



BREAKFAST CLUBS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOLS

Eating breakfast at the start of every school day is known to improve not only children's nutritional intakes, but also performance both physically and mentally.^{1,2} One in seven UK schoolchildren miss breakfast before school,¹ rising to a quarter of secondary school pupils.³ Equivalent to more than 860,000 children arriving at school without breakfast,¹ the opportunity to eat breakfast at school can help to improve nutritional status and health, and the ability to learn

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A BRIEF HISTORY

Breakfast clubs began as a pilot scheme in the US back in 1966. Initially aimed at 'nutritionally at risk' children, this was adopted as a national scheme. In the UK, breakfast clubs gained pace during the 1990s, driven by a demand for nutritious food provision, and also for a safe, supervised place for parents to leave their children before the start of the school day. Today, more than eight out of 10 UK schools (85% in 2014) now provide breakfast clubs.⁴

START EVERY DAY RIGHT

Children who regularly eat breakfast, and particularly cereal with milk, either at home or at a club, are more likely to meet their nutritional requirements for the day and arrive at school ready to perform both physically and mentally.^{2,10} In addition, those who attend a breakfast club are known to behave better in class, attend school more frequently, demonstrate improved school performance and exhibit better quality friendships.^{1,5} For most schools, a breakfast club provides far more than just food.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF SKIPPING BREAKFAST

Hungry children can struggle to learn. If a child arrives at school hungry, they can lose one hour of learning time.⁶ If this happens once a week, this could be equivalent to losing 70% of a term* over the whole of their primary school life.⁶ For a child arriving at school hungry every day, the loss of effective learning time could be significantly more. Evidence suggests not only academic benefit from breakfast club attendance but also: improved attendance and punctuality; a better sense of community and belonging; and better quality friendships.^{1,5} Breakfast clubs have also been found to help prevent bullying.^{1,5}

MEETING NUTRITIONAL NEED

Eating a healthy, balanced breakfast is the best start to every day. The nutritional benefits of breakfast for school-aged children are well accepted, and numerous studies have documented that breakfast eaters achieve a healthier overall diet compared to breakfast skippers.^{1,2} In particular, eating a breakfast cereal will help to provide some of the essential vitamins and minerals known to be 'at risk' in UK children's diets (eg iron, vitamin D, B vitamins, plus calcium from the milk),^{7,8} and may offer a higher nutritional content compared to other breakfast choices (eg bread or pastries).⁹

1 Hoyland A et al (2012) *Breakfast consumption in UK schoolchildren and provision of school breakfast clubs*. *Nutrition Bulletin* 37: 232-240
2 Williams P (2014) *The Benefits of Breakfast Cereal Consumption: A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base*. *Advances in Nutrition* 5: 636S-673S
3 British Nutrition Foundation (2015) www.nutrition.org.uk/nutritioninthenews/pressreleases/a-quarter-of-uk-secondary-school-children-have-no-breakfast.html
4 *An Audit of School Breakfast Club Provision in the UK*. Kellogg's, 2014
5 Defeyter MA et al (2010) *Breakfast clubs: availability for British schoolchildren and the nutritional, social and academic benefits*. *Nutrition Bulletin* 35: 245-253
6 *A Lost Education: the reality of hunger in the classroom* (2013). Kellogg's Report,

<http://pressoffice.kelloggs.co.uk/index.php?s=20295&item=122412>
7 Bates B et al (2014) *National Diet and Nutrition Survey Results from Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 (combined) of the Rolling Programme (2008/2009 - 2011/2012)*. Public Health England
8 Gibson S & Gunn P (2011) *What's for breakfast? Nutritional implications of breakfast habits: insights from the NDNS dietary records*. *Nutrition Bulletin* 36: 78-86
9 Papoutso S et al (2014) *The combination of daily breakfast consumption and optimal breakfast choices in childhood is an important public health message*. *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition* 65: 273-279
10 Hoyland A et al (2009) *A systematic review of the effects of breakfast on the cognitive performance of children and adolescents*. *Nutrition Research Reviews* 22: 220-243

* If a child arrived at school hungry once a week over a school year, that adds up to 36 hours of learning time - rising to a shocking 8.4 weeks, or 70% of one school term for pupils aged between five and 11 over their entire primary school life.⁶