

Expanded FSM

Guidance for secondary schools

Southwark Public Health Division
Children and Adult Services

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Introduction

Southwark's Free Healthy Secondary School Meals (FHSSM) scheme, introduced in September 2023, extended free school meal eligibility to pupils from families receiving Universal Credit who do not qualify for benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

The government has announced that, from the start of the 2026/27 academic year, these pupils will be eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM) under a new category, expanded FSM.

Responsibility for funding meals will transfer from Southwark Council to central government.

This guidance is written to support schools with the change from FHSSM to expanded FSM, supplementing the FHSSM Year 3 Guidance shared in November 2025.

It includes:



Administration

How to administer the changes on your MIS and kitchen till software



Eligibility checking

What are the requirements for eligibility checking, how will checks be carried out, and who is responsible for completing them



Meal funding

Comparing funding for FHSSM and expanded FSM



Future support

What ongoing support will Southwark Council provide to secondary schools on school food



Frequently asked questions

Common questions answered for schools and parents/carers in the appendix.

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Administration

To support the introduction of expanded FSM small changes to the Management Information System (MIS) system (e.g. Arbor, Bromcom, SIMS) and kitchen till management software (e.g. Civica, Cunninghams) are required.

The changes will ensure that pupils eligible for benefits related FSM are correctly recorded in the MIS system and can receive their free meal at the kitchen till.

Your meal payment system (e.g. ParentPay) should directly synchronise with your MIS and kitchen till management system. If it does not, please contact your MIS or meal payment system provider.

The summaries below set out the changes required, based on the MIS system and software currently used by your school (Tables 1 and 2).

If your MIS or kitchen till management system is not listed, or you are unable to implement the recommended changes, please contact us at bruce.kidd@southwark.gov.uk for support.

MIS system update

Table 1: Summary of changes by MIS system

System	Change
Arbor	Arbor have updated their Free School Meal eligibility section to include add 'Targeted FSM' as a category. See the link here for more information.

Add Free School Meal eligibility

FSM Category* Targeted FSM

Start date* 19th May 2026

End date Leave empty for ongoing

Last verified date 25th Jun 2026

Next check date 25th Jun 2027

UK Country* England

Primary Guardian Claimant

Bromcom	Bromcom have updated their system to include these changes. The 'Meal & Transport' panel in the 'Profile' section has been updated. In the 'Free School Meals' tab – there is now the following field. - FSM Category - The FSM category of a pupil (Targeted FSM / Expanded FSM / Other FSM) See the link here for more information.
SIMS	SIMS have updated their system to include the following fields: - FSM Eligibility Category Code <i>The FSM category of a pupil (Targeted FSM / Expanded FSM)</i> - FSM Eligibility Last Verified Date <i>Date when a pupil's FSM eligibility was last confirmed</i> Schools should have received this update to SIMS on 29 June. If you have any questions you can contact SIMS directly for support - Phone: 03330 150 212 - Email: support@educationsoftwaresolutions.co.uk - Help Portal: https://help.parentpaygroup.com/csm

Kitchen till management software

Table 2: Summary of changes by kitchen till management software type

Software	Change
Civica	No change – continue using 'Grant Meals' category for expanded FSM.
CRB Cunninghams (as known as 'Fusion' or 'Impact')	Keep all students under the 'supervisor' category. The council is aware a guidance document is being created by CRB Cunninghams to support schools. Please follow advice or recommendations provided by CRB Cunninghams over the summer.

Cyclone	No change - keep all students under a separate meal category in Cyclone.
Infinity+	For all students under the 'UC Student Free School Meal – Manual List' category, rename category to 'Expanded FSM – Manual List'.
IRIS FasTrak (as known as 'Biostore')	For all students under the 'Bursary Free School Meals' category, rename category to 'Expanded FSM', if possible.
None	NA, but do make sure that the updates to your MIS system are completed.

Linking the MIS system with the kitchen till system

See below for an overview of what action is required to link the MIS system with the kitchen till system (Table 3).

Table 3: Action required based on MIS system and kitchen till system synchronisation

Scenario	Action required
MIS system automatically synchronises expanded FSM eligibility data with your kitchen till system	These changes should automatically transfer to the till system. Schools to check that the synchronisation is working correctly.
MIS system does not automatically synchronise expanded FSM eligibility data with your kitchen till system	Manually update pupils' free meal entitlement within the till system. Schools add pupils' manually using a report from their MIS system which includes pupils eligible for expanded FSM. Generate the report using the following instructions: On the MIS system, filter by user defined field for 'expanded FSM' as 'Yes' or 'True' or 'expanded FSM' box in the dietary panel ticked for example

If you are still having issues with the MIS system linking with the kitchen till system, please contact your MIS and/or till system provider in the first instance. If further support is required, contact Bruce (bruce.kidd@southwark.gov.uk).

Please note changes to your MIS and kitchen till system should be made either after completing your own eligibility checks during the summer break, or after receiving your pupil registration list from the council on 1 September 2026 (see the next section, 'Eligibility checking').



Eligibility checking

The current list of families receiving FHSSM at your school will be reviewed to determine eligibility for expanded FSM.

Southwark Council will undertake these checks as part of its termly FSM opt-out and auto-award (auto-enrolment) process. The resulting eligibility status will apply for the entirety of the 2026-27 academic year.

