National School Breakfast Programme

Impact Report 2026

A foreword

Sir David Holmes CBE, CEO Family Action

I'm delighted to welcome you to this report which celebrates the impact of the second iteration of the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) from July 2021 until July 2026.

From the NSBP's very beginning in 2018, the programme caught the imagination of schools across England.

It was such a tremendous opportunity to provide a free and nutritious breakfast to hundreds of thousands of children in disadvantaged areas every school day and schools rose brilliantly to this challenge, committing their own time and resources willingly to make the programme work - even in the face of a global pandemic!

Family Action has been very proud to lead the NSBP. I am grateful to the Government for funding the programme, to our brilliant staff team for all of their hard work, to our supply chain and logistics partners for getting the food to schools so reliably and to every school and school team that participated in the programme for your commitment to the objectives and for making the NSBP a wonderful reality in each of your schools.

Together, we have shown that a nutritious breakfast makes a world of difference.

Sir David Holmes CBE, CEO Family Action

> **It was such a tremendous opportunity to provide a free and nutritious breakfast to hundreds of thousands of children in disadvantaged areas every school day.**

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Our NSBP breakfast provision has had an incredibly positive impact on our students and our school community as a whole.

For many of our pupils, breakfast is something they may not always have access to at home, and this provision ensures that **every child has the chance to start the day with a healthy, nutritious meal.** This consistency has had a visible effect on their energy levels, **ability to focus,** and overall **wellbeing**.

We have noticed that children who attend breakfast club are much **more settled and ready to learn** when lessons begin. **Teachers have commented on the difference it makes in terms of concentration and behaviour,** particularly during the first lessons of the day.

It also **removes a layer of stress for children** who may otherwise come to school hungry and distracted, allowing them instead to **begin the day in a positive frame of mind**.

Another important impact has been on attendance and punctuality.

The breakfast club has given children a real incentive to come into school early, and we have seen a **clear improvement in both punctuality and daily attendance** as a result.

Parents have also expressed their appreciation, as the club not only supports their children's health and education but also provides a **safe and welcoming start to the school day**.

Overall, the NSBP breakfast provision has become an invaluable part of our school life. It has improved outcomes for our pupils, fostered a sense of community, and ensured that no child begins their learning day disadvantaged by hunger.

Finance Manager, Gladesmore Community School

Programme overview

The Government-funded National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) was launched in March 2018 to ensure pupils in the most disadvantaged areas of England had access to a healthy breakfast at school, without barrier or stigma, and identified and encouraged those pupils who would most benefit to attend.

The first programme was delivered between March 2018 and July 2021 and further details can be found in the impact report **here.** A second programme was commissioned in June 2021 and operated from July 2021 until July 2026. This report details delivery of the second programme.

The programme was delivered by award-winning charity Family Action, with the belief that a healthy school breakfast, without barrier or stigma, can set up pupils to succeed and give them the very best chance to learn. A healthy breakfast at school helps provide pupils with the energy and nutrients they need to thrive – improving concentration, behaviour, social skills, attendance, punctuality, wellbeing and educational attainment.

The second programme supported over 3,200 schools in primary, secondary, SEND and Alternative Provisions (APs), to set up or develop their breakfast provisions.

We are proud to say that over 381,500 pupils in schools were fed and supported by the programme every school day at its peak (according to data supplied by our schools)[1]

Eligibility

Schools were eligible for the programme if **at least 40% of pupils fell within IDACI bands A-F** (the most disadvantaged categories in the Government's 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index').

Participating schools received:

- **Subsidised healthy breakfast food delivered directly to the school** for provision weekly or fortnightly. (Food was provided free of charge from July 2021 to July 2022 and subsequently subsidised by 75% for the remainder of the programme.)
- Support from a **dedicated expert NSBP team** with a phone and email **helpdesk available Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm** across the year, as well as individual enrolment meetings for every school and **ongoing support meetings.**
- An easy to use **online digital portal for ordering food and accessing resources and support**.
- **Best practice sharing events** and a wide range of resources to support and enhance provisions.

Our support

We believe schools need to be supported, influenced, and challenged to set up a breakfast provision that meets pupils' needs.

Therefore, at the outset, each school received an enrolment meeting with one of our School Breakfast Coordinators (SBC), designed to understand each school's specific circumstances and challenges, guide them through the process and recommend the most appropriate breakfast models, to ensure the school reached all pupils at risk of being hungry.

The number of subsequent support calls each school received depended on individual circumstances. The team proactively reached out to schools with low pupil uptake to support the effectiveness of their provisions.

[1] Estimate drawn from school data returns and operational school figures in July 24

School breakfast provision model

No two schools are the same, so each school had personalised support from the NSBP to build a breakfast provision to fit the needs of that school, navigating restrictions due to space, time, staff capacity, facilities or the needs of the pupils themselves. Many schools used a combination of models to ensure breakfast was accessible to all target children:

Traditional Breakfast Club: A classic sit-down model in the hall or dining room where pupils benefit from a nurturing family-style breakfast This model supports development of fine motor skills through using cutlery, socialising with others from a range of ages, and promoting independence through tasks such as pouring their own milk or spreading their own bagels. After breakfast, pupils can often read, play or access early morning physical activity.

Classroom breakfast: Offering breakfast in the classroom, often as part of what is known as a 'soft start', where classrooms open early. This is a simple solution for schools wishing to make food available to very large numbers of pupils without incurring significant staffing costs.

Playground breakfast: A tray of warm breakfast foods greeting pupils as they arrive in the playground every morning is ideal for schools with high numbers of pupils at risk of being hungry whilst at school. Well suited for schools with limited staff capacity and dining space restrictions, it also creates opportunities to enhance parent engagement.

'Grab and Go': Whether served on the door at multiple entry points or in a restricted indoor space, this provides a flexible option for serving large numbers in a short time and is ideal for reaching pupils who arrive just before the bell and too late for a traditional breakfast club. It is also popular with secondary age pupils.

Provision for 'Lates': All schools were encouraged to be mindful that latecomers may be arriving hungry, through no fault of their own. Food should be available and offered to all these pupils as a matter of course, to ensure it is inclusive and reduces any potential stigma.

