

**magic
breakfast**
fuel for learning

Evidence to the Education Committee

**How to realise the benefits of school
breakfasts through the Children's
Wellbeing and Schools Bill**

February 2025

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page features a thick yellow line that curves from the bottom left, forms a heart shape, and then continues to the right. Three yellow stars of varying sizes are scattered around the heart and line.

Executive summary

This paper summarises the extensive evidence that outlines the potential benefits of free school breakfasts when delivered in a universal, hunger-focused, stigma- and barrier-free way. It is complemented by the experience and expertise of Magic Breakfast and brought to life through the lived experiences of schools, pupils, and families who access our provision.

Magic Breakfast has been part of the development of a broad and robust evidence base regarding school breakfast provision and its role in improving education outcomes, alleviating poverty, and supporting pupils' wellbeing and life chances. Recommendations and identified areas for greater scrutiny draw on this evidence and practical experience of school breakfast provision at scale in the most disadvantaged schools for more than two decades.

Our review and recommendations relating to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill are:

- Impact and reach of free school breakfasts must be monitored and measured in a robust way to enable scrutiny and deliver an effective public policy. Without this, there is a risk that the children and young people who need it most do not benefit, and that intended impact is not achieved.
- A mixed-model approach to breakfast provision is essential to reducing disadvantage and tackling child poverty. It gives greater autonomy to schools and benefits the public purse, as it costs less per pupil to implement school breakfasts using a variety of models, beyond the traditional 'Breakfast Club' model.
- An inclusive approach for special schools and pupils with SEND is crucial to ensure the Bill and policy implementation is effective for all children and schools.
- Breakfast provision is best embedded in schools when its design and delivery are supported with expert advice and effective guidance.

Ensuring legislation enables a breakfast policy through these recommendations is not only beneficial for attainment, behaviour and attendance, wellbeing and health; it will protect and ensure the Government's investment in the policy. There is an opportunity to generate significant returns for the UK government in the medium and long term, as set out in research conducted by Pro Bono Economics in 2021. They concluded that if all pupils completing Key Stage 1 at schools with high disadvantage in England received Magic Breakfast's model of school breakfast provision at that time, it could generate long-term benefits of £2.7 billion to the UK economy.ⁱ Noting that the intervention only cost £180 per child per year at the time, the benefit cost ratio was a staggering 50:1.

Teachers overwhelmingly support provision of free school breakfasts, as we heard from a survey of 10,000 teachers, of whom we asked their views on the Government's planned school breakfast policy.ⁱⁱ The policy receives overwhelming support, but teachers express concerns about the necessary funding for sufficient staffing and the inclusion of special schools when only considering Breakfast Clubs. Specifically, 92% said the policy must have designated funding for staffing.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill offers an exciting opportunity for children and the country. Free school breakfasts can be a foundation stone on which pupils' wellbeing, learning, and health can be built. With effective legislation and policy implementation there is the potential to support families with high costs of living, alleviate child poverty, and reduce the widening disadvantage gap in education.



Introduction

Who is Magic Breakfast

Magic Breakfast is a registered charity with a mission to ensure no child or young person in the UK is too hungry to learn. We make a difference to the learning, wellbeing, and opportunities of more than 300,000 children and young people, every school day. We do this by offering free breakfasts and expert advice to schools across England and Scotland.

Magic Breakfast has over 20 years' experience in delivering, evaluating, and optimising school breakfast provision. We have been involved in cross party policy design and have advised civil servants in the UK, Scottish, and Welsh Governments as well as across local government. Magic Breakfast has successfully delivered a multiplicity of national and local contracts. This includes co-delivery of the first phase of the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP).

Evidence of the benefits of Magic Breakfast's approach

Magic Breakfast considers the Bill to be a strong marker of intent for the Government.

Magic Breakfast's model is universal, and the policy's universalism is a strong enabler to ensuring provision is stigma and barrier free. Alongside its universality, we provide expert advice and support to schools; helping them to target their provision in a hunger-focused way, ensure the possible benefits of breakfast are realised and that provision supports the children and young people who most need it.

We have long campaigned for school breakfast provision and outline clearly in our briefing, [Breakfast: The Simple Choice](#), the proven benefits of effective school breakfast provision in education.

