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Dear Parents / Carers,

Important Update: Changes to Free School Meals from September 2026

We are writing to share some exciting news about free school meals. Following the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which became law on 29 April 2026, the eligibility for free school meals significantly expanded from September 2026. We want to make sure every family knows about this change — you may now be entitled to apply, even if you have been turned down before. Registering also means your school receives additional Pupil Premium funding, which helps us to provide extra support for all pupils.

What has changed?

Previously, free school meals were available to families receiving Universal Credit only if their household take-home pay was £7,400 a year or less.

From September 2026, the earnings threshold has been removed entirely. All families who receive Universal Credit are eligible to apply for free school meals, regardless of how much they earn.

Who is eligible for free school meals from September 2026?

Your child may be eligible if your household receives any of the following:

- Universal Credit — with no earnings limit (this is the key new change)
- 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 Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and your annual household income does not exceed £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

Children who are looked after by a local authority (in care), or who have left care under a Special Guardianship Order or adoption order, are also automatically eligible.



How to apply

If you believe your child may now be eligible for FSM, we encourage you to apply as soon as possible. Applying is straightforward and only takes a few minutes. You can apply:

- Online at: <https://fsm.lgfl.net/>
- By contacting our school office directly — we can check on your behalf

You will need to provide your National Insurance number (or NASS reference number if you are subject to immigration control) and your child's details. Eligibility is checked automatically against government records, so you will usually receive a decision very quickly.

If your child is already receiving free school meals, you do not need to do anything — their entitlement will continue automatically.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or would like help completing your application, please do not hesitate to contact the school office on 01959 522 228 or email us at office@shoreham.kent.sch.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sheraton

Head of School

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This letter reflects the changes introduced by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (Royal Assent 29 April 2026). Eligibility criteria are set by the Department for Education. Please check gov.uk for the most up-to-date guidance.