These core models are flexible and can be combined - schools on the programme were encouraged to be creative and to make breakfast both accessible and fun. It is important to note that the majority of schools with a pre-existing childcare breakfast club introduced a new breakfast model to run alongside their pre-existing offer (usually paid childcare). Very few schools on the programme did not create a new provision of some kind.

Food and deliveries

The NSBP breakfast offering consisted of a selection of low sugar cereals and porridge, as well as ambient and frozen bagels with milk and spreads supplied by the school. The benefit of this food offer was that it enabled schools to offer breakfast for large numbers of children within a short timescale. All breakfast products met School Food Standards (SFS) and regulations in England. The programme offered guidance for schools on SFS relating to breakfast, as well as on portion sizes for different age children. They were also given regularly updated information on ingredients and allergens in the products provided.

Schools were encouraged to reach all pupils at risk of being hungry at the start of the school day and were able to order as much food as was required to ensure all needs could be met. Deliveries could be weekly or fortnightly, depending on the needs of the school, their storage capacity and what was most cost effective. Schools were able to adjust orders via the online portal to suit demand.

School support

Schools were guided and supported through their time on the programme, from enrolment meetings to targeted support meetings. School Breakfast Coordinators conducted structured meetings with schools to provide advice, support and resources, but also to challenge where necessary and ensure accountability by monitoring the reality of the breakfast delivered.

Advice was offered in a whole range of areas, including:

- **Identifying pupils at risk of being hungry at school**
- **Extending breakfast provision and improving targeting**
- **Bringing in 'hard to reach' pupils**
- **Adding value to breakfast time**
- **Reducing costs and getting the most from the provision**
- **Meeting School Food Standards**
- **Promoting breakfast and engaging staff, pupils and parents**
- **Monitoring the impact and benefits breakfast provision delivers**

This personalised approach enabled the experienced staff on the programme to offer ideas and support tailored to each school's situation, drawing on best practice in other schools. It is this tailored approach that enabled us to share innovation and learning, with the goal of ensuring more pupils were fed in each school. Schools were given a comprehensive range of resources detailing how they could maximise and optimise their breakfast provision and how they could publicise it to pupils and parents. This included posters, social media templates and promotional ideas.

The team provided ongoing support, checking in with schools and targeting those with low uptake, to offer support, identify challenges and take prompt action to resolve issues where possible. Many schools experienced challenges, especially when their circumstances changed, whether that was due to premises, staffing issues, changes in key school roles (e.g. new headteacher), or budget concerns.

As school staff are very 'time poor' our innovative digital system allowed schools to easily sign up and get support when they needed it and to suit their capacity.

They were able to access online meeting booking systems, were guided through the process by a series of automated reminders, provided with a range of digital resources, and had access to the email and phone helpdesk 5 days a week across the year.

During their period of support, participating schools were regularly surveyed to understand how satisfied they were with the programme and to collect impact data. Overall, the satisfaction surveys confirmed that schools were very positive about the support they received.

The impact data confirms the very high numbers of pupils reached and the benefits to schools of introducing the programme.

The team provided ongoing support, checking in with schools and targeting those with low uptake, to offer support, identify challenges and take prompt action to resolve issues where possible.

The team are absolutely brilliant, extremely helpful and nothing is too much trouble.

Sir John Hunt Community Sports College

Farnborough Spencer Academy

Breakfast for all

Farnborough Spencer Academy is a secondary school in Nottingham with 1,000 pupils on roll. The school has grown rapidly over the past five years and now operates at full capacity with a waiting list for Year 7. A core priority for the school has been fostering a **warm, welcoming environment** and a **supportive culture** where pupils feel motivated to attend.

This is realised through a free breakfast for all pupils, embedded within a structured morning routine and supported by a **strong whole-school culture.**

Farnborough Spencer Academy redesigned its breakfast offer to increase engagement and **remove barriers to learning**. Previously, a small breakfast club operated in the sports hall with limited take-up. The school decided to relocate the provision to the main hall and opened it to all students. Since this shift, the school has seen a remarkable transformation.

On any given day, **over 200 students now enjoy their breakfast at school,** contributing to a **vibrant, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.**

The provision is supported by a **strong team effort.** Staff arrive early to prepare breakfast; two Learning Support Assistants start at 7.45am to slice and toast all the bagels and then they are joined by another 4 staff who arrive at 8am to butter and add toppings to the bagels for pupils.

Credit: Farnboroughspencer.org.uk

> **Our breakfast provision creates such a great start to the day. Our students have responded so positively to the routine of providing breakfast and a friendly space to gather before their school day begins.**
>
> **Breakfast club has been a vital part of setting the tone for success every day.**
>
> Jemma Malloney, Assistant Principal

As a result of NSBP provision:

- **Attendance increased by 3%, rising from 86.9% to 91.4% over two years**
- **Punctuality improved, with fewer late marks recorded**
- **Breakfast supports and reinforces routine, recognition and relationships**

The breakfast offer sits within the school's wider ethos built around the **"Three Rs" – Routine, Recognition and Relationships.** Gates open at 8:10am and students enter through a single gate, where they are greeted by their Head of Year. Missing equipment and uniform issues are resolved immediately, free of charge, before pupils are invited to enjoy breakfast in the school hall.

Around 20 staff are present each morning to support pupils as they arrive, **reinforcing positive relationships and a sense of belonging.**

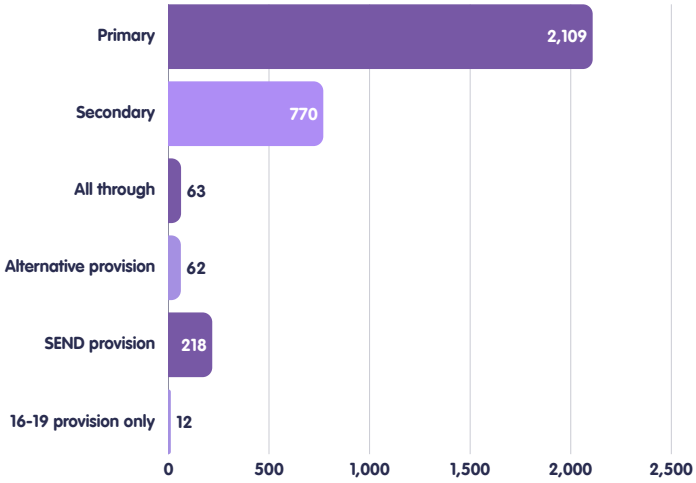
Targeted support ensures pupils **who need it most are actively encouraged to attend breakfast through internal monitoring systems**. This inclusive approach has had a **significant impact on attendance and punctuality.** Attendance rose from 86.9% to 91.4% in two years, alongside reductions in lateness.