- **Literacy and numeracy:** Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and funded by the Education Endowment Foundation found that providing Magic Breakfast's provision 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 without provision.
- **Attendance and punctuality:** Magic Breakfast's provision was found to positively impact attendance; attendance was found to increase in schools offering our models of breakfast provision, with 26 fewer half-days of absence per year in a class of 30. This was alongside a reduction in late arrivals.
- **Behaviour:** Magic Breakfast's provision approach has been proven to improve classroom behaviour: an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) study in England found that in schools with our 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 is imperative for regulation in the mornings and has a huge impact on behaviour in the mornings. We couldn't not offer it, as it is so important.”

Safeguarding Lead
South Shields School, Tyne and Wear

This evidence is backed by teachers' agreement that breakfast provision could yield improvements:



- 94%:** concentration in the classroom
- 92%:** energy and alert levels
- 92%:** readiness to learn
- 83%:** physical health and wellbeing
- 80%:** attendance

From our 2023-24 annual survey with 648 respondents.

Beyond the school gates, free school breakfasts can have long-term benefits to the economy. A 2021 report by Pro Bono Economics outlined the positive economic impact of a breakfast model that targets children at risk of hungerⁱⁱⁱ and includes expert support and advice for schools. Building on evidence that improved academic outcomes lead to economic benefits, the study found that a Magic Breakfast 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.

Approximately £4,000 of these benefits would go to the Government through increased tax revenue and reduced public services costs. Based on the low cost of school breakfasts, this meant that for every £1 invested in breakfast provision for children at Key Stage 1, the return on investment would be over £50 in benefits.^{iv} 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.^v

Supported groups

As currently drafted, the Bill supports 'all qualifying primary pupils'^{vi}. The Bill defines 'qualifying primary pupil' in the way Magic Breakfast would seek. This is to include those in the reception year who are not of compulsory school age.

Magic Breakfast also agrees with the definition of 'relevant school'^{vii} given in the Bill. This includes all educational settings – not just mainstream schools.

However, it is noted that the Bill is limited to primary aged pupils, those typically between the ages of 5 and 11. The Bill does not cover pupils of nursery or secondary school age.

Whilst the primary/secondary boundary is quite tangible in mainstream schools, it is less defined in some SEND settings. This could create barriers to access for SEND schools and their pupils.

Monitoring and measurement



To scrutinise and deliver an effective public policy, impact and reach must be monitored and measured in a robust way.

The Bill currently contains no provisions for measuring or monitoring the success of school breakfast provision. This is concerning as it will hinder the Bill's scrutiny and efficacy. Effective delivery is vital to ensure the policy achieves its stated aims to tackle disadvantage and reach the pupils who need it most.

For many schools, the duties outlined in Part 2 of the Bill will be new functions. Without robust measuring and monitoring there is a risk that the delivery of breakfast provision will not be an effective use of public funds.

In their report on mission driven government, Nesta and the Institute for Government note that 'data is critical to de-risk decisions by government.'^{viii} Without robust – and legislatively mandated – data it will be difficult to effectively augment the policy in future. It will also be difficult to scrutinise the policy, its effectiveness, and impact.

Putting children and young people at the heart of this legislation

It is essential to measure reach at a pupil level, looking at uptake of the provision, rather than a school level. This will enable an understanding of how, and if, pupils are benefiting from the provision available and allows a swift understanding of where problem areas may exist, and where more support and advice is needed. By capturing metrics based on pupil characteristics, it can also ensure that those most in need are benefiting.

To this end, Magic Breakfast believes that it is important that the Bill considers the characteristics of children and young people accessing school breakfast provision. Pupil Premium, Free School Meals Eligibility, and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) are known markers that can be used to ensure breakfast provision is reaching those who need it the most.

Ensuring satisfaction and impact are delivered for intended beneficiaries

Scrutiny of beneficiary stakeholders' satisfaction should be possible. If these groups are not satisfied and the provision is not meeting their needs, then the Secretary of State would need to review its efficacy and delivery. Magic Breakfast would include the following groups as beneficiary stakeholders; school students within the scope of the Bill; their parents, kinship carers, connected persons, or responsible adults.

The Bill should also require The Secretary of State to collect data on the outcomes of the policy. This should include to what extent the provision impacts behaviour, attendance, concentration, academic attainment, and health and wellbeing. Magic Breakfast's evidence shows that when delivered effectively, school breakfast policy can have an impact on these areas. Therefore, if the Government policy does not significantly impact these areas, then the policy's efficacy can be scrutinised.

