CARR JUNIOR SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Your child may now be entitled to free school meals - Apply now

From September 2026, the government is expanding free school meal eligibility, and we want to ensure families are aware of what is changing and how to check whether they may be entitled to support.

What is changing?

Currently, free school meals are available to all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 under the universal infant free school meals scheme. For pupils in older year groups, eligibility depends on specific benefit criteria.

From September 2026, free school meals will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit, with the removal of the previous £7,400 income cap.

This change means that many more children in York will be entitled to receive a free, nutritious meal each school day, helping to ease pressure on family budgets and ensure pupils are ready to learn.

Eligibility criteria

Your child may be eligible for free school meals from September 2026 if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (the £7,400 income cap will be removed from September 2026)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (with an annual household income of no more than £16,190 and not receiving Working Tax Credit)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Please note:

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will continue to receive free school meals automatically under the universal infant entitlement.

How to apply

Families with children attending **Excel Learning Trust schools in York** can apply now to check eligibility through North Yorkshire Council.

Apply online:

Apply for free school meals

https://fisportal.northyorks.gov.uk/Synergy/fsm_prereq.aspx

Why this matters

We understand that many families are experiencing increased financial pressures. Access to a healthy school meal can make a meaningful difference to children's wellbeing, concentration, and attendance at school.

In addition, every successful free school meal application attracts Pupil Premium funding, which provides extra resources to support teaching, learning, and outcomes for pupils across our schools.

Need help?

If you would like support with an application or have any questions about eligibility, please contact your child's school office in the first instance. School staff will be happy to help or to signpost further support if needed. Information and links are also available on the school website.

We encourage all families who think they may be eligible to apply.

Mrs L Winston
Head of School