Good attendance is celebrated through whole school recognition, rewards and consistent monitoring. Overall, the breakfast provision has strengthened community, improved engagement and ensured pupils **start the day ready to learn.**

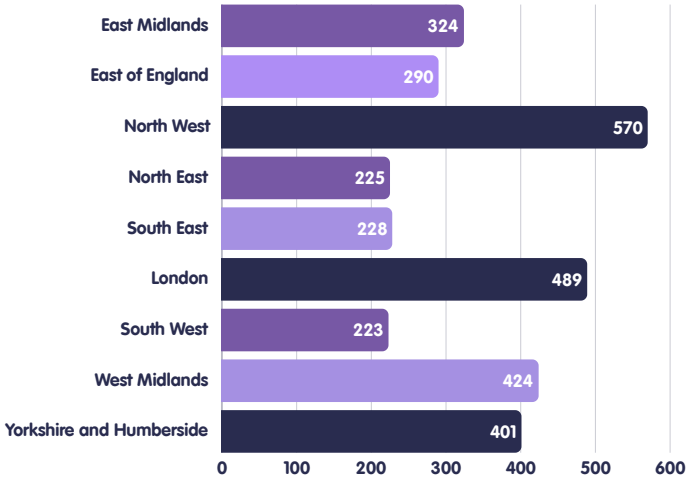
> **The NSBP has been instrumental in creating a warm, welcoming start to the day for all students to achieve.**
>
> **Farnborough Families appreciate how important the start of a day can have on student achievement therefore removing barriers to increase punctuality and attendance allows all students to feel included and cared for at school.**
>
> Stevie Barker, Principal

NSBP reach

Number of schools by school type[2]



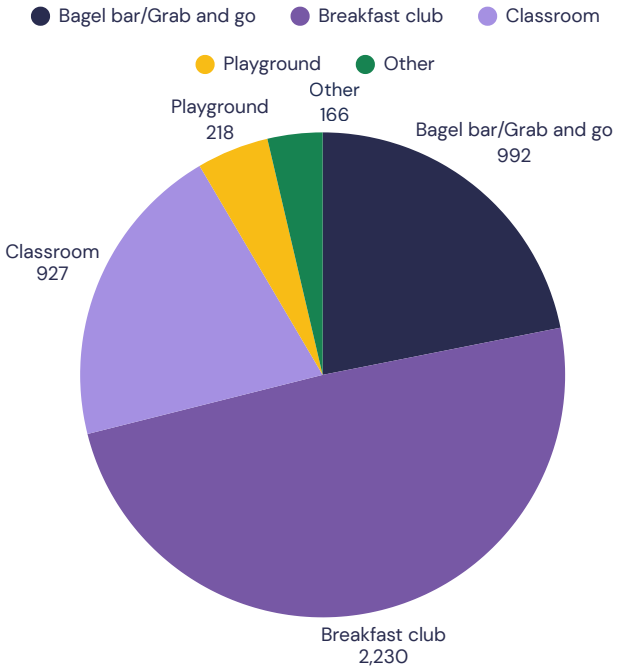
Number of schools by region



3

Popularity of breakfast delivery models

These figures relate to the number of schools offering each model. Some schools operated more than one model.



> **The Bagel Bar has completely transformed our mornings.**
>
> **Pupils arrive happier, calmer and ready to learn, and families feel supported from the moment they arrive at school.**
>
> Headteacher

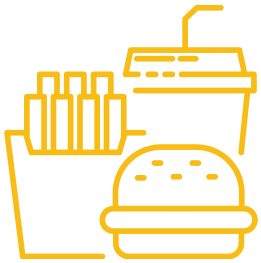
[2] Schools who signed up and ordered during the programme, from July 2021 – January 2026
[3] Figures taken from most recent data week returns from 3010 schools.

NSBP impact

381,500 pupils fed
every school day, over 1.9 million breakfasts per week [4]

Over 100 million bagels
provided to schools [5]

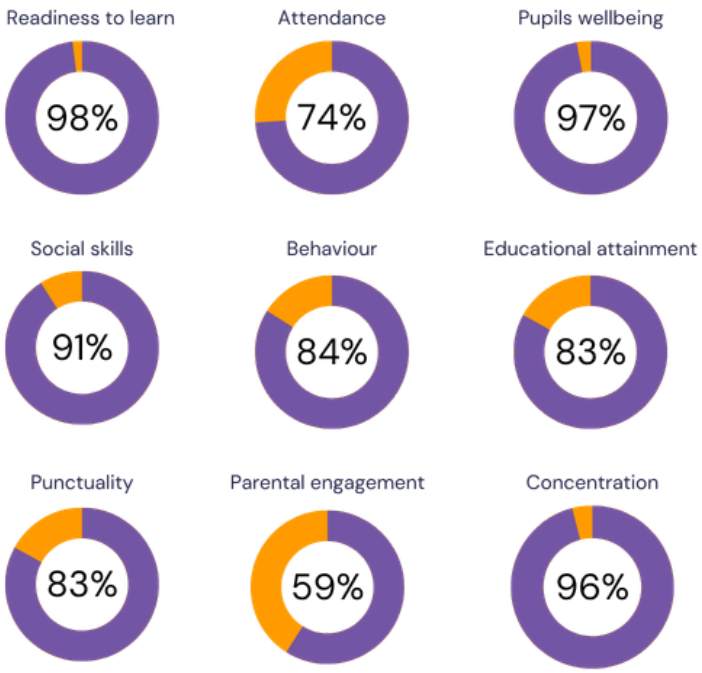
Over 1 million boxes of cereal
provided to schools [5]



94% of Headteachers
say they have seen a **reduction in inappropriate food** coming into school since starting the NSBP [6]

Headteacher outcome areas

Headteachers were asked whether, in their opinion, the introduction of the breakfast provision resulted in any improvement in the following areas: [6]



> **Our NSBP breakfast provision has had a noticeable positive impact on student wellbeing and readiness to learn. Staff have observed improved punctuality, increased focus in morning lessons, and a greater sense of routine for many students. It's also created a calm and welcoming start to the day, which sets a positive tone across the school.**
>
> Graham Robinson, Assistant Headteacher, Limehurst Academy

[4] Calculated from data from 'data weeks' where schools were asked to complete a set of agreed data. Peak data from July 2024.
[5] Orders recorded on our online ordering system; Figure include bagels and cereal ordered between Sept 2021 and June 2026
[6] Percentages drawn from 1926 responses to this question in our Head Teacher Survey.

