

Dear Parent/Carer,

Free School Meals and Pupil Premium – Information for Parents and Carers

At St Alban's Catholic High School, we want to ensure that every student has access to the opportunities, resources and support they need to thrive and achieve their full potential.

Following changes introduced by the Government from **September 2026**, eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) has been expanded. We would therefore encourage all families who think they may be eligible to check and apply, even if their child has not previously received Free School Meals.

Who can apply for Free School Meals?

From September 2026, **all children living in households receiving Universal Credit are entitled to Free School Meals, regardless of household earnings**, provided an application is made and eligibility is confirmed.

There are now two categories of benefits-based Free School Meals:

Targeted Free School Meals (Targeted FSM)

This applies to eligible families who meet the Government's existing income criteria. Children in this category receive a free school meal and also attract **Pupil Premium funding** for the school. At St Alban's, families may also be able to access additional support where required, including support with school uniform, stationery and equipment, revision resources, eligible school trips and other educational opportunities.

Expanded Free School Meals (Expanded FSM)

This is the new entitlement introduced from September 2026 for children living in households receiving Universal Credit who do not meet the Targeted FSM criteria. Children in this category are entitled to a **free school meal**, but this eligibility does **not** attract Pupil Premium funding or the additional support associated with Targeted FSM.

Families receiving certain other qualifying benefits or with no recourse to public funds may also be eligible.

How do I apply?

If you receive **Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit**, we strongly encourage you to complete an application through Suffolk County Council. This is important even if you are unsure which category your child may be eligible for.

You can apply online through the Suffolk County Council website:

[Apply for free school meals - Suffolk County Council](#)

The online application provides an immediate response and confirmation email once your application has been completed.

It is important that families make an application, as eligibility needs to be checked and confirmed. Applying enables Suffolk County Council to determine whether your child is eligible for **Targeted FSM or Expanded FSM** and ensures that both your child and the school can access the appropriate entitlement and funding.

Why is applying important?

If your child qualifies for **Targeted FSM**, they will not only be entitled to a free school meal but will also attract Pupil Premium funding for the school.

At St Alban's, this funding helps us to provide additional support to overcome barriers to learning and ensure that eligible students can participate fully in school life. Where required, this may include support with:

- school uniform;
- stationery and essential equipment;
- revision materials;
- Technology contributions;
- eligible curriculum trips and educational experiences;
- targeted academic, pastoral and attendance support; and
- other identified barriers to learning.

If your child qualifies for **Expanded FSM**, they will receive their free school meal entitlement but will not attract Pupil Premium funding solely through this category.

Changes in circumstances

We recognise that family circumstances can change. From September 2026, Free School Meal eligibility is checked **at least annually**, and the outcome of the check is valid for the academic year.

However, if your circumstances change during the year and you believe your child may have become eligible, we would encourage you to contact Suffolk County Council or the school for advice.

The quickest way to apply is online through the Suffolk County Council website. If you require assistance, you can contact Suffolk County Council on **0345 606 6067**.

If you would prefer to speak to someone at St Alban's before applying, please contact our Pupil Premium and Free School Meal team at:

PPFSM@stalbans-staff.org

We are very happy to provide support with the application process or answer any questions you may have.