Government to cut costs for parents ahead of new school year

15 July 2026



From September, 1,400 more schools get free breakfast clubs, branded uniform costs are capped, saving families up to £1,000 a year on school costs.

Families will see the cost of going to school slashed even further from September, as guidance confirming caps on branded uniforms is issued to schools and more free breakfast clubs are confirmed.

Parents at 1,400 more schools will find out if they can save up to £450 through free breakfast clubs from September, when more than 2,700 will be up and running. It means the government has smashed its target of adding 2,000 schools to the programme this year. Over 680,000 children will attend them after the summer holidays – up from 300,000 today.

The clubs are already delivering cumulative savings of nearly £25 million to families by serving up over 10 million free breakfasts and 5million hours of childcare unlocked. For a family using their club every day that's worth up to £450 and 95 hours a year, or nearly 2 working weeks back on the morning juggle. Children arrive more settled, fed and ready to learn from the moment the school day begins.

From September schools must comply with the new legal limits on the number of branded uniform items they can require. It means parents can buy more of the

everyday basics, like trousers and shirts, from any shop or supermarket rather than one pricey supplier.

After polling found a third of parents still worry about uniform costs the government is also publishing strengthened statutory guidance today telling schools to take more steps to bring down the cost of individual items, especially for more expensive items like blazers and jumpers, in time for the 2027 school year.

Taken together, heading back to school is now set to be almost £1,000 cheaper for many families. A child could benefit from up to £450 a year through a free breakfast club and up to £500 a year through the expansion of free school meals to every household on Universal Credit – on top of cheaper uniform as the new branded-item limit bites.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

> *No parent should have to choose between a summer day out to the beach and kitting their child out for school.*
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> *From September, families will feel the difference at the school gates: free breakfast clubs at 1,400 more schools, an end to expensive lists of branded uniform, and more free lunches for those who need them. That's the British childhood this government believes in – and why we'll always fight to give every child the very best start in life.*

This announcement builds on the biggest ever expansion of funded childcare, now saving families using their full 30 hours an average of £8,000 a year per child – with more than 548,000 codes validated by parents for the working parent entitlement in spring 2026.

Ahead of the new school year, the government is making it easier for all families to enjoy the weekend treats, days out and day trips over the summer with the government's Great British Summer Saving scheme. From 25 June to 1 September, VAT has been cut on children's meals in restaurants, children's and family tickets for theatres and cinemas, and tickets for family attractions, alongside free bus travel for children aged five to 15 in England throughout August. This is part of the government's work to ease the cost of living, including

action to take £117 off household energy bills, freezing rail fares and prescription charges and increases the national minimum and living wage.

A consultation on early years funding, published today, will also set out plans to tackle the postcode lottery holding some children back.

Government is setting out proposals that will mean councils pass more funding for disadvantaged 2-year-olds directly to nurseries and childminders.

Families will also feel the difference at their local Best Start Family Hub – helping parents find everything from stay-and-play sessions to health visitors and parenting advice. Backed by over £900 million, more than 200 are already open, on the way to up to 1,000 by 2028.

To drive that ambition forward, the government is today launching the Best Start Improvement Coalition – bringing together business, charities and social investors to ensure every hub delivers for the families who need it most.