

magic  
breakfast  
fuel for learning



# Why Breakfast?

A Magic Breakfast briefing

At Magic Breakfast, we're proud to have delivered breakfasts across the UK for over 20 years. Our aim is to eliminate child morning hunger, for now and for good.

This briefing outlines some key benefits of breakfast provision, which include bridging the attainment gap, improving academic outcomes, supporting parents to work, stimulating economic growth, and helping families through the cost-of-living crisis.

**£2.7 Billion**

*The long-term economic benefit of all disadvantaged key stage 1 pupils receiving a school breakfast for one year.*

## Benefits to the Economy

**Breakfast improves educational outcomes for children, which positively impacts future earning potential and thus national economic growth.**

Research by the Department for Education (DfE) shows that school grades have a direct impact on earning potential, which in turn affects potential tax revenue. A report by the department found that a one-grade improvement in overall GCSE attainment is associated with an average increase in the present value of lifetime earnings of £8,500.

A one-standard deviation improvement in overall GCSE performance is associated with an increase in discounted lifetime earnings of approximately £96,000.

Supporting this, a 2021 report by Pro Bono Economics outlined the positive economic impact of a breakfast model that targets children at risk of hunger. Building on evidence that improved academic outcomes lead to economic benefits, the study found:

- School breakfast provision could generate long-term benefits to the economy of around £9,200 per child when offered to children for a year in Key Stage 1.
- This means that for every £1 invested in breakfast provision for children at Key Stage 1, the return on investment is over £50 in benefits.
- At the time of the study there were an estimated 298,000 pupils completing Key Stage 1 at schools with high levels of disadvantage in England. If all these pupils were to receive a school breakfast, it could generate total long-term economic benefits of around £2.7 billion.

## Benefits to Pupils

**There is a plethora of research directly linking disadvantage to low educational outcomes.**

Disadvantaged pupils in England leave primary school approximately nine months behind their peers in learning. By the time they complete their GCSEs in secondary school, this doubles to 18 months.

School breakfast provision for children experiencing disadvantage has been continuously found to have a proven positive impact on educational attainment, concentration, focus and behaviour in the classroom:

- **Improved GCSE results**

Research conducted by The University of Leeds (2019) found that children in secondary school who consume breakfast regularly achieve, on average, 2 GCSEs higher than children who rarely eat breakfast.

- **Improved literacy and numeracy**

Research carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) found that providing a free, nutritious breakfast to Year 2 pupils boosted children's reading, writing and maths by an average of 2 months' progress over the course of the academic year compared to pupils in schools with no provision.

- **Attendance**

The same study also found attendance increased in schools offering breakfast provision, with 26 fewer half-days of absence per year in a class of 30. This was alongside a reduction in late arrivals.

- **Cognitive function**

Research conducted by the University of Leeds (2016) found that tasks requiring attention, executive function, and memory were facilitated more reliably by breakfast consumption relative to fasting, with effects more apparent in undernourished children.

- **Behaviour**

An Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) study in England found that in schools with breakfast provision, pupil behaviour improved as well as the classroom environment, and concluded that breakfasts 'improve outcomes for children who do not even attend breakfast club.'



# Breakfast: Building a New Childcare Model

School breakfast provision offers key childcare benefits for working and non-working parents in the short, medium and long-term, which can generate strong second-impact outcomes for families and the UK economy.

Morning breakfast provision in schools can add on up to an extra 1.5 hours of free childcare for parents each morning in a safe, secure school setting. This is predominantly using the breakfast club model, which parents and carers can utilise to support them with their employment responsibilities and to extend working hours to earn more income.

This additional time each morning also has the potential to allow non-working parents to access work more flexibly, and working parents to access work that suits their skills and needs better – 20% of parents say breakfast at their child's school enables them to get to work or study on time, and 68% of families say that they face challenges around breakfast time.

As well as allowing parents greater access to work - thus supporting economic growth

nationally - free school breakfast provision would also save families money on morning childcare.

The UK currently has the third highest childcare costs in The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), at 30% of the average earnings among couples, more than twice the OECD average of 14%.

Reducing childcare costs by even an hour each morning would offer families significant savings each week, which could have profound impacts on those experiencing poverty. Coupled with saving on food costs, breakfast provision should be considered a highly desirable cost-saving intervention for struggling families.

