

School Breakfasts and the Attendance Crisis

A Magic Breakfast Briefing

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About 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.

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The Issue

The United Kingdom faces a school attendance crisis. In England, more than 20% of pupils are persistently absent from school. This number has doubled since before the Covid pandemic.

The reasons for absence rates increasing are complex, but the importance of turning them around isn't. School attendance is one of the biggest indicators of attainment.

Solving our school attendance crisis will take a wide suite of policy levers being pulled simultaneously. At Magic Breakfast we know and can prove that school breakfasts need to be one of those levers.

Our Magic Evidence

What's For Breakfast?

Magic Breakfast's 2023 Report – [Read It Here](#)

Parents told us of **the support having breakfast offered at their child's school offered them in their responsibility to support attendance**. They told us of examples of their children being regularly on time now with the desire to attend breakfast club, and their security that their child is fueled for learning.

In the same report we asked pupils aged 11-14 why they attend breakfast at school. Of this group, **9% cited allowing them to get to school on time as the reason to attend breakfast**.

“

One particular student had a very poor attendance at school. They were specially invited to breakfast club by the school and since attending they have been able to build friendship networks and receive support from staff in the morning which they previously hadn't had access to. This has led to a significant improvement in their attendance — Linda, Magic Breakfast Partner School Teacher, West Midlands*

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A Free, Universal, Before-School Breakfast Club

The Education Endowment Foundation's 2019 Report – [Read It Here](#)

The EEF are one of the UK's leading educational research charities and they did an independent study of the impact of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfasts.

Their research found a wide array of benefits for pupils and the wider school environment. These benefits included an improvement in attendance at schools delivering the Magic Breakfast model. **In a class of 30 pupils there were around 26 fewer half-days of absence per year.**

The EEF highlighted the role of Magic Breakfast staff who provided expertise, advice, and support as the 'lynchpin' to the school breakfast programme's success.

“

The breakfast provision has ensured that children who were often late and hungry are now well fed and ready to learn. This has improved the attendance and punctuality of a number of children which helps with them being more alert and ready to go into class — David, Magic Breakfast Partner School Teacher, London*

”

Magic Breakfast Partner School Survey

The Published Results of Magic Breakfast's 2023 Measuring and Monitoring Survey – [Read It Here](#)

Every year Magic Breakfast works with schools to assess the impact of the work we do in schools across the country. This year's survey was completed by over 400 schools.

Magic Breakfast asked schools to tell us the areas where they've seen improvements that they link to breakfast provision. **In 2023, 78% of schools agreed that breakfast has a positive impact on attendance.**

This isn't a one off with **76% of schools agreeing that breakfast has a positive impact on attendance in 2022** and **79% of schools agreeing that breakfast has a positive impact on attendance in 2021.**

* name changed to protect anonymity

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