

The free breakfast clubs programme: Key facts & information

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1. Can I talk to someone about how to deliver a free club?

You can submit any questions that you have [here](#). If your school is selected to take part, you will be assigned to a peer-to-peer network to learn from other schools and share ideas. If you need additional support, we will provide you with an expert adviser.

2. Can I visit a school that's already running a breakfast club?

We encourage you to reach out to early adopter schools in your area who are running a breakfast club to learn from what they are doing. You can also read case studies from early adopter schools [here](#).

If your school is selected to take part, you will be assigned to a peer-to-peer network to learn from other schools and share ideas.

3. How are other schools making it work?

Through the early adopter test and learn scheme, schools have successfully delivered free breakfast clubs from different starting positions and using a range of different models.

You can check out different case studies [here](#) to see how other schools have overcome staffing, space and other challenges.

4. My school is already part of a breakfast club programme. Can I continue working with them?

If you are already part of a breakfast programme or work with an organisation to source food and/or run your breakfast offer, please get in touch with them to discuss what will happen if your application is successful.

If you are part of the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP), your school will be invited to join the programme from September 2026.

5. My school currently runs a 'soft start' model where pupils can arrive early to school. Can we adapt this model to meet the requirements of the programme?

Yes, you can. To meet the minimum requirements of the scheme, you must offer a free breakfast club for at least 30-minutes before the compulsory start of the school day. You can extend your soft start and serve breakfast to pupils to meet this requirement.

For example, if the compulsory start of the school day begins at 8:50 and you allow pupils into the school anytime from 8:30, you would only need to open the doors 10-minutes earlier, and offer food, to meet the minimum requirements.

6. My school currently runs a small breakfast club. How do I scale it up to make it available to all pupils?

Successful schools will receive a £1000 start-up grant to cover the cost of:

- Equipment – for example storage, food preparation and serving equipment and play equipment
- Training – for example Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene and Allergy Management training
- Infrastructure and systems – for example breakfast club booking systems and technology products
- Other revenue costs associated with setting up the free breakfast club provision

You will also have access to a wealth of support materials, guidance and practical tools, as well as peer to peer networks and support from advisors, to scale up your club.

For example, the free breakfast clubs [blueprint](#) has a checklist with the different things you need to think about when preparing your club.

7. What should I do if I already have a breakfast club run by a private provider?

Where a PVI is already delivering a breakfast club that meets the needs of children and families, we're not expecting schools to displace that provision and should, instead, aim to incorporate the universal breakfast club offer as part of the existing provision.

8. We have already received wraparound funding, will our funding for the Early Adopter scheme be impacted?

The wraparound childcare programme and the funding for the breakfast club programme can work together and be mutually supportive. Schools are entitled to receive funding from both programmes, providing there is no double funding as per grant conditions.

For example, the wraparound funding can be used to ensure the availability of after school childcare, and/or to extend the before school offer to more than 30 minutes. The breakfast club funding allows the school to offer the 30 minutes of free breakfast clubs to all pupils.

We encourage all schools who want to find out more to read the relevant guidance and contact their local authority representative.

9. Can I run free places and paid-for breakfast club places during the 30-minutes?

No, schools cannot run paid-for places during the 30-minute funded breakfast club. The 30-minutes of the club must be free to all pupils.

However, schools can charge for any provision before the 30-minute breakfast club. See question 10 for more information.

10. Our parents need more than 30 minutes childcare – can I charge for the first half an hour and then make the last half an hour free?

Yes, schools can continue to offer paid-for wraparound childcare before the free 30 minutes.

The expectation, as set out in the wraparound childcare: guidance for schools and trusts, remains that all schools should provide paid-for wraparound childcare, available before school from 8am and after school until 6pm, on the school site, unless there is a reasonable justification not to. The new free breakfast club offer should build on existing school provision and work to contribute to the full wraparound childcare offer.

Where schools are operating paid-for provision and a free breakfast club, they are expected to ensure that:

- parents and carers can benefit from the free club and pay a lower fee for the paid-for provision than they were prior to the introduction of the free breakfast club, reflecting that 30 minutes is free; and
- under no circumstances are children required to attend paid-for provision to access the free breakfast club

For example, at Holbrook Primary School, they run their paid-for provision from 7:30-8:15 and then the free breakfast club from 8:15-8:50. You can read more about how they do this [here](#).