NSBP social value

The NSBP demonstrated that a national support programme can deliver substantial social, economic, and community value alongside its core objectives, with measurable benefits for schools, families, staff, and local economies.

Over £4 million in social value

The programme generated over £4 million[7] in social value, a significant return beyond its core service delivery.

Economic and community benefit

- Spend in the local supply chain, boosting local economies and supporting businesses.
- Through local recruitment, increasing employment and income within communities

Workforce and inclusion

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) initiatives delivered to all staff: Improved workplace culture, engagement, and productivity.
- Staff wellbeing investment enhancing employee satisfaction and programme delivery outcomes.

The programme generated over £4 million[7] in social value, a significant return beyond its core service delivery.

> **The team lives and breathes its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and has created the most positive working environment I have ever worked in.**
>
> Team member

[7] Social Value data drawn from and valuated by TOMS portal at peak accumulation July 2025

Bramcote College

A secondary classroom model

When Bramcote introduced their breakfast provision, they were a small 11–18 school with around 400 pupils, approximately 32% of whom were eligible for Pupil Premium. While overall school attendance was good, they had a core group of persistent absentees and variable punctuality, particularly in older year groups.

As the school has grown to 826 pupils, with around 27% Pupil Premium, they wanted a scalable, inclusive intervention that directly supported attendance, punctuality and readiness to learn.

Their solution was simple: **bringing breakfast directly to pupils as part of a culture of love, care and belonging.**

> The impact of the NSBP has been exceptional; it has become embedded in our school culture and an essential part of the school day for so many of our children.
>
> Being able to provide breakfast has not only improved attendance and punctuality but has provided a focus for a strong start to the day for so many of our vulnerable children.
>
> Jo Cooper, Deputy Headteacher, Bramcote College

What did they do differently with the NSBP?

- Breakfast was taken to pupils in the classroom, rather than expecting them to attend a breakfast club.
- Bagels were prepared by the catering team and delivered in insulated bags to form rooms and key support areas.
- Pupil rotas supported delivery, building responsibility and reducing staffing demands.
- Provision extended to Pupil Support, Learning Support, ARNA, ERP and Sixth Form, ensuring no pupils were missed.
- Strong collaboration between school staff, pupils, catering staff and the PTA made the model sustainable.

> **One of our students once said, 'bagels mean love'!**
>
> Jo Cooper, Deputy Headteacher, Bramcote College

Prior to the NSBP, the school had tried several other approaches, such as a canteen breakfast club, playground trolleys and entrance stations, however it was found they missed some pupils and they required significant staffing.

They decided that if breakfast was truly important, they needed to take it directly to pupils and so classroom bagels became a part of their daily form time routine.

They reached an agreement with their caterers to provide additional hours at the start of the day to prepare the bagels. Bagels are then decanted into takeaway delivery style insulated bags which are collected by pairs of pupils on a rota basis at the start of form time.

> **Bagels are not just food to get children through until lunch time; they are a way of starting the day well, a social moment between students and staff and a symbol of the care we have for our children.**
>
> Jo Cooper, Deputy Headteacher, Bramcote College

As a result of NSBP provision:

- Attendance is now consistently among the top 5 schools in Nottinghamshire.
- Punctuality has significantly improved, with very few pupils arriving late.
- Pupils experience a calm, predictable start to the day.
- Readiness to learn has improved, particularly during the two 75-minute lessons before lunch.
- For pupils with anxiety-related non-attendance and those in specialist provision, a calm breakfast routine has helped regulate emotions and set a positive tone for the day.

Pupil and parent voice

Mainstream settings

Parent, carer and pupil voice surveys were distributed to a random sample of 800 mainstream schools in November 2023.

In addition, 184 SEND settings were invited to contribute. These settings were offered a range of approaches to capture pupil and parent voice, with the survey forming just one option.

Overall, the survey findings provide valuable insight into the impact of breakfast provision on pupils and families across both mainstream and SEND settings, offering important learning to inform current delivery and shape future programme development.

Mainstream school's key findings from parent and pupil feedback:

- The majority (71%) of primary and secondary pupils who eat breakfast at school every day said it made a difference to them.
- The most popular reasons that primary pupils accessed a school breakfast were enjoying breakfast at school, having more energy, feeling in a better mood, stopping hunger before lunch and seeing breakfast as a good start to their school day.
- The most popular reasons that secondary pupils accessed a school breakfast were not having time to access breakfast at home, enjoying breakfast at school, having more energy and stopping hunger before lunch and seeing breakfast as a good start to their school day.
- The most popular benefits of school breakfast cited by parents/carers for their children were, enjoyment of breakfast, a good way for them to start the day, a calm start, making new friends and trying new foods.
- The most popular benefits of school breakfast for parents/carers themselves were, not having to worry about their child not having breakfast before school, helping their child be on time, reducing pressure on the family budget and allowing parents to get to work or study on time.

71% of primary and secondary pupils

who eat breakfast at school every day

said it made a difference to them.

Breakfast helps me feel better before exams. Gives me time to relax...

Secondary Pupil

Without this provision we would struggle to get everyone to school on time.

Parent, Primary School

SEND settings

Overall, the survey findings provide valuable insight into the impact of breakfast provision on pupils and families across both mainstream and SEND settings, offering important learning to inform current delivery and shape future programme development.