The new Ofsted report card system is an ideal opportunity to ensure impactful delivery of this policy, particularly as it relates to quality of education and behaviour. As Ofsted have said, the gap between outcomes for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is now at a scandalous level. By



monitoring this policy intervention, inspectors will be able to consider whether there has been full inclusion, whether it is being delivered on a hunger, barrier and stigma free basis and how it is impacting on attainment and behaviour.

Examples of effective legislation that enabled monitoring and measurement

This Bill would not be the first to include legislatively mandated data collection. A number of Acts of parliament already contain provisions on measuring and monitoring. The Environment Act 2021^{ix} and the Climate Change Act 2008^x both mandate the Secretary of State to collect data relevant to the Act; there are also clauses to mandate the publication of such data.

At the same time there are clauses throughout legislation mandating annual reporting on the implementation of legislation. Such clauses could be effective and efficient in school breakfast provision. The Companies Act 2006^{xi}, the Modern Slavery Act 2015^{xii}, and – most relevantly – the Academies Act 2010^{xiii} all contain provisions on annual reporting. The first two acts' duties fall on individual companies whilst the latter act mandates duties for the Secretary of State. This shows the diversity of available options for ensuring monitoring is included.

Magic Breakfast, with our partner schools, consistently measures and monitors the impact of our charitable work through regular pupil uptake analysis and our annual Measuring and Monitoring survey. This is published on our website and is available [here](#). This builds on the independent evaluations of Magic Breakfast's programme noted in the Introduction.

Measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of the provision of school breakfast is vital to ensuring the success of the policy.



Provision in Wales



We must consider the learnings and lessons of similar policies across the United Kingdom. The Welsh Government's free breakfast policy does not measure or monitor its impact. This has been shown to be detrimental to its effectiveness.

The Free Breakfast in Primary Schools scheme (FBIPS) was enacted in Wales in 2013 under the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#). The scheme [states](#) that 'all children who go to a primary school which is maintained by a local authority can have a free breakfast at school, if their school provides free breakfasts.'

Following the Government's guidelines, families must request free breakfast from their headteacher and governing body. It is then at the discretion of the school to determine if there is enough of a need to provide the service. The school can then ask the local authority to provide free breakfast in school.

The approach taken by Wales, in which families must express a need for free breakfast services, and both schools and local authorities can deny the request, creates stigma and barriers to access. This is examined further in Magic Breakfast's [Hidden Hunger](#) report, which found that, despite Government legislation intending to reach all primary schools in Wales, 85% of disadvantaged pupils are not reached by the provision.

The legislation has also caused confusion around childcare. According to the Act, schools 'may not' charge a fee for breakfast services, but 'may' charge a fee for childcare. As childcare and breakfast provision coincide, this has generated confusion over what constitutes breakfast, and what constitutes childcare provision. As noted in the [Hidden Hunger](#) report, 'the introduction of a de facto cost to some provision [has created] barriers for many pupils who need it most.' In fact, 10% of schools indicated that they limit free places at breakfast provision, or that free places are given out on a discretionary basis or based on status.

"Having breakfast at school means **my mum doesn't have to worry about me being hungry** in the morning until lunch time and I don't have to worry about my mum being stressed or feeling guilty." – Tom, 11, Enfield

The Free Breakfast in Primary Schools scheme does not include expert support and advice or monitoring metrics. Additionally, the legislation lacks a sound exemption clause. Such Government choices have resulted in confusion among families and schools, barriers to access to children, and stigma. At present, Section 21 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill risks following in the footsteps of the Welsh Government.



A mixed model approach

Ensuring that schools can deliver breakfast provision in a way that suits the local school environment is key to a successful policy.

Whilst breakfast itself has been proven to support and enhance educational attainment in children and young people, there are still many ways that school provision can be implemented poorly, thus not reaching the very pupils it aims to support. School breakfast provision as an educational intervention is only fully effective when it reaches children who are experiencing hunger. To do this, it must include **mixed models** to enable all children to access breakfast each morning.

