



SYDENHAM SCHOOL

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Wednesday, 9th September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Free School Meals - Important Information for Families

Earlier this year, the government confirmed changes to Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility starting from the 2026-27 academic year. As we begin this new term, we want to ensure all families understand these changes and know how to apply if they may be eligible.

Action required if you've moved from another local authority: Families whose children previously attended school in a different borough or county must submit a new application to Lewisham Council. We encourage you to do this without delay.

Understanding the new eligibility criteria

From September 2026, eligibility for free school meals has been extended to all pupils from households receiving Universal Credit. There are now two categories:

- Targeted FSM - for families receiving Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less. Children in this category may also qualify for additional support linked to disadvantage funding, including Pupil Premium and other school support programmes.
- Expanded FSM - for families receiving Universal Credit above the £7,400 earnings threshold. Children in this category will be eligible for a free school meal. However, eligibility for Expanded FSM does not automatically qualify a child for Pupil Premium funding or other forms of disadvantage-related support. Eligibility for Pupil Premium remains subject to the government's separate criteria.

How to apply

If you believe your child may qualify under these new arrangements, please take the following steps:

Step 1: Submit your application to Lewisham Council

Complete the online application at: [Lewisham Council - Free school meals and extra support for your child](#)

The Local Authority will review your application and notify you of your child's eligibility status.

Step 2: Share your eligibility confirmation with us

Once Lewisham Council confirms your child's eligibility, please send this confirmation to our school office at: info@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk

This will enable us to update your child's records promptly and ensure their free meal entitlement is activated from the start of their eligibility period.



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Please note: We can only provide free school meals once eligibility has been verified by Lewisham Council. Without this confirmation, we cannot activate the entitlement. Previous eligibility from another borough or county does not transfer automatically.

Important reminder for existing FSM families

If your child received Free School Meals last year, their eligibility must be confirmed under the new national arrangements for 2026-27. Eligibility will be reviewed at the start of every academic year and may change. Lewisham Council manages this review process for schools in the borough, and it requires time to complete.

Using your Free School Meals entitlement

We would like to remind eligible families that the FSM entitlement covers the Meal Deal only, available at lunchtime in the canteen. Any additional items or snacks purchased at break time will be charged to your account and must be paid for separately. Please ensure your child understands this arrangement.

Need help?

If you have questions about eligibility or require assistance with your application, please contact Lewisham's Pupil Support team directly at: [Lewisham Council - Free school meals and extra support for your child](#)

They manage the eligibility assessment and annual review process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Wijnberg
Headteacher