

Partner School Survey 2023

magic
breakfast
fuel for learning

Magic Breakfast

Magic Breakfast is a registered charity providing healthy breakfasts to children and young people in the UK who arrive at school too hungry to learn, and expert support to their schools. Over 200,000 children and young people are on roll at Primary, Secondary, ASL / Special Educational Needs Schools and Pupil Referral Units that the charity works with, in disadvantaged areas of Scotland and England. Providing breakfast ensures that children start their school day with the energy and nutrition they need to be able to make the most of their morning lessons. Magic Breakfast also undertakes research, and campaigns for long-term solutions to end hunger as a barrier to learning.

Background

Each year, in the Summer term, Magic Breakfast surveys all of our partner schools to understand the key challenges they and their school community are facing, we call this our Measuring and Monitoring (M&M) survey. We also ask schools about the impact of school breakfast provision in their school, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. We use this data to track trends over time, improve our programme - tailoring it to the needs of schools - and to grow knowledge in the sector and beyond of the challenges schools and their communities are facing and the role school breakfast provision can play in addressing these.

The following data is based on responses from just over 400 schools in areas of high disadvantage in England and Scotland. It is a selection of data collected, however, do reach out if you have any questions or would like further information.

Environment

Poverty and Hunger

- **81% of Magic Breakfast partner schools surveyed believe that child hunger increased** in their school community in the past year.
- **90% of Magic Breakfast partner schools surveyed believe child poverty has increased** in their school community in the past year.
- **99% of schools stated 'cost of living crisis' as the main driver** of increased hunger and/or poverty in the school community.
- This was followed by unemployment and a change in the demographics of the school (e.g., increased children with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)). A number of schools also mentioned that the mental health of families and pupils was also a contributing factor.

When speaking with schools about the impact of these increases in poverty and hunger on their school population these were the common responses.

- **Over half of respondent schools told us that they had increased demand for food aid.** Many schools are providing food vouchers, food bank referrals, food parcels or running food banks at schools.

- **Just under half of respondent schools told us that demand for uniform had increased significantly** with many schools providing free uniform and pupils arriving in ill-fitting uniform.
- **Other common impacts observed by teachers include:** increased demand for FSM, decreased attendance, increased hunger, increased demand for breakfast, lack of lunch, money for lunch and reduced quality of home lunches, worse behavior and more children living in temporary accommodation.

When asking schools about the impact of the cost of living crisis on children and young people we found:

- **69% of schools said inequality** amongst children and young people in the school had grown as a result of the cost of living crisis
- **67% of schools** are seeing an impact on children's learning due to the cost of living crisis.
- **More than 1 in 3 schools said hunger and food insecurity was impacting on children's ability to learn** including resulting in poor concentration, increased tiredness and behavioral issues.
- **Almost 1 in 4 of schools said the stress and anxiety of the cost of living crisis on families** was impacting on children and young people's learning.
- **1 in 6 respondent schools said that increased poor attendance and/or lateness as a result of the cost of living crisis** is impacting on children and young peoples' learning.

In the words of teachers in our partner schools:

*"The poor are poorer... Our **pupils in poverty are eating and heating their homes less.**"*

*"**Attendance has decreased** which impacts on education - families spending money on food and therefore, not able to afford bus fare for school."*

*"There **is a change in appearance with pupils.** Uniform is not up to standard and has to be replaced by school. Many of the girls come in leggings because families cannot afford school trousers. Some pupils arrive extremely hungry, especially after a weekend."*

*"Pupils experience fewer holidays, no cultural experiences outside the area, clothes not replaced as often. Even the **quality of packed lunches has declined** to cheapest option with **little nutritional value**, with little to no fruit."*

*"Parents needing to make harder decisions on what they spend their money on in relation to **food, clothing and childcare**"*

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"The impact of poorer rates of attendance undoubtedly impacts attainment. Pupils from our poorest families will arguably find it more **difficult to concentrate in class due to lack of sleep and nourishment**, which has been further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. The mental stress families are feeling caused by **financial pressure** is being felt in our school on a daily basis."

"Post-pandemic data shows an **impact on learning and progress for most disadvantaged**. These families are now even less able and empowered to support learning, as **priorities shift to meeting basic needs** (mental health, clothing, food)" - Teacher, Magic Breakfast Partner School England

"**Parents are more stressed about how far their finances can stretch** which in turn creates an uncomfortable atmosphere in the home. **When unhappy or hungry, children can't get past their bad start to the day** and this can have an impact on their learning."

"At times when children need to research for their homework, **children who have no access to internet or mobile devices** are often given the opportunity to complete this in school. **Some are too embarrassed to let us know that this is the case** so will not be given this opportunity."

We also asked schools about challenges they were facing and these were some of the common themes:

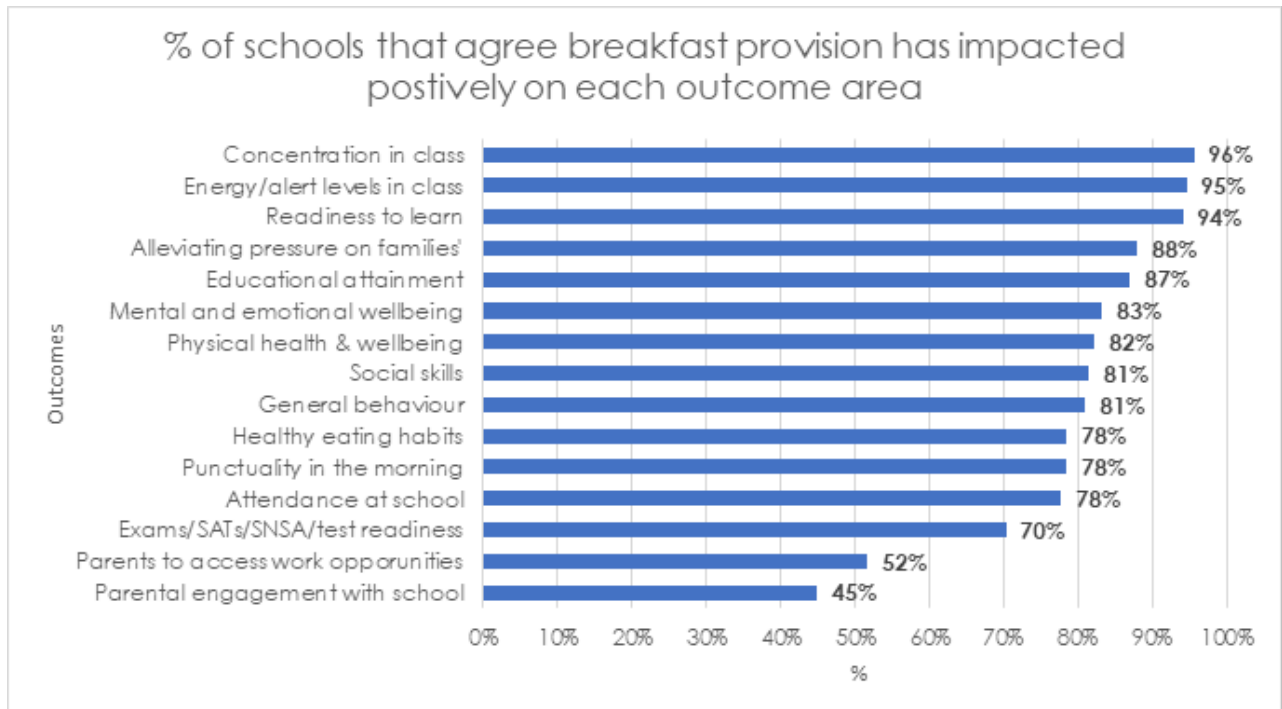
"**School budgets are a constant challenge** with all the increases in energy costs, food costs and educational resources. The anticipated pay rises will also have a huge impact on the budget if there is no additional funding coming in from the Government whilst these are welcomed by staff as **many are also struggling with their cost of living**." – Magic Breakfast Partner School, Yorkshire and Humber

"We have **had refugee families join us every term this year**. They are housed in a local hotel and living there is very difficult for them for many reasons. We also have high pupil mobility as a result." Magic Breakfast Partner School, South East

"There has been a significant increase in children with high special educational needs, as a result, staffing requirements are higher causing **pressure on the school budget** and uncertainty for budget setting looking ahead." – Magic Breakfast Partner School, North East

Impact of Breakfast Provision

Against a difficult background, we continue to hear how our hunger focused breakfast provision is helping to alleviate some of the elements of the current crisis and ensure that fewer children are too hungry to learn in the morning.



Other impacts observed by schools include:

- **Positive attitude towards school:** "Children who attend the breakfast club appear to have a more positive attitude in all aspects, not just learning. It positively impacts relationships between peers, and provides a safe, stigma-free place to talk with staff."
- **Staff-student relationships have strengthened:** "The breakfast club has helped staff to build relationships with pupils that they would not usually interact with due to different timetables etc. which makes the pupils feel more comfortable around the whole building."
- **Increased independence and confidence and soft skills:** "Our breakfast club provision is run by our pupils, this has allowed them to develop their leadership, organisation, and inter-personal skills. We now have a large cohort from S2-6 who run it every morning with very little staff intervention."
- **Reduced stigma:** "Because we promote breakfast as 'the norm', there is no judgement on anyone accessing the food. I believe this allows pupils to feel comfortable accessing or asking for more if they need it."

Quotes and Stories

“One child was continually late for school arriving between 9.15 to 9.30am. He was falling behind in his studies especially in phonics which is taught between 8.55 and 9.30 every day and breakfast was not the healthy kind (crisps while travelling to school). After a discussion with his parents and understanding their situation, we offered him breakfast every day. This has worked brilliantly. He is in school every day by 8.15am, has a good breakfast and has made progress; he has just passed the phonics test.” – Magic Breakfast Partner School, Lewisham

“It was identified that a behavioural and lack of concentration problem with a particular student was due to not eating breakfast. This behaviour was disrupting the class and their early morning learning. Once identified, the child was provided with a bagel/breakfast, the child was happier and much more focused.” – Magic Breakfast Partner School, Kent

“Parents have often said how much they appreciate the breakfast provision because they are struggling with preparing breakfast that their children like and or do not have the funds to be able to provide an adequate meal for their children.” - Magic Breakfast Partner School, Wandsworth

“A child who has suffered with anxiety since finds that accessing breakfast club as part of his morning routine relieves the anxiety and gives him an opportunity to sit and talk to his friends, ensuring that he feels relaxed and ready to learn.” - Magic Breakfast Partner School, Oldham

“My child loves breakfast club and it allows me to be at work on time, as a single parent who works full time this would really be a struggle without it as child care costs are so high.” – Parent, North Ayrshire

“We have several single parent families who required access to before school childcare but were unable to afford it. Giving the child access to free breakfast club has meant that the parent can get to work on time and not worry about the child not eating. Many of our children have to walk to school on their own and quite often they would have not had breakfast as their parents would have left early for work. It gives parents peace of mind knowing that their child is being fed and ready to learn.” - Magic Breakfast Partner School, Brent