The auto-enrolment process will also identify families who are newly eligible for expanded FSM. Schools will get a list of pupils who are eligible or ineligible for expanded FSM on Tuesday 1 September 2026 from the council.

If schools wish to complete their own eligibility checks before receiving the council's list, schools can continue to do so. The list the council will send can then be used to verify the initial checks.

See Figure 1 that summarises the council's process:



Southwark Council complete eligibility checks for secondary school pupils in Southwark

images: Flaticon.com



Results of checks sent to schools in a list



Schools update MIS and kitchen till software based on the council list or their own checks

Figure 1: Overview of eligibility checking

IMPORTANT: Southwark Council's checks do not include new admissions, please complete an eligibility check for all new students.

Targeted FSM

The pupil list shared with schools will include the outcomes of targeted FSM eligibility checks too, identifying pupils who qualify for targeted FSM and those who do not, following the end of transitional protection arrangements.



Meal funding

From September 2026, Southwark Council will no longer require schools to submit reimbursement claims for FHSSM.

The Department for Education (DfE) will fund expanded FSM through the new *Free School Meals Expansion Grant 2026 to 2027*.

The funding arrangements for this grant are set out below by school type and year group. For more information see the following guidance [here](#) and the funding methodology [here](#).

Table 3: Funding summary by school year

2026-2027 school year

	KS3 to KS4	KS5 (Sixth Form)
Academy or free school	• The Department for Education will pay you directly • First payment in March 2027 (covering September 2026 – March 2027) • Second payment later in 2027 (covering April 2027 – August 2027) • Funding rate per meal = £2.66 per student • Funding will be determined by the school-level increase in FSM eligibility from the October 2025 census to the October 2026 census	• Receive additional funding through the existing Further Education Free Meals grant paid directly to schools • Meal rate for 2026-2027 school year of £2.66 per student • Payments based on funded student number for 2026-2027 school year
Maintained or special school (maintained or academy)	• The Department for Education will pay local authorities, and this payment will be passed on to schools before 31 March 2027 • First payment in February 2027 (covering September 2026 – March 2027) • Second payment from April 2027 will be included in schools budget share • Funding rate per meal = £2.66 per student • Funding will be determined by the school-level increase in FSM eligibility from the October 2025 census to the October 2026 census ○ No changes in funding for this grant will happen if schools have no increase	• Two payments: Two-third in August 2026; One-third in April 2027 • For more information see here

2027-2028 school year

	KS3 to KS4	KS5 (Sixth Form)
Academy or free school	• First payment to cover April 2027 to August 2027 • Second payment to cover the period before grant is moved into academies' core budget allocations	• No guidance released from DfE yet
Maintained or special school (maintained or academy)	• Funding incorporated into the core funding and high-needs top-up funding that special schools get	



Future support

Meal take-up monitoring

Southwark Council will continue to ask schools to submit an annual report of meal take up (i.e. how many pupils are having a meal from the kitchen).

You will be asked to submit every October to schoolfood@southwark.gov.uk

In person visits

Southwark Council will continue to carry out school food visits to monitor the quality of the food service and provide tailored support to schools as required.

Policy and action plan support

Need help to progress your school food priorities? Free dedicated support is available to help write a school food policy or write and deliver an action plan to support these priorities.

Contact school food for more information: schoolfood@southwark.gov.uk

School Food Service Framework Agreement

The Southwark School Food Service Framework Agreement is designed to support schools in Southwark with catering service tendering. It helps ensure schools secure high-quality, cost-effective services that meet local and national requirements.

Please contact: Kirsty.salmon@southwark.gov.uk or schoolfood@southwark.gov.uk

School Food Champion training

A free online self-directed training for secondary school staff to strengthen whole-school food practice. Participants receive practical resources, specialist advice, a local network.

If you are interested contact: schoolfood@southwark.gov.uk

Contact us

For any other queries please contact:

Bruce Kidd – Secondary School Food Lead bruce.kidd@southwark.gov.uk 07 707 147 564 or

Kirsty Salmon – Programme Manager for Healthy Food Kirsty.salmon@southwark.gov.uk 07 592 118 407

Appendix



Frequently asked questions (to support parents/carers and schools)

Question	Answer
If a family are eligible for 'expanded FSM', how long will they continue to get free meals?	Until the end of July 2027 and then their eligibility will be rechecked.
When will families be moved from Southwark Council's free healthy secondary school meals to expanded FSM?	During the summer school break. Families will not lose any meals they are entitled to during the current summer term.
Do families need to apply for expanded FSM?	No, Southwark Council and schools will work together to enrol families automatically.
Our school has already started completing eligibility checks, should we continue?	Yes, continue your usual process and then also review the list sent by the council on 1 st September 2026 to verify your checks.
For families that are not eligible for expanded FSM, what support can they get for food?	Please refer to the following resources here: www.southwark.gov.uk/food-cost-support
I have read about another free school meal category called 'targeted FSM', what does this mean?	This is the current national government offer. Targeted FSM is for families in receipt of Universal Credit but with annual household earnings of £7,400 <i>or less</i> .
I have read about the end of transitional protection, what does this mean?	Transitional protection allowed pupils who were eligible for benefits-related FSM (known as targeted FSM) to keep getting free meals even if their eligibility changed in the future. These protections will finish at the end of the current school year.