



Dear Parents and Carers

re Changes to free school meals September 2026

We are writing to let you know about changes to free school meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year. The following information has been shared with the College by the Department for Education. Some local details have been added.

What is changing?

Expanded entitlement for families on Universal Credit

From the start of academic year 2026 to 2027, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of earnings.

Going forward, there will be two types of eligibility:

- Targeted FSM: for households in receipt of universal credit earning £7,400 or less (includes free meals and additional support such as pupil premium). Other educational entitlements such as the Holiday Activities and Food program (HAF) and the 'extended rights' element of school travel assistance, will also continue to be based on targeted FSM.
- Expanded FSM: for households in receipt of universal credit earning above £7,400 (free meals only).

Families with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible for Targeted FSM subject to meeting separate criteria.

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 will continue to be entitled to free school meals under the universal infant free school meals policy regardless of family circumstances.

End of transitional protections

Since 2018, some children have continued to receive free school meals, even if their family circumstances changed during the rollout of Universal Credit. This is referred to as transitional protections.

Now that entitlement is being expanded to all families on Universal Credit, these protections will end at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (31 August 2026).



This means:

- **Some children may no longer be eligible** from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year if their family does not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit.
- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status.

What you need to do

If your child currently receives free school meals:

- In most cases, you do not need to reapply.
- Your local authority will check your eligibility automatically using the details already held and inform you of any changes to your FSM eligibility.
- In some cases, your local authority may contact you to confirm your details.
- If you are unsure, please contact your local authority for advice.
- **If your child is transferring to The Spires College from a school outside of Torbay Council's Local Authority area**, such as Teignbridge, Devon or elsewhere in the country, please complete Torbay Council's FSM application: [Free school meals - Torbay Council](#).

If your child does not currently receive free school meals:

- You may now be eligible under the expanded criteria.
- You will need to apply through the local authority [Free school meals - Torbay Council](#).

Not sure?

If you are unsure whether you need to apply or if your circumstances have changed, please contact the FSM Team within Student Services at Torbay Council by completing this form: [Contact Form](#). If you are unable to complete the contact form, you may contact the team by telephone 01803 208100. However, please bear in mind that this is a small team and so the contact form is the most efficient way to correspond with them.

Yours sincerely

The Spires College