SEND school's key findings from parent and pupil feedback:

- The most popular reasons that pupils accessed a school breakfast were enjoying breakfast at school as it's an opportunity to chat with friends, take part in activities and for a calm start to the day.
- The majority (77%) of pupils feel happy when they have breakfast. Parents and carers highlighted the importance of recognising their children's more complex needs surrounding food, such as restricted diets, sensory issues, discomfort when eating around others and specific conditions sometimes affecting relationships with food (including ARFID and Autism).
- In a SEND setting, breakfast plays a crucial role in supporting pupils by offering them a chance to explore new foods and develop social skills through shared mealtimes with peers. It also provides the opportunity for them to practice and learn essential life skills.
- Parents and carers noted that their school's breakfast provision provided a vital opportunity for their children who often struggle to eat breakfast at home in the morning due to behaviour, not being hungry or long bus journeys to school.

I think this is such a brilliant facility. When the children weren't hungry or haven't eaten for an array of reasons that morning, this is just peace of mind to parents and makes a huge difference to a child's day.

Plus, it incorporates healthy eating habits and social eating.

Parent, SEND

...breakfast provision provided a vital opportunity for their children who often struggle to eat breakfast at home in the morning due to behaviour, not being hungry or long bus journeys to school.

Pupil and parent voice: Key learnings

Awareness of breakfast
Promotion and awareness of school breakfast being available is vital for both primary and secondary mainstream and SEND schools.

Preparation and choice of food

- A minority of parents/carers and pupils raised issues relating to the range of choice of food available.
- From SEND parents, requests were made to cater for different dietary requirements and catering for children who have food aversions, such as texture.

Timings of Breakfast

- Some parents reported that they cannot get their children to school on time for breakfast.
- SEND school parents and carers highlighted the long journeys, sometimes over an hour that their children had to undertake to reach school. While most parents were satisfied with the current timings, some suggested improvements to better accommodate late transportation.
- A few comments specifically requested earlier breakfast times and earlier bus pick-ups to ensure that children using school transport could attend breakfast sessions.

Breakfast Environment

- Feedback suggested that the environment in which schools offer their breakfast is really important.
- Secondary pupils highlighted some concerns of feeling "shy" or "uncomfortable" in crowded or social spaces and concerns around "eating in front of people" suggesting that the breakfast space is overwhelming for some pupils.
- Parents/carers also raised their child's anxiety as reasons why they did not eat breakfast at school.
- Feedback from SEND school parents/carers suggested that the environment in which schools offer their breakfast is really important. Whilst the majority seemed happy with the environment, there were some recommendations for improvement, including making the breakfast space less overwhelming for some and some parents/carers called for more activities alongside breakfast such as sensory circuits, yoga and drama therapy.

If I don't have time to have my breakfast at home then I know I can have it at school and I won't be stuck with a sore tummy all day and if I eat in the morning I will be able to concentrate.

Primary school pupil

Green Meadows Academy

Inclusive provision

Green Meadows Academy supports many pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and disabilities.

Many pupils are autistic and experience communication difficulties which can lead to anxiety and challenges with engagement.

The school has been providing a breakfast offer for six years and see it as a key part of supporting pupils' wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Many pupils travel long distances to school each morning. As a result, some arrive having not eaten, affecting their energy levels and ability to engage in learning.

The school wanted to ensure all pupils start the day well nourished, calm and ready to learn.

The school were met with several challenges for their breakfast provision:

- **Pupils arrive at different times due to local authority transport arrangements, sometimes extending breakfast provision later into the morning.**
- **Supporting pupils with restricted diets, sensory sensitivities, PICA, food pickiness, and avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID).**

At Green Meadows Academy, our breakfast provision is far more than just a meal.

It's a foundational part of our school day that ensures our pupils are not only nourished but also emotionally and socially ready to learn.

Ryan Gladwin - Vice Principal

As a result of NSBP provision:

- Pupils arrive calmer and more regulated, supporting a positive transition into the school day.
- Improved readiness to learn, particularly for pupils who previously arrived hungry or unsettled.
- Greater independence and confidence through supported breakfast preparation and choice.
- Improved access to nutrition for pupils with restricted diets, PICA, sensory sensitivities or ARFID.
- Increased emotional regulation and reduced anxiety through predictable routines and a calming breakfast environment.
- Strengthened staff and pupil relationships through calm, informal interactions at the start of the day.
- Pupils struggling with transition into school felt more supported.

Pupils are offered a variety of breakfast foods including bagels, cereal, fruit and toast, alongside drinks such as milk, water and juice. Sixth Form students also have access to hot drinks.

Breakfast is served in classrooms, most of which have their own kitchen areas. Set ups vary to reflect the needs of each class and cohort. Staff typically slice bagels, with pupils supported to prepare their own breakfast where appropriate.

Some pupils enjoy using toasters and adding spreads or toppings independently, while others prefer staff support.

In one classroom, a large tray of cereals replaces a traditional sand tray, safely supporting pupils with PICA.

Sixth Form students can enjoy their breakfast in a dedicated lounge area, creating a relaxed and sociable environment.

The breakfast environment is highly inclusive and flexible. Pupils can choose to eat in quieter side rooms, wear headphones, or watch calming YouTube videos during breakfast.

We've seen a noticeable improvement in concentration, a reduction in anxiety, and a more positive atmosphere in our classrooms.

This simple, yet powerful, routine helps us fulfil our mission of creating an inclusive, independent and supportive environment where every child can thrive and reach their full potential.

Ryan Gladwin – Vice Principal

Breakfast Champions

Breakfast is far more than just the food.

It brings a whole community together, with pupils, staff and parents often helping to run the provision, creating a strong sense of belonging and shared purpose.

The impact of these dedicated individuals is significant as they not only ensure every pupil starts the day fed and ready to learn, but also help to foster a warm, inclusive environment.

Pupils who take part in supporting the breakfast provision develop valuable life skills, build relationships and grow in confidence as they see the positive difference they are making to others.

To recognise and celebrate the incredible contribution these individuals make, schools were invited to nominate their Breakfast Champions, those unsung heroes of their provision who consistently went above and beyond.

Breakfast champion story

Ted is one of Team Carr Mill's Bistro Leaders. Ted helps set up, serve, and clear away the school breakfast club, as well as looking after the younger pupils.

Ted talked about being shy and uncertain when he first started as a Bistro Leader. For example, clearing up at the end of breakfast was challenging for him when "I didn't even know if I could go in the staffroom".

Since then, however, he has grown in confidence and now knows exactly what to do each day - happily taking food orders from all children and bringing them each their breakfast.

