

ALDER COPPICE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Achievement through Commitment

Headteacher: Mr P Mandelstam

3 July 2026

CHANGES TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS ENTITLEMENTS

We are writing to inform you of changes made to the Free School Meals System.

From September 2026, Free School Meals (FSM) in England are being expanded to all children whose households receive Universal Credit, removing the previous income threshold cap.

All parents (even those already receiving benefits) must submit a new application to ensure that their child's entitlement continues.

- **New "Expanded" Category:** If you claim Universal Credit and earn **more** than the previous £7,400 per-year limit, your child will now qualify for free school meals. This covers meals only, excluding additional benefits like uniform vouchers or holiday food programs.
- **"Targeted" Category:** If your household earns **less** than £7,400 per year on Universal Credit (after tax and not including benefits), your child gets free school meals plus extra support like the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), Pupil Premium, and school transport.
- **End of Transitional Protections:** Under previous rules, parents who saw their income rise retained their free school meals through transitional protection. These automatic protections will end on **September 1, 2026**, meaning households must actively meet the new eligibility criteria to continue receiving meals.
- **Other qualifying benefits are:**
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guarantee part of Pension Credit
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Qualifying criteria for families with no recourse to public funds

Regardless of household income, all children in **Reception, Year 1, and Year 2** at state schools in England continue to receive free daily school lunches. However, parents should still make an application for Free School Meals if they are eligible.

Even if your child already receives meals (or you transition from previous protections), you are strongly encouraged to submit an application. You can process your claim through the [Dudley Council Free School Meals](https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/benefits/free-school-meals/) portal.

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/benefits/free-school-meals/>

ALDER COPPICE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Website: www.alder.dudley.sch.uk

For direct assistance or inquiries about your specific circumstances, you can contact the council's dedicated FSM team:

- **Phone:** 01384 815 619
- **Email:** freeschoolmeals@dudley.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Joanne Randall

Joanne Randall
Assistant Headteacher