

Graham James Primary Academy

The Sorrells Stanford-le-Hope Essex SS17 7ES

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Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to remind you that Universal Free School meals are currently only available for Foundation and KS1 children. Therefore, from September you will need to pay for your child's school dinner. The cost from September will be £2.50 per day.

Payment should be made in advance or on the day. Payments can be made via Parent Pay.

If you haven't used Parent Pay before you will need your log in details, please contact a member of the office staff for your log in details or if you have any questions.

From September 2026 there will be 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals.

Targeted FSM, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7400 or less.

Expanded FSM, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit.

Who is eligible for benefits based free school meals

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, FSM eligibility has been expanded to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit regardless of household earnings. Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit.
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

A pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal where:

- a claim for this support has been made.
- their eligibility has been verified by the school where they are enrolled or by the local authority.
- they attend a state-funded school in the Thurrock area. If your child attends a school outside of Thurrock, you must apply to the council for the area in which they attend school.
- If attending a state funded nursery school, they must be receiving full-time education, or if part time, must be receiving education both before and after the lunch period.

Households may also be entitled to a meal if they:

- are in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- receive the guarantee element of Pension Credit
- have an FSM entitled child in education other than school (EOTAS). The support may form part of any EOTAS package agreed with the SEN department.

You may also be able to claim [free school meals for your child if you have 'no recourse to public funds'](#) – for example, if you cannot claim benefits.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to free school meals please visit [Thurrock free school meals](#) for more details. If you are entitled, then the school may also receive additional funding, this is known as pupil premium.

Yours sincerely

Petra Back
Head Teacher