Moving beyond the minimum standard

The Bill requires that schools deliver one model of the breakfast provision, the traditional breakfast club. Magic Breakfast acknowledges and welcomes the benefits around childcare that this will bring. In the 2023-24 school year, amongst Magic Breakfast's partner schools:

- 80% provided a breakfast club
- 84% offered breakfast provision for children arriving late
- 86% offered more than one form of breakfast provision (excluding late provision)

However, as the explanatory notes to the Bill acknowledge in paragraph 26, providing a 30-minute breakfast club is to be seen a *minimum*. Schools will be empowered to 'offer more than the minimum standards to meet the needs of their school, pupils, and parents.' This must include schools being able to use consequential funding to deliver models beyond the minimum standards. The published guidance and conditions of grants for the Early Adopter Scheme do not make this clear. For schools to be empowered to 'offer more than the minimum standards' they must be enabled to do so through effective guidance, support, and financing.

The efficacy of a mixed model approach

Magic Breakfast has developed and enhanced a mixed model approach, which today effectively reaches children at greatest risk of hunger across all the schools it works with. We reached on average 209 children and young people per school day in 2022 compared to an average daily uptake of just 44 pupils per school in non-Magic Breakfast schools.^{xiv} In other words, Magic Breakfast's specific breakfast approach – which embeds mixed-models and expert advice and support - reached five times the number of pupils with breakfast than other models across the country.

Reaching fewer pupils per school offers diminishing returns on the cost of running the programme and reduces the impact and effectiveness of the policy. A mixed model approach has also been noted to reduce the cost burden of school breakfast provision. The [Education Endowment Foundation noted in their National School Breakfast Programme scale-up report](#) that delivering alternative forms of provision 'reduced costs and improved reach of the programme.' They noted, using 2021 figures, that the cost per pupil served for breakfast club only provision was £51.90 per year. For schools delivering a breakfast club and one of the models set out below, the cost was £12.90 per year. This suggests that at the level of pupils accessing provision it is 75% cheaper to deliver a mixed model approach.



Models that can improve impact and effectiveness

Magic Breakfast has a detailed guide to a variety of school breakfast models, which we can provide to the Committee if this would be of value. An overview of the most popular models follows.

Classroom provision is delivered within the main learning environment either immediately before the start of the school day or it can be embedded as a soft start. Food can be produced centrally, or miniature classroom-based kitchens are used by some Magic Breakfast schools. This model already meets staff to pupil ratios within existing staff time.

Takeaway provision (or grab and go) sees breakfast items made available to pupils as they arrive every morning, in a location that is easily accessible. This could be at the school gate or as they line up in the playground. This is adaptable to any school layout and can be tagged onto the end of breakfast club. This model requires minimal excess staffing and due to being delivered in existing open pupil areas, schools are already meeting staff to pupil ratios.

Nurture groups are particularly effective in enabling inclusion for pupils with SEND. Nurture groups are for targeted pupils, for booster learning sessions, or a calm and quiet start to the day. These models work well as small form breakfast provision to supplement wider reach models.

Late provision ensures that pupils who arrive after the start of the school day are also given stigma and barrier free access to breakfast. This often provides an opportunity to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils who are often among the most vulnerable.

Mixed models in practice

As shown below, different models of breakfast provision create different benefits and present varied challenges. While schools may identify a single model that is suitable to their context, it is also crucial to permit implementation of and sufficiently fund multiple models within a single school. At Magic Breakfast, 64% of our primary partner schools deliver multiple models to ensure the impact of their breakfast provision.

If a national policy is implemented with only one model, there is a risk of schools being unable to fully integrate the approach and deliver it universally. In turn, this would not be compatible with confronting poverty, which requires an approach that seeks to maximise pupil uptake by removing stigma and barriers. Numerous models exist to deliver school breakfasts, the table on the following page examines three of the most popular, including the breakfast club model.

Encouraging schools to adopt models which work for them, alongside offering advice and support will be vital to a place-based policy making approach. Adopting a place-based approach has been vital to the success of Magic Breakfast. We come alongside schools and develop models that can best embed in their context. This is partly why our 2022 [Hidden Hunger](#) report noted that Magic Breakfast schools reach – on average – around 375% more pupils than non-Magic Breakfast provision in England.