Indeed, a 2022 report by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Magic Breakfast found that a low-income lone parent with two children could be £1,200 better off annually through the removal of morning childcare costs alone.



# Breakfast and the Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis has had an enormous impact on families across the country, with a particularly detrimental impact on low-income households and children, and their ability to eat and/or eat well.

In October 2022, The Food Foundation found that 4 million children were experiencing food insecurity in the UK. In the same month, the Food Standards Agency reported that 15% of participants it surveyed had used a food bank or food charity in the last month (up from 11% in October 2021).

Magic Breakfast's latest research (What's For Breakfast, May 2023) paints a similarly bleak picture. It found that 76% of families are struggling to get enough healthy food to eat, 33% of families have cut back on the amount of food they buy, and 18% of parents are skipping meals so that their children can eat.

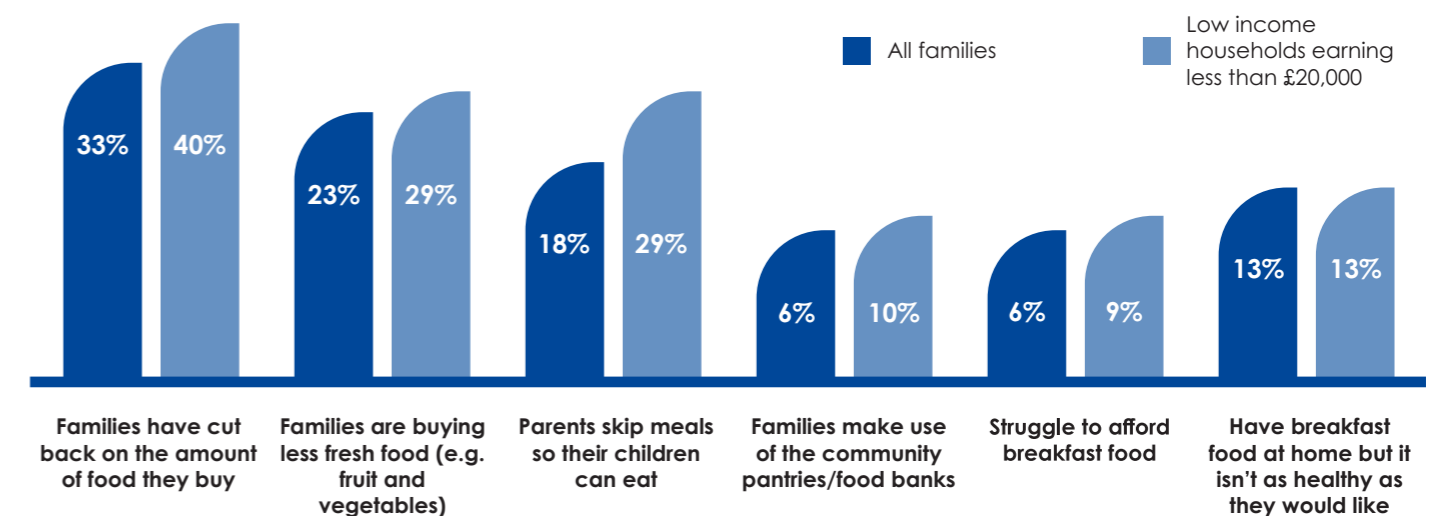
The research also found that more than one-fifth of children worry about not having enough food at home, with 12% stating they don't have breakfast because there is nothing to eat at home. This is in line with what schools are reporting, with 93% of Magic Breakfast schools surveyed in June 2022 having reported that child poverty had increased in their school in the past year and 81% reporting an increase in child hunger.

By making breakfast available to any child at the start of the day, regardless of their circumstances, this means even if a family is experiencing food insecurity or an unexpected change in circumstance for the first time, the child can still access breakfast.

Having breakfast at school can not only fuel a child for learning but is also one less meal for a parent or child to worry about.

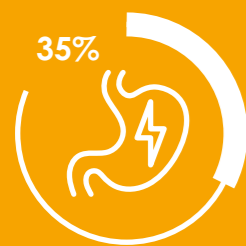


With so many families experiencing the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, there is a growing need for inclusive school food programs.

