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Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to inform you of important changes to Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility and funding arrangements that will take effect from **September 2026**.

These changes are being introduced nationally and may affect your child's entitlement to free school meals. We want to ensure that all families continue to receive the support they are entitled to, and that the school is able to secure the appropriate funding to support our pupils.

Currently, some pupils remain eligible for free school meals under transitional protection arrangements. **These protections will end at the end of this academic year.**

From September 2026, all pupils must meet the eligibility criteria in order to receive free school meals.

There will be two categories of benefits-based Free School Meals:

1. Targeted Free School Meals

This applies to pupils in households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less. Pupils eligible under this category will:

- Receive free school meals
- Attract additional funding through Pupil Premium

2. Expanded Free School Meals (new category)

This applies to pupils in households receiving Universal Credit but above the £7,400 threshold. Pupils in this category will:

- Still receive free school meals, however; they will not attract Pupil Premium funding

It is essential that all eligible families apply, even if your child already receives a free meal, as eligibility must now be checked and confirmed annually. School funding is directly linked to eligibility under the Targeted FSM category.

We kindly ask all parents and carers to:

- Check whether you may be eligible under the new criteria. Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Guarantee element of Pension Credit.
- Complete an application form by the 17th July 2026 via the school website if you believe you may qualify <https://apply.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/sims-tameside>
- Reapply if your circumstances have changed, even if you have not previously been eligible

Please note a pupil is only eligible to receive a free school meal where both:

- An application has been submitted.
- Their eligibility has been verified by the school or by the Local Authority.

Applications are now open, and we encourage you to apply as soon as possible to ensure support is in place for the start of the autumn term.

Full guidance on eligibility can be found on our school website, where you will also find a direct link to the application form. Paper copies can be obtained from the school office.

If you are unsure whether you qualify, we strongly encourage you to apply. The process is straightforward and confidential, and our school office is happy to support you if needed.

We appreciate that changes to financial support can cause uncertainty, and we are committed to supporting our families through this transition. Ensuring that all eligible pupils are registered is vital in helping us continue to provide support and resources across the school.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Paula Boyce
Office Manager