

Free School Meals

Changes from September 2026

What is changing?

- The Government is **changing the rules for Free School Meals from September 2026**
- This means **all children who currently get Free School Meals will be checked again before September 2026** to make sure they still qualify
- If your child no longer qualifies, **you may need to pay for their school meals from September 2026**
- **All families receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to Free School Meals** under the new rules
- After this, **children receiving Free School Meals will be checked every year**



Who can get Free School Meals?

Your child may be eligible if you receive certain benefits.

If you qualify, **Free School Meals will be split into two groups**, depending on your circumstances.



Walsall Council

Two types of Free School Meals

Targeted Free School Meals

For lower income families and those on certain benefits

This includes families who receive:

- Universal Credit with household earnings below £7,400
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- No Recourse to Public Funds (ask your school for an application form)

You get:

- Free meals
- Your child's school will receive extra funding, called Pupil Premium, to help support your child

Expanded Free School Meals

For other families receiving Universal Credit.

- Universal Credit with household earnings above £7,400

You get:

- Free meals only

Infant children (Reception, Year 1, Year 2)

- All children get free school meals
- Please still apply for benefit-related Free School Meals if you are eligible – it helps your child's school provide additional support.

Nursery-age children

- If your child attends a school nursery before and after lunch, they may get Free School Meals if you qualify.
- Apply the same way as for school-age children.
- Private nurseries are not included.

Do I need to do anything?

Already getting Free School Meals?

- You do **NOT** need to apply again
- We will contact you if needed

Applied for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction?

We will use the benefits information we already hold. We may automatically award Free School Meals.

Please let us know if you do not want your information to be used in this way by emailing: freeschoolmeals@walsall.gov.uk

How to apply



Apply online:

Apply for free school meals | Walsall Council

Need help? Email freeschoolmeals@walsall.gov.uk or visit your **Walsall Connected centre**.