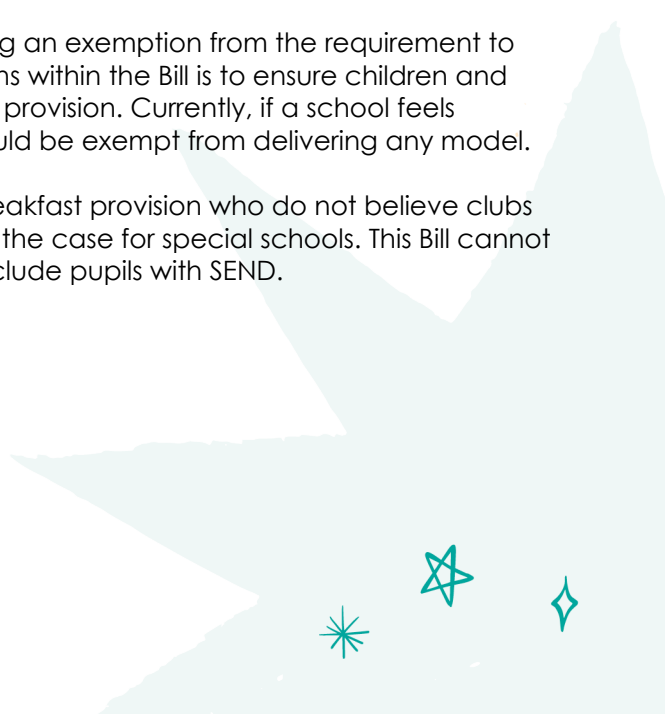


Model	Benefits	Challenges
Traditional breakfast club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers structured pre-school socialisation which supports building a sense of community and belonging Supports additional activities such as reading and physical activity Enables food choice and nutritional value Can offer targeting alongside universalism. Supports working parents in the morning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can require facilities for large student body Can require provision to stop before school starts Comparatively expensive Risks complacency if established and left.
Classroom breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can support schools with limited capacity outside of classrooms Can be delivered in a soft-start approach Generates highest pupil uptake of all models Supports extended reach for pupils including those unable to access early breakfast provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all schools will feel comfortable delivering in classroom environments Can limit food choice on offer This in turn can limit nutritional value of the offer.
Takeaway (or grab and go)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can support other models as an extended reach addition or be deployed on its own Increases punctuality Requires limited staffing to support Costs comparatively less than other two models Flexible to school facilities as can be delivered anywhere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can limit food choice due to standing nature This in turn can limit nutritional value of the offer.

Enabling schools to meet their duties under the Bill

Mixed models can also support schools at threat of requiring an exemption from the requirement to deliver school breakfast provision. The intent of the provisions within the Bill is to ensure children and young people accessing schools have access to breakfast provision. Currently, if a school feels incapable of delivering the breakfast club model, they would be exempt from delivering any model.

We know there are schools passionate about delivering breakfast provision who do not believe clubs are the right model for their environment. This is particularly the case for special schools. This Bill cannot be allowed to only cater for mainstream education nor exclude pupils with SEND.



An inclusive approach for SEND

The clear inclusion of pupils attending special schools in the Bill is welcome. The Bill must ensure that it is inclusive and effectively caters for these schools.

The Bill currently requires breakfast clubs to be provided to all 'qualifying primary pupils' and offers a suitable definition of these pupils. This ensures provision is available to 4.5 million pupils as per [2023/24 school census data](#).

Current concerns with the Bill in relation to SEND pupils in special schools

The Bill risks creating stigma and barriers for pupils with SEND who attend special schools. Many special schools are all-through schools, catering for all ages of pupils and focusing more on levels of need than age. The current position of the Bill would mean these schools would be expected to deliver a provision free to most pupils whilst barring some from accessing it.

This reality is unlikely to happen though. What would be more likely is that already stretched school budgets would be used to facilitate extending provision to secondary aged pupils. This further exacerbates the current SEND crisis. The Government should codify what would likely be normal practice and fund the provision to all pupils in special schools through to Year 14.

Implications of extending the Bill's provision to all pupil in special schools

The extension to secondary pupils in special schools would not require a significant amount of additional resource from the Government. Whilst there are around 4.5 million pupils of primary age in England there are only around 100,000 pupils of secondary age in special schools. This would mean increasing the scope of the policy – in terms of pupils reached – by 2.22%.

Whilst extending the scope of the Bill in this way would increase its reach by 2.22%, not all 100,000 children and young people would seek to likely access food within a breakfast provision. A number of pupils with significant and complex needs do not require the food provision accessed by most pupils.

