School breakfast clubs are an opportunity for children to have a nutritious start to the day by eating breakfast at school. With an estimated 860,000 children arriving at school without breakfast\(^1\), the opportunity to eat at school is essential for their health and ability to learn.

Breakfast clubs are organised by a wide range of different people and no two are the same: some are run by school caterers and teachers, some are run as social enterprises and others by parent and teacher associations.

Alongside breakfast, most clubs provide extra-curricular activities including reading, educational computer games and PE. Evidence shows that breakfast clubs not only ensure that children start the day in the right way, but that they also have a key role in driving attendance and academic attainment.

**A Brief History**

Breakfast clubs started in America back in 1966, with the introduction of a pilot for the Federal School Breakfast Programme\(^2\) aimed at nutritionally ‘at-risk’ children, which later became a national program .

In the UK, it took us slightly longer to start, with breakfast clubs gradually developing during the 1990’s, driven not just by demand for food provision but also for a safe, supervised place for parents to leave their children before the start of the school day. Now more than half of UK schools (56% in 2012) provide a breakfast club\(^1\).

If a child arrives at school hungry, they lose 1 hour of learning time\(^7\). If this happens once a week this is equivalent to losing 70 per cent of a term over the whole of their primary school life. If the child arrives at school hungry every day the loss of effective learning time is significantly more.

**EVERY BREAKFAST CLUB IS UNIQUE BUT COMMON GOALS INCLUDE:**

- That no child will start a school day hungry and without food
- To provide the energy and nutrition required by the mind and body for active learning
- To improve attendance, concentration and learning in the classroom
- To provide positive examples of healthy eating to create a foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits
- To enable children to socialise, listen and talk in a relaxed atmosphere
- To provide opportunities to complete homework, and undertake extracurricular activities
The nutritional benefits of breakfast for school-aged children are well accepted, and numerous studies have documented that breakfast eaters eat a healthier overall diet compared to breakfast skippers. Those that consume breakfast tend to have higher intakes of carbohydrates and fibre and lower intakes of fat; are more likely to achieve adequate intakes of vitamins and minerals; tend to be slimmer and have lower levels of blood cholesterol.\(^3\,4\,5\,6\).

### Hungry Children Don’t Learn

Teachers will tell you that hungry children can’t learn. In fact, if a child arrives at school hungry, teachers say they lose one hour of learning time a day.\(^7\) This means that if a child arrived at school hungry once a week they would lose the equivalent of 8.4 weeks of learning time (70 per cent of a term) over the whole of their primary school life. If a child arrives hungry every day, the loss of learning is considerably more, affecting the child’s potential to learn, concentrate and participate in everyday activities.

Numerous studies, both here and in the USA, show a positive link between participation in a breakfast club and improved performance in tests, concentration, memory and academic achievement.\(^6\) Interestingly, these benefits are not just confined to those children who are at risk of poor nutrition. Research conducted in the UK demonstrates academic benefits from breakfast club attendance, but also highlights benefits from the provision of opportunity to develop social skills and an improved sense of belonging.\(^6\).

### Kellogg’s Breakfast Clubs

Kellogg’s has helped establish and support over 1,000 breakfast clubs over the last decade, delivering training and offering grants to schools. Last year alone we funded over 660 new and existing breakfast clubs.

By 2016, our goal is to have donated 15 million servings of breakfast and snacks to children in need across the UK. In this way, Kellogg’s is helping to tackle the problem of child hunger by providing the fuel they need to learn.

The results of the study showed that breakfast club attendance increased friendship quality, ratings of closeness, helpfulness, companionship and security and decreased ratings of conflict.\(^6\)

Children who attend breakfast clubs behave better in class, attend school more frequently, demonstrate improved school performance and exhibit better quality friendships.\(^6\) For most schools, a breakfast club provides far more than just food.

### References


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