11. I currently have a food only/grab and go breakfast offer. Can I continue this?

A: The evidence shows that children benefit most from a breakfast club which not only provides a healthy breakfast, but also a soft start to the school day before learning begins. That is why we are rolling out free breakfast clubs to all primary schools across the country, so that every pupil has the opportunity to benefit.

Schools can continue to offer breakfast food to children not attending the club if they feel this would be appropriate, but this would not be funded by the free breakfast club grant.

12. Can I limit the number of pupils attending my free breakfast club?

A: We want all children to be able to benefit from breakfast clubs, including those who most need the soft start to the day.

Therefore, you cannot limit places at the free breakfast club. All pupils in reception to Year 6 on roll at your school must be able to access a place if they wish.

You can however use a booking system – giving parents & carers a reasonable sign-up period –to anticipate and plan demand.

We have also included a [template for assessing parental demand](#) in the [blueprint](#) to help you estimate how many pupils are likely to take of the offer.

13. When will we receive our funding?

You will receive your funding according to the following schedule, with exact timings subject to change:

- Late May 2026 (maintained schools)/ early June 2026 (academies): Start-up grant (£1,000) + daily payment for Summer Term (£25 x 63 days = £1,194)
- Late October/early November: Per pupil payment for Summer Term (TBD – amount dependent on take-up) + Daily payment for Autumn & Spring terms (£25 x 131 days = £2,482)

Timings of the per-pupil payments for Autumn and Spring Terms are to be confirmed.

14. Do I need to record breakfast club attendance daily?

During Summer Term 2026, you will be asked to report to the Department how many, and which, pupils attend your free breakfast club during a one-week period in June. This data will be used to calculate your per-pupil payment.

Arrangements post Summer Term will be shared in due course.

15. Is there extra funding available for pupils with high needs?

Schools should make breakfast clubs inclusive and accessible for all children. This includes children with SEND and children considered vulnerable. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities. If a child with disabilities needs a reasonable adjustment to attend the breakfast club, this cannot be charged to parents and carers.

See the '[Creating inclusion provision](#)' section of the [guidance](#) for further information.

We've taken on board feedback from the early adopter phase and have increased the funding rates from April 2026 onwards in mainstream schools to £1 per pupil per day, plus £25 a day guaranteed.

16. Who should staff my club?

Staffing your free breakfast club should be based on what best meets the needs of your pupils and your individual circumstances. There is no requirement for teachers to run free breakfast clubs, and schools are encouraged to use a flexible staffing model. Options include:

- Existing support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, midday supervisors)
- Private, voluntary, or independent (PVI) childcare providers
- New recruits, including those seeking flexible work or new to childcare

There are no specific qualification requirements for wraparound care for school-aged children, unless your provision includes under-5s and is registered on the Early Years Register.

To support schools, the Department has recently updated its [Workforce Toolkit](#) which offers guidance, tools and templates to support recruitment, retention and workforce development across a range of providers in breakfast clubs and wraparound childcare.

17. Can I use volunteers?

Yes, volunteers can be used to support the delivery of free breakfast clubs. Many clubs already make effective use of volunteers alongside employed staff and external providers. While volunteers can play a valuable role, it's important to ensure they are appropriately supported and supervised, especially when working directly with children.

There are no specific qualification requirements for wraparound care for school-aged children, unless your provision includes under-5s and is registered on the Early Years Register. Schools have flexibility in how they staff their clubs, and using volunteers can be a practical and community-driven solution.

An Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check with Barred Lists is legally required for anyone working with children. GOV.UK offers a [free tool](#) to help you choose the right check, but for breakfast club or wraparound childcare staff working with under-18s, an Enhanced DBS including the Barred Lists is mandatory.

18. What ratios are we expected to follow when delivering breakfast clubs? Is this different depending on whether it's in house or using an external provider?

The Department cannot advise on individual circumstances. Staffing levels and ratios should be determined by individual schools, considering the different levels of need of the children attending. Some children with the highest needs may require 1:1 support.

