



Monday 1st June 2026

Changes to Benefits-related Free School Meals

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to inform you about upcoming national changes to **Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility**, which will take effect from **September 2026**.

The government has announced that the criteria for Free School Meals will be updated from this date.

From September 2026, the Free School Meal eligibility is expanding to include **all children** from households in receipt of **Universal Credit regardless of household earnings**.

This may mean that some families who currently receive FSM will need to reapply under the new rules, and some families who were not previously eligible may now qualify.

If your child is currently eligible for Free School Meals, you do not need to do anything at the moment.

If you are unsure if your child might be eligible for Free School Meals, please continue reading for further information

How to check whether you are eligible

To help you prepare, here is the most reliable way to check your eligibility:

1. Use the East Sussex online eligibility checker You can check your current eligibility at any time using the East Sussex County Council website. Simply visit the [Free School Meals page](#) and follow the step-by-step checker. (Parents will need their National Insurance number or NASS number.)

2. Review the qualifying benefits Under the current rules, families may be eligible if they receive certain benefits such as:

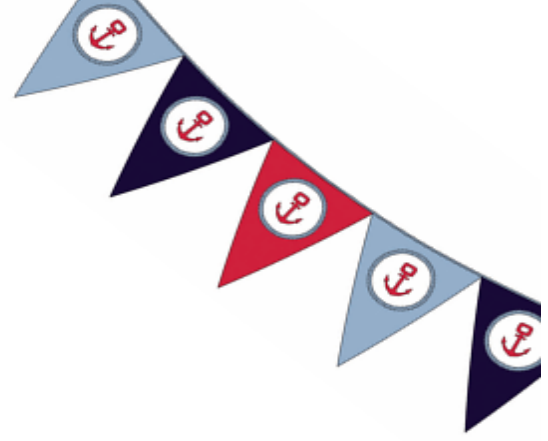
- Universal Credit

Headteacher - Claire Westcott
Roderick Avenue North, Peacehaven
East Sussex BN10 8BZ
Telephone: 01273 584212
e-mail: office@meridian.e-sussex.sch.uk
web: www.meridianschool.co.uk





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- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (without Working Tax Credit)

These criteria will be updated for September 2026, but checking now will help you understand your starting point.

3. Contact the school office if you need help If you are unsure, or would like support completing the online check, our office team is happy to help.

What this means for you now

- Your child's current FSM status **will not change** this school year.
- We will provide clear instructions on how to reapply once the new national criteria are released.
- If your circumstances change before September 2026, you can still apply under the current rules.

We understand how important this support is for many families, and we will do everything we can to make this transition smooth and clear.

If you have any questions, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

C. Westcott

Ms. Westcott
Headteacher

Headteacher - Claire Westcott
Roderick Avenue North, Peacehaven
East Sussex BN10 8BZ
Telephone: 01273 584212
e-mail: office@meridian.e-sussex.sch.uk
web: www.meridianschool.co.uk

