

# Universal Infants Free School Meals (UIFSM)

## Have you registered?

All Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 could get a free lunch.

### How do I register?

Registering is quick and easy; simply visit [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) and select the following tab. (You will need your National Insurance Number or Home Office number to hand).

Register for free school meals (Reception class, Year 1 and Year 2) >

### Did you know?

If your child is eligible for free school meals, they'll remain eligible until March 2023, or until they finish their current phase of schooling (primary or secondary), if that's after March 2023.

By registering, your school could get additional funding called Pupil Premium, which could help towards extra computers, books, trips out and staff etc.



## Universal Infant Free School Meals vs Free School Meals

### What is the difference?

When it comes to making the most of the school day, a pupil needs to be well rested, well-fed and well supported to thrive. Enter free school meals...



For years, schools have been able to ensure this is the case through the provision of a midday meal for those who would otherwise go without.

The Universal Infant Free School Meals programme (UIFSM) introduced by the coalition government went one step further, offering meals to every pupil between the ages of four and six, regardless of their background.

There is speculation that the scheme may end as a result of budget cuts. However, the original Free School Meals programme (FSM) will continue unaffected regardless of the future of UIFSM.

Here are the key differences and how it can make a difference for your child:

### Eligibility

Within the original FSM programme, children are awarded lunches based on their parents' income, with the more disadvantaged students receiving free school meals to make sure they were able to eat at lunchtime. For some pupils, this can be the only balanced meal they have each day, making the scheme important from both a welfare and educational perspective.

The UIFSM scheme was later launched to provide every infant pupil with free lunch, regardless of their family's financial standing. This means there are no forms to be completed declaring wealth or employment status, taking away what some perceived as the stigma of receiving free meals by opening it up to all pupils.

### Relation to Pupil Premium

The FSM scheme ties into Pupil Premium Grant allocation (PPG), with every child registered for free meals to automatically being eligible for extra funding from the government to ensure their background doesn't disadvantage their learning in any way. For more information, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>

UIFSM is not related to PPG in the same way. Despite infants being automatically allocated a free lunchtime meal, if parents are in receipt of qualifying benefits they must still register their child for FSM in order for the school to receive the PPG they are entitled to.

The UIFSM programme got off on 'shaky' start as it was perceived as perhaps not being effectively communicated to all parents, causing some schools to miss out on receiving the PPG funding for those children entitled to it.



### Age Limit

As the name suggests, UIFSM are restricted to pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, whereas a student can be eligible for FSM (and PPG) at any point throughout their primary or secondary education – including their years in sixth form, or as 16-18 year olds at a further education college. Therefore, if your child is currently receiving UIFSM and you haven't registered for FSM (if you are on certain benefits/income support), you will be paying for a school meal when you do not have to when your child starts Year 3.

### What to do now

To ascertain if your child is eligible for FSM and therefore the PPG, visit the websites below or phone County on the following number: 0300 123 4048

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

[www.hertsdirect.org/freeschoolmeals](http://www.hertsdirect.org/freeschoolmeals)

