



Thriftwood

School and College
website: www.thriftwoodschool.com

12th June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Subject: Free School Meals – IMPORTANT information

We are writing to let you know about how we check eligibility for free school meals and an important change coming into effect from September 2026.

What is changing?

From September 2026:

- More children will be entitled to free school meals
- If your household receives Universal Credit, your child will now be eligible (this is regardless of your income level)
- Eligibility will be checked annually (you might qualify one school year but not the next)

Previously, families receiving Universal Credit had to earn below a certain amount to qualify. This income limit is being removed, so many more families will now be able to access free school meals. [\[govexplained.co.uk\]](http://govexplained.co.uk)

What this means for your child:

- Your child may now be entitled, even if they were not before
- It is possible that children who were previously protected, may no longer qualify to receive free school meals the under new rules
- If your child already receives free school meals, their entitlement will need to be checked again

Important - you still need to apply

- Free school meals are **not** given automatically
- **You will still need to apply** through your local council or school/college
- This helps ensure your child receives meals from the start of term (September 2026)

Changes to existing entitlements:

Since 2018, some children have continued to receive free school meals even if their family circumstances changed. This protection will end in August 2026. [\[gov.uk\]](http://gov.uk) From September 2026, eligibility will be based on your current circumstances.

Checking eligibility for free school meals

When you apply for free school meals, we use a secure government system to check eligibility. This system allows us to check using the details you provide (such as your name, date of birth and National Insurance number) against government records. This process is quick, secure and means that you usually do not need to provide paper evidence of benefits.

All schools/colleges are required to **recheck eligibility for free school meals each year.**

This means that:

- We will carry out an **annual check** using the secure system
- This ensures that children who are entitled, continue to receive free school meals
- Children who are no longer entitled, will no longer receive free school meals
- It also ensures that support is allocated fairly, based on current circumstances

You may be contacted to confirm or update your details when these checks take place.

What do you need to do?

If you have already completed a Pupil Consent Form, this will usually include all the information we need to carry out eligibility checks.

- **If your child already receives free school meals**, you do not need to take any immediate action. We will contact you if we need any further information. We will automatically re-check eligibility.
- **If you believe your child may now be eligible** but you have not yet applied, please provide us with the required information using our online form (link below) and we will be happy to action the check for you.

[Free School Meals - eligibility check – Fill in form](#)

Deadline

Please complete the online form by Friday 19th June 2026. This will allow sufficient time for us to process the government check so that our kitchen team can prepare for the new school year.

What will we do?

- We will ensure you have completed the appropriate form to provide us with the required details and have given your permission for us to check eligibility on your behalf.
- We will process the application on your behalf and you will be informed of the outcome, regardless of whether your application is successful or not.

Further information

If you have any questions or would like support completing an application, please contact the school/college office. All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Georgina Pryke
Executive Headteacher

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