

Free School Meals and Children in Care (or children who were previously in care)



If a child is in care, or was previously in care, their school will be entitled to additional Pupil Premium funding to help support our most vulnerable children. However, the child is not automatically entitled to Free School Meals.

To find out if a child is eligible, an application will need to be made via our website.

Families need to be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed and earning below particular thresholds, dependent on which type of benefit they receive.

Qualifying benefits:

- ✓ Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ Income based Job Seeker's Allowance
- ✓ Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- ✓ Working Tax Credit run on
- ✓ Child Tax Credit **but no element of Working Tax Credit** and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190

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Transitional Protection

If you are a foster carer and do not receive any of the qualifying benefits, the child in your care may not be eligible for Free School Meals under the standard criteria.

However, if the child was registered for Free School Meals after 1 April 2018, and was eligible before entering care, they will continue to receive Free School Meals under transitional protection.

This entitlement remains in place until the end of the 2025/26 school year, regardless of changes in their care arrangements.

From September 2026, the eligibility criteria will change. All children in households receiving Universal Credit will qualify for Free School Meals, regardless of income level.

When a child receives Free school Meals, parents and carers across Suffolk may also be eligible to receive benefit from free holiday club places for children and young people over the school holidays, through the **Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) programme**.

[Suffolk InfoLink | Holiday Activity and Food \(HAF\) programme 2025 in Suffolk](#)



Apply online:

Registering for Free School Meals is quick and easy, and you will receive an immediate response of your eligibility.
www.suffolk.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

For more information call
0345 606 6067 or email
freeschoolmeals@suffolk.gov.uk