He said: "I just put my apron on, and I ask the children what they'd like."

During his last year at Carr Mill, Ted trained up new Bistro Leaders and he and his fellow Bistro Leaders also took on a younger apprentice.

Ted was presented with his Breakfast Champion certificate in a Friday assembly where he said, with a big smile, that "it was a bit scary to go up in front of everybody, but everyone cheered!" [8]

> **I just put my apron on, and I ask the children what they'd like.**
>
> Ted, Primary pupil

...he has grown in confidence and now knows exactly what to do each day - happily taking food orders from all children and bringing them each their breakfast.

[8] Extract from Breakfast champion case study interview, May 2024

Carr Mill Primary

Boosting attendance with breakfast

A primary school in St Helen's in Merseyside with 276 pupils, Carr Mill faced significant challenges with historically poor attendance and punctuality across generations, a whole-school attendance well below local and national averages, a high proportion of persistently absent pupils and negative impacts on outcomes across all stages.

Carr Mill recognised that a cultural shift was needed to secure sustained improvement.

Attendance was made the school's number one development priority. The attendance policy was rewritten with the message that attendance is everyone's responsibility, and improving attendance became a staff appraisal target.

A Family Support Worker was employed to provide Early Help by identifying barriers to attendance and offering targeted support, including a school based positive parenting programme focused on routines and behaviour.

The school strengthened community belonging through the establishment of #teamcarrmill and introduced a comprehensive cost of living offer, including free daily breakfast, snacks, uniform, after school clubs and heavily subsidised trips.

Joining the NSBP in 2022, the school introduced a Breakfast Bistro and Bagel Bar at the start of the school day. **The daily breakfast has played a key part in Carr Mill's initiative.**

As a result of NSBP provision alongside other initiatives:

- Attendance has increased from around 92% (below local and national levels) to 94.9%.
- Persistent absence has dropped from 30.3% to 13.4%
- Punctuality has increased and the number of pupils arriving late has decreased.
- Fewer referrals to Tier 3 Mental Health Services (75% decrease)
- Pupils attending a daily breakfast rose from 5% in 2022 to 55% in 2025
- A higher number of pupils receiving early preventative mental health intervention
- Fewer significant behavioural incidents
- TES award winner – student mental health initiative of the year
- Gold school mental health award

Breakfast provision at Carr Mill continues to be a fundamental aspect of our wider supportive offer for pupils and families. It has been pivotal in helping us to maintain improvements in attendance, reductions in persistent absence and provide early intervention for mental health and wellbeing.

Katie Alexander, Deputy Head & Breakfast Lead

Carr Mill Primary continued...

A daily breakfast
The Breakfast Bistro offers a warm and welcoming start to the pupil's day and provides a wide variety of healthy food, such as low-fat cereal options, fresh fruit, yoghurt, and bagels - all served with a smile by their **Year 5 & 6 Bistro Leaders.**

Some children are invited to their free 'Breakfast Bistro' based on their individual needs, which can include poor or declining attendance/punctuality. Older pupils are invited to be 'Bistro Leaders,' serving breakfast to their younger peers.

This is a popular initiative that promotes breakfast attendance for a group of older pupils who would sometimes be reluctant to come to school.

In addition to the Bistro offer, children have the option of a grab and go breakfast when they arrive at school each morning from stations positioned around school. This is well received and accounts for 51% of their daily breakfast uptake.

Good attendance is consistently recognised and celebrated through praise, incentives and rewards.

Car Mill joined the NSBP in 2022 - pupils receiving a daily breakfast rose from 5% to 55% in 2025

> **Our school commitment to provide each child with access to breakfast on a daily basis has been transformational upon school attendance...**
>
> Andrew Maley, Headteacher

...children have the option of a grab and go breakfast...from stations positioned around school.

This accounts for 51% of their daily breakfast uptake.

School support

Helpdesk

An email and phone line helpdesk was available to schools from 8.30am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year throughout the programme.

The helpdesk supported over 3,900 schools and handled more than 25,600 phone and email enquiries throughout the programme.[9]

Support included enrolling schools onto the programme, as well as providing bespoke breakfast provision, food logistics, portal ordering and finance/invoice support.

One to one support

All schools in the programme received a 1:1 enrolment meeting with one of the experienced School Breakfast Coordinators (SBCs) in the team.

As well as this, schools were able to request 1:1 support with their breakfast provision through a meeting with an SBC, who also proactively reached out to schools to offer this support.

Across the programme, 1141 support meetings took place.

Low uptake support

Schools with low pupil uptake at breakfast (under 20% of pupils on roll taking up breakfast) were regularly offered a 1:1 support meeting to discuss strategies to improve uptake.

388 schools attended low uptake specific support meetings across the programme.

The most common barriers to increasing uptake reported by schools included pupil and parent awareness of breakfast, cost, and pupil attitude to breakfast.

Approximately 6 in 10 of these schools (59%) increased breakfast uptake following the meeting. The average increase seen from these schools was 51 pupils per day.[10]

3,900 schools

25,600 cases

1,141 support meetings

> **Every time I have called for support, the person has been super helpful, professional and friendly.**
>
> Jeannie Credie, Assistant Headteacher, Witton Park Academy

[9] Data gathered from Management Information System from Sept 2021 to June 2026
[10] Data analysed from 361 schools who returned data week returns pre and post support call. Most recent data return sets used from each school for pre and post support meeting.

Peer mentoring

Peer Mentoring was introduced in Autumn Term 2024. One of the best sources of support for schools is from other schools who are familiar with the educational context and have similar demographics. Schools can also be more open to receiving support from other schools as they understand the barriers.

NSBP schools with high uptake provided ad hoc support and guidance for other schools that were struggling with aspects of breakfast. This included uptake, logistics of breakfast, staffing and any other issues schools may face.

Schools were identified that had comprehensive breakfast provisions with high uptake and paired with schools that were struggling to reach pupils with their breakfast.

During the first year schools positively engaged with Peer Mentoring with over 80% of schools actively participating in the scheme. Our NSBP Lead Schools shared best practice around funding, staffing, breakfast food ideas, parental engagement and so much more. Many mentee schools took this support onboard and implemented suggestions from their mentor school.

53 schools engaged in the Peer Mentoring scheme.

