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17th June 2026

Important Changes to Free School Meal Eligibility from September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to let you know about important changes to free school meal eligibility, which may mean that more families are now able to receive support.

From September 2026, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals under the expanded eligibility criteria.

We encourage all families who think they may be eligible to apply, even if:

- your child currently brings a packed lunch
- your child has not previously had school meals
- you have applied before and were not eligible
- your circumstances have changed recently

Why it is important to register

Registering for free school meals can provide support beyond the cost of school lunches. Eligibility may also help the school access additional funding to support teaching, learning resources, pastoral care and wider opportunities for students.

Please note that parents and carers will need to reapply each academic year, even if their child currently receives free school meals. Once approved, entitlement will be awarded for the full academic year, regardless of any later changes in circumstances.

From September 2026, all children in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals. However, Pupil Premium and some other linked funding will continue to be based on the existing criteria. This means schools may not receive Pupil Premium funding for every child who qualifies for free meals under the expanded criteria. It is therefore important that families complete the registration process so

eligibility can be recorded accurately and the school can access any funding available to support students.

How to apply

Applying is quick and confidential.

Please apply through: [Free school meals - Torbay Council](#)

Alternatively, please contact the school office if you would like support with the application process.

Need help?

We have provided some helpful FAQs on our website:

[Lodestar Academy, Lodestar Academy](#)

We understand that discussing finances can feel difficult. Please be assured that all enquiries and applications will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B Woodward', with a large loop at the end.

Beth Woodward

Acting Headteacher