Evidence to support an inclusive approach and extension of the Bill's provision

In Swiss Cottage School, for example, which Magic Breakfast supports as part of a partnership with the London Borough of Camden, breakfast is offered to 100% of pupils. However, only 50% of pupils are provided with food as part of the partnership. The remaining pupils access selective or medically prescribed diets provided by the National Health Service. This means any extension of the scope of the Bill would not necessarily require an equivalent extension to food costs.

Many special schools segment their classes not by age groups – as mainstream schools do - but by need category. Therefore, you may have a class where Year 6 pupils – who are currently covered by the Bill – and Year 7 pupils – who are not currently covered by the Bill – take their lessons together. The Bill maintains that only the former of these pupils should be entitled to a breakfast provision and classroom teachers would only be required to recommend breakfast provision to a portion of their class. Hunger does not end at the legal barrier between primary and secondary school.



Additionally, the mandatory nature of breakfast clubs as the main method of provision is clearly aimed at mainstream education. Magic Breakfast works with around 150 schools that would fall within the legal definition of special schools. Within this, only 16% operate a Breakfast Club only model. An additional 17% operate a Breakfast Club alongside another model of provision. The remaining 67% operate only models which are not a Breakfast Club. This speaks to the benefits and inclusivity of a mixed model approach.

The before school aspect of a Breakfast Club often does not fit with the needs of the school and its pupils. These schools have wider catchment areas and rely on public sector transport contracts which often involve pupils arriving promptly for the start of the school session. Therefore, schools prefer to operate models which fit within a longer soft start, which can be embedded into the school day. This takes a food first approach rather than prioritising childcare; this is in line with the needs of children, young people and their families.

Enabling an inclusive breakfast provision for all pupils with SEND

Children and young people with SEND face some of the greatest levels of disadvantage in our society. Since 2016 in England, the number of pupils with SEND support who have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) - an indicator of disadvantage used by the Government - has consistently risen and has always been greater than that of the general school-age population. Indeed, currently 38.3% of pupils with SEND are eligible for FSM, compared to 21.4% of all pupils in schools without SEND.^{xv}

Pupils with SEND achieve significantly lower educational outcomes than children without SEND. Indeed, in 2023 just one in five pupils with SEND met the expected standard in reading, writing and math.^{xvi} Any policy aimed at improving educational and learning outcomes must include these children and young people.

We have outlined in the previous sections the steps needed to ensure the Bill is inclusive of pupils in special schools. Inclusivity is necessary and can be enabled for all pupils with SEND (in special and mainstream schools) by implementing the recommendations made in this submission: to embed

"With our children being SEN students, **mornings at home can be tricky** due to illness and behaviours. Parents know that if they send their child to school without having breakfast, **they will be fed when they get to school.**" Hamza, Teacher, East Midlands

monitoring and measurement for scrutiny and to enable a mixed model approach.

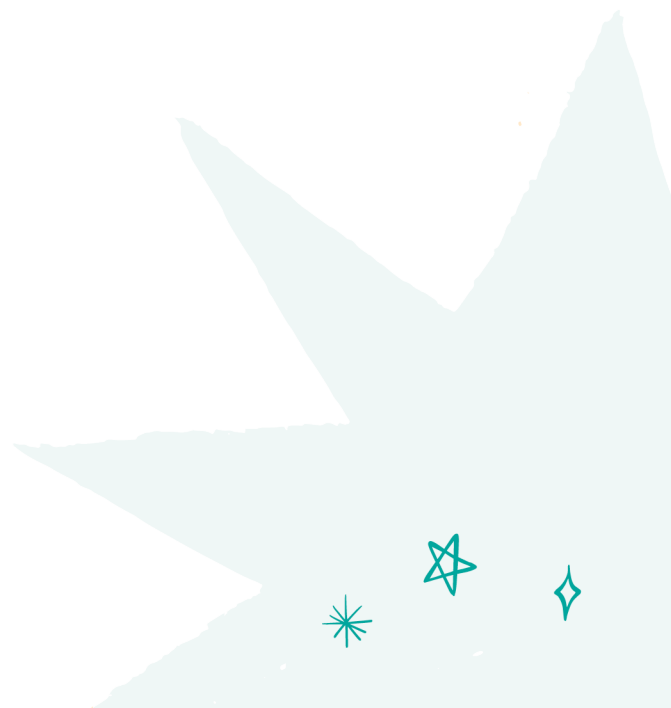
Supporting this argument is the use case: pupils attending special schools have been found to use school breakfast provision more than in other school types. In a Government evaluation of breakfast club provision (2017) where 20% of the schools were special schools, pupils in these schools were most likely to attend for all five days, and more likely to have kept up attendance long term.^{xvii} Overall, the study showed that special schools had the highest average proportions of pupils attending breakfast clubs compared to any other type of school, with over half of pupils on roll attending.



