

1st July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Important information regarding changes to Free school meals eligibility from September 2026

As you may already be aware, the government recently announced that the Department for Education will be introducing a new benefit criteria from September to offer free school meals to more children. These changes mean that all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive a free school meal.

There are also important changes to the existing free school meals eligibility. If your child currently gets a free school meal because they have been protected under transitional protection rules but you no longer receive Universal Credit, then their entitlement will end in August 2026. From then on, only families in receipt of Universal Credit will qualify. **Essex County Council have instructed that all families will therefore need to reapply to confirm their ongoing eligibility in order to continue receiving free school meals.**

To clarify, from September 2026 there will be two categories of benefit-related Free School Meals:

Targeted Free School Meals

This category continues to be based on the existing income threshold. Pupils will be eligible if their household:

- Is in receipt of Universal Credit, and
- Has an annual household income of £7,400 or less.

Expanded Free School Meals

This category covers pupils who:

- Live in households receiving Universal Credit, and
- Do not meet the income threshold for Targeted FSM (i.e. the annual household income is above £7,400).

Action for you to take:-

- If your child has previously been eligible for free school meals, you must reapply to continue receiving this benefit.
- If you think your child may now be eligible for FSM under the new 'Expanded Free School Meals' category, you should make an application online.

Essex County Council have advised that families should submit their application in August to allow them sufficient time to run the necessary checks in time for the beginning of the academic year 2026/27.

To reapply or make a new application for free school meals, please click on the below link:-
<https://www.essex.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/free-school-meals/apply-free-school-meals>

Yours faithfully,



Mr D Scott
Associate Assistant Headteacher

Headteacher: James Saunders MBA

Honywood School Westfield Drive Coggeshall Essex CO6 1PZ. Tel: 01376 561231 email: admin@honywoodschool.com

Honywood Community Science School is part of the Saffron Academy Trust, a Company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales.

No. 7618351 Registered Office: Audley End Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4UH