

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to inform you that the government has updated the criteria for Free School Meals (FSM) from the start of the 2026–2027 academic year. These changes mean that more pupils will become eligible under the new national rules.

What is changing?

From September 2026, all children from households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to a free school meal, regardless of income. This is a significant expansion of the current system.

The government has introduced **two categories** of benefits-based Free School Meals:

- **Targeted FSM** – for pupils in households receiving Universal Credit **with annual earnings of £7,400 or less**.
- **Expanded FSM** – for pupils in households receiving Universal Credit **who do not meet the targeted FSM income threshold but** are still entitled under the new expanded category.

Ending of Transitional Protections

Since 2018, many pupils have continued to receive FSM through transitional protections, even if their household circumstances have changed. These protections will end at the end of the 2025–2026 school year.

This means that not all children who previously received FSM will continue to be eligible unless they meet the new criteria from September 2026.

How the Free School Meals auto award will work

Cornwall Council will securely bring together data held across different Council teams to identify pupils who may be entitled to free school meals but are not yet registered.

Cornwall Council will review the combined data and look for families:

- with school-aged children
- who receive certain government-specified benefits

Cornwall Council will send the families who are potentially eligible a letter explaining:

- what free school meals are
- the benefits of these
- our plan to run the eligibility checker against their details

The letter will also explain how families can opt out if they prefer; Cornwall Council will not do this.

Once the opt-out period ends, Cornwall Council will remove the records of those families who opted out and run the eligibility checker on the remaining records. All of the eligible records will then be registered for free school meals and supported through the usual Department for Education process.

Why this matters

Accurate eligibility checks ensure that:

- Your child receives the meals they are entitled to.
- The school receives the correct funding to support pupils.
- No child misses out when the new system begins.

Cornwall Council will be working closely with schools, and with data and IT teams, to put this system in place securely and effectively.

Cornwall Council will provide a rough estimate of targeted and expanded FSM pupils ahead of August 2026 as soon as the data is available. These figures will be indicative only and subject to change, with final numbers confirmed in August 2026.

Cornwall Council plans to start contacting families in August 2026.

In the meantime, families can check their eligibility for free school meals at any time by visiting the Cornwall Councils [Apply for Free School Meals Parent Portal](#).

Alternatively, families are invited to contact enquiries@penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk if they have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. L Prynne

Pupil Premium Coach
Penryn College