It is about more than the statistics. Families have shared with Magic Breakfast how their children are required to take medication at certain times and how this must correspond with meals. In such cases we have learned these families felt reassured and comforted by the fact their children could get something to eat at school before lessons began, and staff would encourage their child to eat. Other families have discussed the needs of their children with autism, wherein routine is regarded as crucial. Several parents shared that the breakfast offer is an integral part of their morning routines and how having that extra time at school prior to lessons can help break down anxieties and help children be ready for their school day, rather than coming into the classroom straight from home.

A breakfast policy that aims to tackle child poverty by reducing morning hunger and improve educational outcomes must, unquestionably, include pupils with SEND. This recommendation goes beyond the practical evidence – it is a moral imperative that the children who experience the highest levels of disadvantage in society are not excluded by a government policy that aims to alleviate poverty.

“Daily struggles regulating son to even get him dressed and ready. When he refused breakfast and was having a difficult day, his TA greeted him and calmly used a relational gesture about whether he would like to go with her to get a bagel and it really helped settle him. **Children with additional needs can struggle and putting in a relational gesture with breakfast at school can really help.**” Priya, Parent, South East



Expert support and advice

Breakfast provision is best embedded in schools when its design and delivery are supported with expert advice.

Expert advice and support can be realised through external staff working in a network of schools, they are not only able to tap into one school's experiences, but they can also leverage the network to solve problems. For instance, Magic Breakfast's School Engagement Partners frequently link schools showcasing their diverse breakfast provision models to new or struggling schools, providing inspiration and demonstrating operational feasibility. These connections and communication are critical to ensuring that all schools feel capable of embedding the most successful provisions within their school communities.

The necessity and value of expert support and advice has been well evidenced. An independent evaluation of the Conservative government's National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) during its 2018 to 2021 iteration, described the expert support and advice within the programme as the 'lynchpin' of the programme's success and ability to deliver at scale.

Indeed, the subsequent iteration of the NSBP, which did not incorporate expert support and advice into its approach, reached far fewer children with breakfast per day. Specifically, an average of 89 pupils per day took up the breakfast offer; significantly lower than the 152 pupils on average that were reached when expert advice and support was embedded in the programme (when it was co-delivered by Magic Breakfast).^{xviii}

The impact of providing expert support and advice

Magic Breakfast has learned, in partnership with schools of all types across England, how to deliver free school breakfasts that are accessible, and stigma- and barrier-free. One of the key components is providing expert support and advice to schools to help schools deliver this service. Schools are already stretched too thin, with limitations on their budgets, staff, and time. By offering expert support and advice, we can better ensure this policy is effective and achieves what it intends.

The [Education's Endowment Foundation's National School Breakfast Programme: Scale-up Evaluation Report](#) evaluated the scale-up of the programme when it was delivered by Magic Breakfast in partnership with Family Action. This included the changes made and costs of the National School Breakfast Programme and put forward lessons for future scaling-up efforts. The evaluation found that providing a 'high degree' of expert support and advice to schools was 'important to the successful reach of the programme.'

In the case of the National School Breakfast Programme scale-up, support and advice included support provided by trained National School Breakfast Programme staff members, financial support in the form of grants, and resource-based support in the form of free foods and promotional materials.



Magic Breakfast partner schools also find expert support and advice to make a significant difference, noting it to be of high value. Our Hidden Hunger report confirms it has a positive impact on pupil uptake of school breakfast. In this review, Magic Breakfast partner schools were found to have an average uptake of 209 pupils per schools, a significantly higher number than the national average: 44 in England, 22 in Scotland, 58 in Ireland, and 75 in Wales. Such findings reflect the important role that advice and support can have when optimising provision.

Expert advice and support can help remove barriers to attendance and reduce any associated stigmas. Support and advice to schools, delivered by skilled experts, could be the difference between this policy succeeding and failing.