The staff to child ratios needed are dependent on the age of children and the qualification levels of staff. You will need to determine how many staff you need to ensure the safety and welfare of children, considering:

- the types of activity
- the age and needs of the children, including SEND or medical needs
- if any children need 1:1 support
- safeguarding

If your wraparound provision includes children who normally attend reception class during the school day, or younger children (aged 5 or under) there must be sufficient staff as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for group and school based providers.

19. Where should I run my free breakfast club?

Most schools are likely to choose an on-site delivery model for their free breakfast club, using flexible spaces such as halls, classrooms, or multi-use rooms. Early adopter schools have successfully used a range of internal spaces and hybrid models, including outdoor areas.

Schools also have the flexibility to use nearby off-site locations, particularly where it may help meet local logistical needs or support food preparation. When selecting a premises model, schools should consider space size, layout, proximity to kitchen facilities, ease of access for children and staff and be prepared to adapt to meet changing demand and weather conditions.

20. Does my free breakfast club need to take place all in the same space?

No, your free breakfast club does not need to take place in a single space. Many of the early adopter schools have successfully delivered provision across a variety of settings, using combinations of available spaces such as halls, classrooms, multi-use rooms, and outdoor areas, though not all schools used the same types of spaces.

This flexible, hybrid approach can be particularly helpful for schools without a large central area or those choosing to run provision in smaller, separate groups.

21. What does ‘in the vicinity’ mean?

When delivering free breakfast club provision off-site, the venue should be within the vicinity of the school. It should be within easy walking distance for pupils and staff, and logistically feasible, allowing safe and timely movement between the off-site space and the school site.

The location should also be convenient for parents and carers, particularly for drop-off arrangements, and schools should consider whether the space is suitable for long-term use as part of their breakfast provision.

22. What food am I allowed to serve at my free breakfast club?

Schools are expected to provide a healthy, nutritious and varied breakfast offer to pupils which will set them up for the school day ahead. The [School food standards practical guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-food-standards-practical-guide) provides useful advice for headteachers and governors to ensure that food offered at free breakfast clubs is compliant with the School Food Standards.

23. How can I source food for my free breakfast club?

Schools can choose how to source and deliver food as best meets their needs and in accordance with relevant public procurement legislation.

There are a number of models that schools can consider, such as:

- sourcing food directly from suppliers, including breakfast club providers, partners or supermarkets or using an existing food supply contract
- utilising an existing catering contract or putting in place a new catering contract with a LA or private catering company
- using a buying framework including from a public buying organisation or consortia

Schools may wish to use the [sustainable procurement: the government buying standards](#) which includes lots of good advice around sustainable sourcing.

24. Do I have to serve hot food?

No, hot food is not a requirement of the free breakfast clubs. The expectation is that schools provide a healthy, nutritious and varied breakfast offer to pupils which will set them up for the school day ahead which can either be hot or cold.

25. Do you have examples of menus or what other schools serve?

Breakfast examples are included as part of the [free breakfast clubs guidance](#) and a variety of example menus have been designed and included within the [blueprint](#).

26. Do I have to use my school catering provider?

No, you do not have to use your existing school catering provider. Schools have flexibility in how they choose to source and deliver food for their free breakfast clubs. However, there are key requirements if you go in-house or use an external provider:

- **Food Safety Registration:** If the school or the external provider is handling and preparing food, they must be registered as a food business operator and be subject to inspection by Food Safety Officers.
 - **Food Standards and Allergens:** All food provided must comply with regulations on food preparation, follow healthy eating guidelines (such as School Food Standards), and account for all allergies and dietary requirements (cultural, religious, and medical).
 - **Reputable Suppliers:** You must use reputable suppliers to ensure food safety and quality.
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27. How am I expected to cater for allergies?

The Allergy Team, Benedict Blythe Foundation and the ISBA co-created [The Schools Allergy Code](#), a framework of best practice, to help schools keep pupils with allergies safe.

The Schools Allergy Code sets out best practice to help schools keep pupils with allergies safer. It is recommended by the Department for Education as part of its [Allergy Guidance for Schools](#).

As well as providing a set of standards, the Code includes clear guidance on how to implement these in any setting and a checklist so schools can identify where they are meeting best practice.