



## WESTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



14<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **Changes to Free School Meals (from September 2026)**

We are writing to inform you about important national changes to Free School Meals (FSM) that will take effect from September 2026. These changes may affect your child's eligibility, either now or in the future.

#### **What is changing?**

From September 2026 all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals, regardless of income. This means many more families will be able to access free school meals.

#### **End of current protections**

At present, once a child qualifies for free school meals, they usually keep that entitlement even if family circumstances change, this is called Transitional Protection. This protection will continue until the end of the 2025/26 school year. From September 2026, eligibility will be based on your current circumstances. This means some children may gain or lose eligibility depending on changes to household income or benefits.

#### **Important: You still need to apply!**

Even if you receive Universal Credit free school meals are not automatically given. You must still apply through school. If you think your child may be eligible, we strongly encourage you to apply.

#### **Why apply?**

Registering for free school meals can :-

- Provide free, nutritious lunches for your child.
- Help the school access additional funding to support pupils.
- Ensure you receive any related support you may be entitled to.

#### **What should you do now?**

- If your child already receives free school meals you do not need to take action at this stage. We will contact you if anything changes.
- If you think you may be eligible, please contact the school as soon as possible.
- If your circumstances change, please notify the school at your earliest convenience.

These changes are designed to help more families access free school meals. We encourage all parents who may be eligible to apply and ensure they receive the support available. Please contact the school should you wish to discuss this confidentially.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Karyn Hing  
Head Teacher

## Who is Eligible for Free School Meals?

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, the FSM eligibility to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit regardless of household earnings. Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal where both:

- a claim for this support has been made
- their eligibility has been verified by the school where they are enrolled or by the local authority

Households may also be entitled to a meal if they:

- are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit
- meet criteria set out in separate guidance for [families with no recourse to public funds](#)