

Key findings of 2016 research study by the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) into the impact of school breakfast provision

Funded by the DfE/EEF, conducted by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) and delivered by Magic Breakfast

Magic Breakfast worked with the IFS to deliver a research project in November 2016, using a randomised controlled trial to assess the impact of school breakfast provision on children in disadvantaged areas of England.

Key outcomes

Year 2 children in schools providing a breakfast club experienced the equivalent of around

2 months' additional progress in reading, writing and maths, compared to Year 2 children in the other schools in the trial.

Year 6 children in schools providing a breakfast club experienced the equivalent of around

2 months' additional progress in writing and English when compared to Year 6 children in other schools in the trial.

The findings suggest that **it is not just eating breakfast that delivers improvements, but attending a breakfast club at school**. This could be due to differences in the type of breakfast or the nutritional content of the food provided at breakfast clubs (e.g. porridge, healthy cereal and bagels replacing biscuits, crisps or very sugary food), and/or the social or educational benefits of the breakfast club environment.

Pupil concentration and behaviour, as measured by a teacher survey, **improved in the schools that provided breakfast clubs**. This finding is interesting because it shows that breakfast clubs provide an opportunity to **improve outcomes for children who do not actually attend breakfast club**, through better classroom environments.

Attendance at school also **improved** slightly for children in breakfast club schools, with about 26 fewer half-days of absence per year for a class of 30.

The research involved 8600 children in 106 schools that had no prior school breakfast provision, or only a very small charging childcare provision. Schools were randomly allocated into a 'treatment' group or a control group. The treatment group were given support and resources and asked to launch a free breakfast provision open to all before the school day, without barrier or stigma. They were also encouraged and supported to optimise the club, identifying and targeting children for attendance. The project was evaluated using a randomised controlled trial that compared the progress of pupils in the schools that were running a breakfast provision to that of a control group of pupils in schools that were asked to wait a year to launch a new breakfast provision.