,400 or less per year

Your child will receive:

- Free school meals
- Additional funding support for the school (such as Pupil Premium)

#### **Expanded Free School Meals**

Your child will be in this group if:

- Your household receives Universal Credit, and
- Your income is above £7,400

Your child will receive:

- Free school meals only

They will not receive additional funding linked to FSM.

### **Checking eligibility**

The DfE has confirmed that:

- Eligibility will be checked regularly, including annually.
- Checks should take place before the start of the school year where possible.

### **Applying for free school meals**

Even though eligibility is expanding, families will still need to apply.

- You will be asked to provide key details so your eligibility can be checked.
- This helps ensure your child can receive meals from the start of term.

### **What you need to do**

- If you receive Universal Credit, your child is likely to qualify from September 2026.
- Please make sure the school has your up-to-date information.
- Contact the school if you would like help applying or checking eligibility.

If you have any questions or need support with checking eligibility, please get in touch with the office.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Walklet  
Academy Manager