It was interesting to speak to another school regarding what they do in Breakfast Club, then discussing how some of their ideas could be implemented at the academy.

Mentee school

Through the NSBP, children benefited from nutritious options aligned with School Food Standards, and schools received operational support, good practice sharing, and supported parental thinking around healthy eating.

Assistant Principal, Porters Grange Primary School and Nursery

Portal resources

A comprehensive library of resources was developed for schools to use.

These articles were made available on the portal for schools to view and download.

The portal resources proved extremely popular, with over 70 resources receiving more than 55,000 views.

The resources covered a range of topics, including food ordering and support, how to use the portal and helpdesk, the impact of breakfast, supporting breakfast provision, and promoting breakfast provision. A variety of school case studies were also produced as part of this work, covering all school settings, sharing tips and best practice.

Virtual events

Schools on the programme were invited to participate in a series of best practice virtual events throughout the duration of the programme.

These events formed a key element of the support offered, providing opportunities for programme staff and school partners to showcase best practice and share resources. They played an important role in the programme, offering valuable insight into how other schools have successfully addressed common challenges.

37 events were held in the period January 2023 to April 2026.

Key themes covered in events were:

- Pupil and parent engagement in breakfast, engaging school staff, funding, improving uptake, nutrition and school food standards, best practice sharing for SEND schools,
- "Meet schools" events for both primary and secondary, and,
- transition events about future support offers.

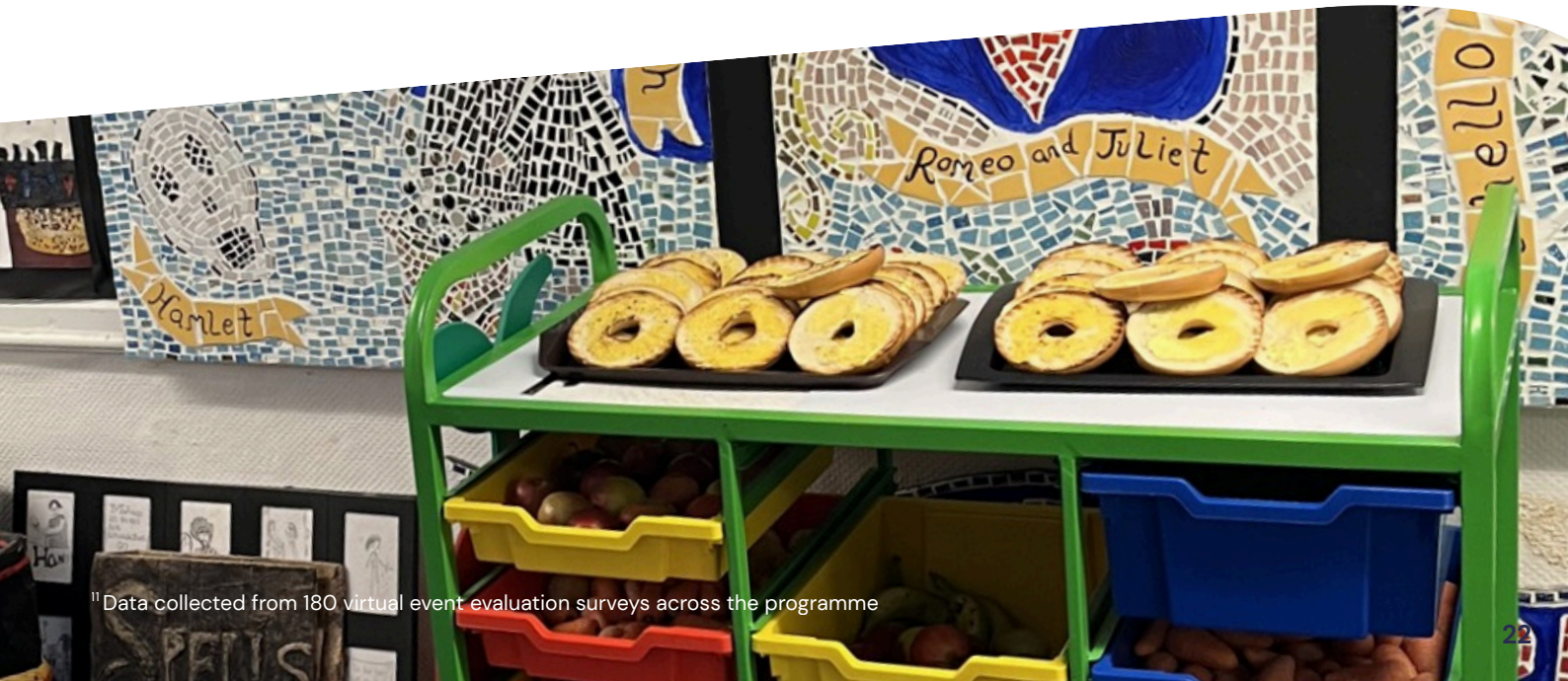
There was an average of 48 attendees per event.

95% of schools who attended were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the event[11].

> **Thank you for this opportunity. Presentations were well delivered and very useful. Very well organised and ran to time.**
>
> Attendee at virtual event

95% of schools who attended

were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the event



[11] Data collected from 180 virtual event evaluation surveys across the programme

The Gillford Centre
Alternative provision

The Gillford Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for KS2, KS3 and KS4 pupils in North Cumbria. The school set out to ensure every pupil could start the day with a nutritious breakfast, recognising the impact hunger can have on vulnerable pupils and families.

Through the daily provision of bagels, all pupils can access breakfast, removing a key barrier to learning and wellbeing. The school funds an extra half hour a day for a kitchen assistant to prepare bagels.

Fostering community through breakfast. Breakfast time is used as a valuable opportunity to build a sense of community. Pupils and staff sit together in the school hall, creating a shared experience that many pupils may not regularly have at home.

Promotion and outreach. The school actively promotes the Breakfast Club through various channels, including posters, induction sessions for new pupils and parents, and regular communication via letters and texts. This ensures that all stakeholders are aware of and engaged with the provision.

Lates. Pupils arriving late, or attending on reduced timetables, are checked to see if they have eaten. If not, breakfast is offered regardless of the time, ensuring no pupil starts learning hungry.

