Athersley South Primary School

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FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND PUPIL PREMIUM UPDATE – PARENT ACTION REQUIRED

Important Changes Coming in September 2026!!!

📢 Free School Meals Are Changing 📢

From **September 2026**, the Department for Education is introducing new eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM). This is excellent news for families with over half a million additional pupils nationally being eligible for a free school meal.

☑ **All children from households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to a Free School Meal, irrespective of the household income amount.**

There will be two bands of Free School Meal Entitlement:

- **Targeted Free School Meals** – This will be awarded where ***Universal Credit is claimed AND the household income is less than £7,400 per annum***. In addition to a free school meal these pupils will attract Pupil Premium funding for the school to provide additional resources and also have access to additional benefits such as subsidised music lessons, the council's Holiday Activities and Food Programmes and School Travel Assistance Programmes.
- **Expanded Free School Meals** – This will be awarded where ***Universal Credit is claimed but household income is £7,400 or above per annum.*** These pupils will still be entitled to a free school meal but will not attract any of the additional funding or support.

⚠ Transitional Protection Is Ending

Some children currently receive Free School Meals through **transitional protection arrangements** which have been in place since the start of the roll out of Universal Credit in 2018. If your child receives free school meals under these rules but your family **no longer receives Universal Credit**, their entitlement will end on **31st August 2026**.

From 1st September 2026, only families who receive Universal Credit will qualify under the new criteria.

Under the new scheme, from September 2026, eligibility will be checked by the Local Authority annually as a minimum, and there will be no transitional protection arrangement in place. Therefore, should your circumstances change during the year and your child is no longer eligible for Free School Meals, your entitlement will cease at the next recheck.

🌟 What Is Pupil Premium?

Pupil Premium is additional government funding provided directly to schools to support eligible pupils and help raise achievement levels.

Schools receive approximately **£1,550 per eligible child each year**.

From September 2026 the school will receive pupil premium funding for children awarded **Targeted** Free School Meals only.

Additional eligibility may apply to:

- Children currently in care
- Previously looked-after or adopted children
- Service children

🍽️ Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

All children in:

- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 2

Will continue to receive a free school meal under the Universal Free School Meals programme.

✔ No application is required for these meals.

However, if your family receives Universal Credit or any other qualifying benefit such as support under Part IV of the Immigration and Assylum Act 1999, **we strongly encourage you to apply for Free School Meal entitlement as well**, as this enables the school to receive Pupil Premium funding if your award falls into the **Targeted** Free School Meals band.

This funding helps us provide:

- 📚 Extra educational support
- 🎯 Targeted intervention programmes
- 🎨 Enrichment opportunities
- 💻 Learning resources and equipment
- 🌈 Additional support to help children thrive

Every successful application benefits both your child and our school community.

💡 What We Need You To Do

We need **everyone** to complete the following Microsoft Forms Questionnaire, irrespective of your meals status now. This is purely to help us anticipate the impact of this change at lunchtime in the school dining hall and estimate the increased number of meals that we will need to serve in order to plan resources and ensure everyone still has a pleasant dining experience.

Free School Meals Eligibility and Uptake September 2026 – Fill out form

If you are already in receipt of Free School Meals that is all we need you to do. You do not need to reapply. Your eligibility will be rechecked between now and the end of August and you will either be placed into one of the two new free school meals bandings, or if you are no longer eligible the Free School Meals Team will be in touch to communicate this.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit and are not currently in receipt of Free School Meals we need to apply for this status. No award can be made without you applying. We need you to apply even if you have no intention of your child actually taking their meal. This will ensure that your child and the school receives any other additional financial support that they may be entitled to.

🔍 Check Your Eligibility

You can apply for free school meals in one of two ways:-

- Online by going to www.barnsley.gov.uk/free-school-meals-form
  This will be the easiest, quickest and most straightforward way to apply for both yourself and the school.

- Complete the attached eligibility check form and return it to school as soon as possible.

🔒 The process is completely confidential and every eligible application helps secure valuable funding that supports all pupils across our school.

🥗 Healthy Meals, Happy Learners

Free School Meals play an important role in:

- Promoting healthy eating habits
- Encouraging children to try new foods
- Supporting healthy lifestyles
- Providing the energy needed for an afternoon of focused, high-quality learning

Thank you for your support.

The ASPS Team