

FSM eligibility 2026/27: guidance for updating pupil records

This guidance helps school staff record Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility accurately in their management information system (MIS), using the Synergy FSM report.

From autumn 2026, FSM eligibility is recorded under two categories: **Targeted FSM (TFSM)** and **Expanded FSM (EFSM)**.

Each FSM record must include the correct category, UK country, start date, eligibility verification date and, where applicable, end date.

Using the Synergy FSM report

Use these two fields when updating your MIS:

Synergy field	How to use it
Current Tier	Identifies the pupil's current FSM category: TFSM or EFSM.
Eligibility Last Checked	Provides the eligibility verification date to record in your MIS.

Record an eligibility verification date for all FSM entries, including previous periods that need to be closed.

Understanding the dates

Date	Meaning
FSM start date	The date that period of eligibility began. Retain the original date where a pupil remains eligible under Targeted FSM.
Eligibility verification date	The date eligibility was checked. Use the Eligibility Last Checked date from Synergy.
FSM end date	The date used to close an eligibility period. Hackney recommends using the day before the eligibility check date where an existing period needs to be closed.

Updating FSM records

Pupil's circumstances	Action required
Remains eligible under Targeted FSM	Retain the original start date. Record TFSM , update the verification date and leave the end date blank.

Moves from previous FSM entitlement to Expanded FSM	Close the previous period, retaining its history and recording the verification date. Hackney recommends an end date one day before the Eligibility Last Checked date. Create a separate EFSM entry using the check date as both the start date and verification date. Leave the new end date blank.
Becomes eligible for Expanded FSM for the first time	Create an EFSM entry using the date eligibility was confirmed as both the start date and verification date. Leave the end date blank.
Was previously eligible but no longer qualifies under either category	Retain the original start date and close the existing period. Hackney recommends an end date one day before the check date. Record the verification date and preserve the previous record.
Is not eligible and has no previous FSM entitlement	Leave the FSM module blank.

Expanded FSM start dates must not be earlier than 1 August 2026. Do not overwrite previous FSM history when creating a new period.

Example: moving to Expanded FSM

An eligibility check on **24 August 2026** confirms that a previously eligible pupil now qualifies under Expanded FSM.

Record	Date
Previous FSM period: end date	23 August 2026
Eligibility check	24 August 2026
New EFSM period: start date	24 August 2026
New EFSM period: verification date	24 August 2026

Retain the previous FSM entry and leave the new EFSM end date blank while eligibility continues.

Pupils with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Pupils qualifying through the NRPF criteria do not appear on the Synergy FSM report. Schools must check and re-verify their eligibility.

For eligible pupils:

- Record the FSM category as **TFSM**.
- Record the date eligibility first began as the start date.
- Record the date eligibility was last checked as the verification date.
- Leave the end date blank while eligibility continues.
- Include the pupil's FSM information in the termly School Census.
- Retain the application, self-declaration and supporting evidence for audit purposes.

[NRPF eligibility information and application form](#)

Pupils joining from another local authority

Check the FSM records of pupils joining Hackney schools from outside the borough.

The Pupil Benefits Team may not hold the information needed to verify an entitlement assessed by another local authority. Where current eligibility cannot be verified in Hackney, the parent or carer must make a new FSM application in Hackney.

Once eligibility is confirmed, use **Current Tier** and **Eligibility Last Checked** in the Synergy report to update the MIS. Retain the pupil's previous FSM history.

Final checks

Before completing your return, check that:

- The correct FSM category and UK country are recorded.
- Start, verification and end dates are accurate.
- Previous FSM periods have been retained.
- A separate entry has been created where eligibility changes to EFSM.
- Pupils have been correctly added to the admissions register.

Support

School Census recording queries: Noelia.Rufete-Gil@hackney.gov.uk

FSM eligibility queries: pupilbenefits@hackney.gov.uk