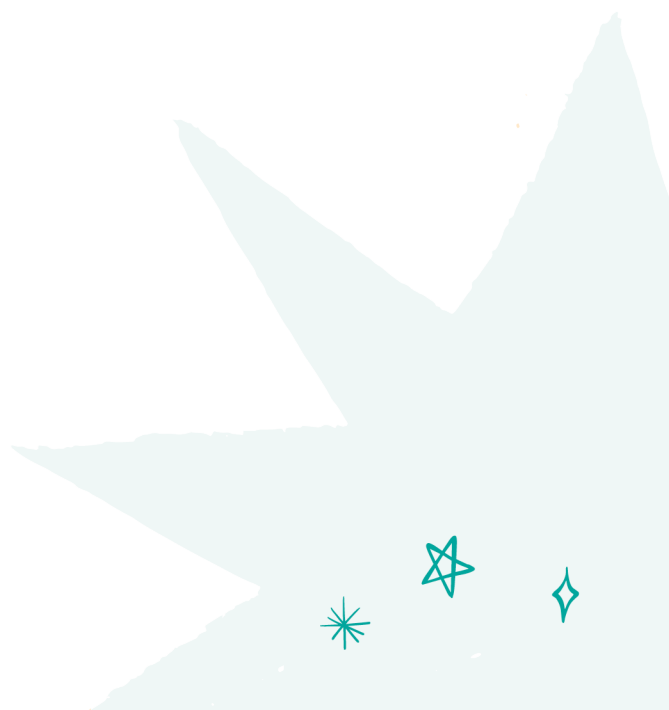
Provision of guidance to schools

The Bill currently provides for the Secretary of State to 'issue guidance' and for the 'appropriate authority' to have regard for it. Magic Breakfast does not believe these provisions are clear enough to ensure that children and young people are not at risk of a postcode lottery.

Lord Justice Sedley noted in *R v Islington LBC ex p Rixon* [1998] 1 CCLR 119 that parliament's view in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 was that 'local authorities must "follow the path charted by the Secretary of State's guidance, with liberty to deviate from it where the local authority judges on admissible grounds that there is good reason to do so, but without freedom to take a substantially different course"'. This was cited in the [Care Act 2014 explanatory notes](#) to show that guidance in that Bill had been drafted to have the above legal effect.

Such an assertion is not present in the explanatory notes to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. Therefore, it is not clear whether the Secretary of State believes the guidance they issue would have the effect articulated by Lord Justice Sedley.

Without a statutory footing for the guidance schools may deliver breakfast provision in a way not commensurate with the guidance issued after having had the appropriate amount of regard for it. It is children and young people who are at risk in such a situation as this would create a postcode lottery.



References

- ⁱ Pro Bono Economics (February 2021), *The economic cost-effectiveness of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision*, Available: <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fb07e95d-601a-4a35-8e57-f4be01d0644d>
- ⁱⁱ Teacher Tapp survey, September 2024, Available: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/88-of-teachers-support-the-governments-commitment-to-providing-breakfast-in-all-english-primary-schools/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Pro Bono Economics (February 2021), *The economic cost-effectiveness of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision*, Available: <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fb07e95d-601a-4a35-8e57-f4be01d0644d>
- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v Ibid.
- ^{vi} Page 41, Section 21, Amendment to the Education Act 1996, section 551B, subsection 1.
- ^{vii} Page 42, Section 21, Amendment to the Education Act 1996, section 551B, subsection 2, from line 4.
- ^{viii} Gulumurthy et al, 2024, available at <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/what-does-a-mission-driven-approach-to-government-mean-and-how-can-it-be-delivered/>.
- ^{ix} Section 16, subsection 1.
- ^x Section 16, subsections 1, 2, and 3.
- ^{xi} Chapter 4.
- ^{xii} Section 54, subsection 1.
- ^{xiii} Section 11, subsection 1.
- ^{xiv} Hidden Hunger, Magic Breakfast, November 2022, Available: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/research/hidden-hunger/>.
- ^{xv} Special educational needs in England, June 2024, Available: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>
- ^{xvi} Ibid.
- ^{xvii} UK Government (March 2017), *Evaluation of Breakfast Clubs in Schools with High Levels of Deprivation*, Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603946/Evaluation_of_Breakfast_Clubs_-_Final_Report.pdf
- ^{xviii} Hidden Hunger, Magic Breakfast, November 2022, Available: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/research/hidden-hunger/>