> **As a school we feel that there have been massive benefits from the NSBP and the most vulnerable young people within our society have been supported with their breakfast on a daily basis**
>
> Headteacher

Impact on teaching and learning. The positive impact has been remarkable. With pupils no longer experiencing being hungry, they are able to engage more fully in their lessons. This has led to improvements in punctuality, behaviour, and overall wellbeing among the pupils.

Attendance has improved from 61% to 65%, exceeding the national average for PRUs.

Behaviour has also improved, supported by the use of bagels as part of the reward system. Pupils can earn extra toppings for meeting behaviour expectations, contributing to a 5% increase in positive behaviour points. A VIP rewards programme further recognises positive behaviour and strengthens links with families.

As a result of NSBP provision:

- Attendance increased from 61% to 65%, above the PRU national average
- 5% rise in positive behaviour points
- Decrease in suspensions by 11%
- Improved engagement in lessons
- Better pupil wellbeing – reduced hunger and anxiety
- Consistent support for vulnerable pupils, regardless of arrival time
- A shared sense of community between staff and pupils

NSBP key learnings

As a large-scale delivery programme, the NSBP provided an outstanding opportunity for Family Action to scale up an enhanced version of a previously proven approach to school breakfast provision. It demonstrated the significant impact that introducing a free breakfast to pupils can have on key learning and wellbeing outcomes for pupils, setting them up to succeed.

It leaves a lasting legacy, with the introduction of free school breakfast clubs in all schools with primary-aged pupils in England under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act during this Parliament. All eligible schools on the NSBP have been offered a place on the government's free breakfast club programme to start in September 2026.

Secondary schools who were on the NSBP will receive grant funding of equal value from the government for the academic year 2026-2027 to enable them to continue to provide breakfast food to their pupils at no cost to them or their parents.

Key learnings from the delivery of both NSBP programmes (2018-21 and 2021-2026) include:

- **Flexibility from the outset improves outcomes**
- **School support and challenge is key to success**
- **Pupil engagement and intelligent promotion improves take up**
- **Whole school buy in leads to optimal outcomes**
- **Recognising impact builds the will to continual monitoring**

Flexibility from the outset improves outcomes

The programme recognised that all schools have unique characteristics and that it was important to consider a school's individual context during their recruitment to the programme.

Schools were introduced to a variety of breakfast delivery models, and this was key to some schools taking up the programme offer, particularly those who felt they had many pupils at risk of being hungry in school.

Adding an extended reach model such as classroom breakfast and healthy grab and go, as well as a breakfast club, were essential, to many schools' success, ensuring provision could reach more pupils without barrier or stigma.

Providing schools with an easy to administrate digital portal and helpdesk meant support was available to suit schools' capacity. Automatic ordering, which could be adjusted 24 hours a day, reduced the administration burden on schools by removing the need to place orders and collect food themselves.

It (the NSBP) demonstrated the significant impact that introducing a free breakfast to pupils can have on key learning and wellbeing outcomes for pupils, setting them up to succeed.

Key learnings continued...

School support and challenge is key to success

Providing a skilled, responsive and knowledgeable team to support schools using education, influence and persuasion were key to meeting recruitment targets and to schools embarking on the programme with an ambitious mindset.

Schools reported they found the support a huge benefit to the success of their breakfast provision.

Targeted support meetings for low uptake schools encouraged reflection on current provision. School Breakfast Coordinators drew on their knowledge and experience from a diverse range of schools, and best practice from across the programme. They were also key to accountability, providing challenge where necessary.

Pupil engagement and intelligent promotion improves take up

Improving take up of pupils was identified as a particular challenge for school breakfast provisions. It was vital to monitor school uptake, identify schools with low reach, and work with them to challenge and address any issues.

A toolkit of strategies was provided to schools with low uptake, as well as opportunities to engage with a mentor school and attend events on engaging pupils and parents with breakfast.

Whole school buy in leads to optimal outcomes

For breakfast to embed successfully in the school day and be valued and protected, whole school buy in is vital:

- Commitment from the leadership team, and business managers seeing a return on investment are important, as is ensuring sufficient staff are committed to the breakfast to cover for absences and ensure breakfast provision is protected.
- Teaching staff need to see the value to actively identify and target pupils for attendance and accept a change to the start of the school day.
- Catering staff commitment is a significant advantage, as is the contribution of caretakers and cleaners who also need to be supported to understand the benefit of breakfast to counter any inconvenience.

Recognising impact builds the will to continue

For long term commitment, it is important that the whole school understands the benefit of breakfast.

The programme encouraged a large cohort of schools to consider, review and measure the impact of breakfast provision whilst also providing data led reinforcement of the value that breakfast brought to each and every school.

We would like to express our sincere thanks for the support provided through the National School Breakfast Programme.

It has made a significant difference to our school community, ensuring that pupils start the day with a nutritious, reliable breakfast that prepares them to learn. We have seen clear improvements in pupils' focus, energy, and engagement, as well as calmer, more positive starts to the school day.

The programme has also offered important support for families, helping to ease morning pressures and reduce barriers linked to cost and routine. From a whole school perspective, the breakfast provision has strengthened our attendance and safeguarding work, supported equity for all pupils, and contributed meaningfully to wellbeing and attainment.

We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to take part and for the positive, sustained impact it has had on our children and our school.

Kirsten Bradley, Headteacher, Adelaide Primary School

About Family Action

A national charity with a community heart, Family Action has been supporting people through change, challenge and crisis since 1869. We protect children, support young people and adults, and offer direct, practical help to families and communities across England, Wales and the Isle of Man.

Our mission is to protect children, support young people and adults, and offer direct, practical help to families and communities. We speak up for the importance of family, amplify family voices and represent the changing needs of families in the UK today.

We believe everyone deserves dignity, respect and an equal chance at life. While the path in front of us connects back to our past, it's never too early and never too late to try and change things. With the right support at the right time, we can shape or reshape our futures for ourselves – and when we do, the effects ripple out through our communities too.

We also recognise that for better and worse, family shapes us throughout our lives. So, we harness the power of family through holistic, trauma-informed, relational and strengths-based approaches. Through all our work we focus on:

- Creating opportunities and life chances
- Supporting people through life's changes and major stages
- Building and maintaining safe, supportive relationships
- Promoting health, wellbeing and connectedness
- Amplifying family voices and sharing stories

family action

National School Breakfast Programme