



St Edward's CE Primary School
Hanover Street
Castleton
Rochdale OL11 3AR
Tel: 01706 631755
Email: office@stedwardsce.rochdale.sch.uk

Headteacher: Dr A Petrie



Exploring Faith, Life and Learning

Upcoming Changes to Free School Meals (FSM) and Universal Credit Eligibility

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to inform you about important national changes to Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility that will come into effect from the start of the 2026/27 school year.

The UK Government has confirmed that, from September 2026, all children in England whose households receive Universal Credit will be entitled to Free School Meals, regardless of their overall household income.

What is Changing?

Under current rules, families must earn below £7,400 per year (after tax and not including benefits) to qualify for free school meals. From September 2026, this earnings threshold will no longer apply — any family receiving Universal Credit will be eligible. This change is expected to support over half a million additional pupils across England.

What This Means for Your Family

- No income cap: If your household receives Universal Credit, your child will be eligible.
- Financial savings: Families could save up to £500 per child per year on school lunches.
- Support for wellbeing: Access to a nutritious daily meal has been shown to improve children's health, concentration, and learning outcomes.

When Will This Happen?

The new entitlement will begin at the start of the school year in September 2026. Schools nationwide are preparing now to accommodate the increased number of children who will receive meals.

Do Parents Need to Apply?

Yes. Although eligibility will cover all families on Universal Credit, parents will still need to apply for free school meals so the school can process and confirm entitlement.

Applications are expected to open before the start of the 2026 school year, typically requiring your National Insurance Number and Universal Credit Reference Number.

We are awaiting an update from Rochdale Borough Council regarding how to apply.

Why Is This Change Being Made?

This expansion aims to:

- Reduce child poverty — estimates suggest around 100,000 children will be lifted out of poverty.
- Ease living costs for families during a period of rising expenses.
- Ensure fair access to healthy school meals for all children on Universal Credit.



This school has been awarded a
Schools Extra Award 2002
for its out-of-hours provision

British Council International Schools Award



METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