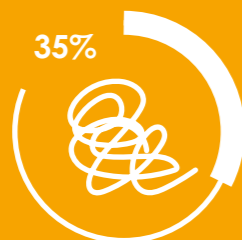


The same research, which involved around 4,500 children and young people in Magic Breakfast partner schools and more than 4,600 parents of pupils in these schools, highlights the immediate negative impacts children and young people experience when arriving to school hungry.

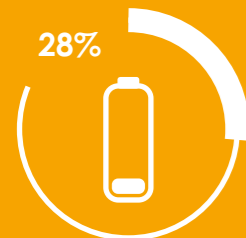
- The most widely recognised feelings of hunger amongst children and young people were their stomachs hurting and finding it difficult to concentrate.
- Over a quarter of those surveyed (27%) agreed that they sometimes buy unhealthy snacks/food during the school morning because they're hungry.



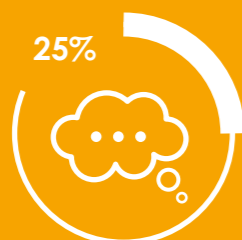
said their tummy hurts



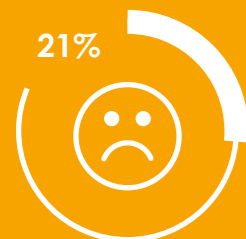
find it difficult to concentrate



have no energy to do anything



find it harder to think about things



are in a bad mood



**It's awful if you need food and have anxiety, it's like two punches in the stomach.**

*Secondary age pupil, Yorkshire & the Humber*

**... when you're hungry you get like, stomach pains, moody and grumpy and stuff. And you don't want that. And some people just start dozing off.**

*Primary pupil, Year 5 North West, Focus Group*



School breakfast is a simple, cost-effective solution that should be seen as an intervention to support children and families through the cost-of-living crisis in the short-term, and to improve educational attainment and generate economic growth in the medium term and long term

## Implementation of a Breakfast Programme

Most of the benefits cited above, including the EEF and the Pro Bono Economics studies, apply to Magic Breakfast's specific approach to school breakfast provision. For us, it is not merely about providing food in the morning – it is about tackling child morning hunger, and that specifically requires a “hunger focused” and “stigma free” breakfast provision.

### Hunger Focus

A breakfast provision that actively seeks out children experiencing hunger within a school, working to boost their attendance at breakfast clubs and ensuring that as many children and young people as possible receive a school breakfast.

### Stigma Free

A provision where a nutritious, accessible breakfast is open and available to all those who want it. A key driver of non-attendance, even among children who are experiencing hunger, is the feeling that breakfast clubs are for “poor” children. A stigma free provision, universal and integrated as part of everyday school culture, works to overcome this barrier to access.

### How does this provision work?

This means that Magic Breakfast doesn't just deliver breakfast clubs. We have multiple methods and approaches to breakfast provision, which can be worked on and combined with others to ensure that each school has a provision that uniquely works for

it. This for example includes morning breakfast clubs, grab-and-go stands and in-classroom breakfast offers.

We can deliver in this way because of our network of engagement partners, who tailor provision to suit individual schools. They are highly skilled breakfast experts who are trained to work with schools to understand the unique barriers faced by each. They offer staff ongoing support to overcome barriers to access and work to ensure all children and young people experiencing hunger are reached. They were identified as the ‘lynchpin’ of the Conservative Party’s original rollout of the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) and are essential to ensure delivery of a high-quality service to schools that reaches all children at risk of morning hunger.

Magic Breakfast's unique hunger focused model has clear, demonstrable advantages. By actively seeking out children experiencing hunger, we reach 209 pupils on average per school across the UK. Not only is this far higher than the English average of 44, but it is more pupils than all four UK nation averages combined.

### Recommendations

The educational and economic benefits of school breakfast are clear. As we approach the 2024 UK General Election, all parties must commit in their manifestos to introduce school breakfasts across England, so that no child is too hungry to learn.

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16. Food Standards Agency, Consumer Insights Tracker – Monthly Bulletin (October 2022), Available at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/consumer-insights-tracker-monthly-bulletin-october-2022>
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