

The free breakfast clubs programme: Key facts & information

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The government is committed to giving every pupil regardless of their background the best start in life. The **free breakfast club programme gives pupils a strong start to the day** to set them up to learn.

Schools participating in the early adopter scheme are already reporting **benefits to their pupils, families, and whole school** after less than two terms:

- 1 **Improved punctuality and attendance**
- 2 **A calmer environment during the school day for staff & pupils**
- 3 **Reduced hunger and increased readiness to learn**
- 4 **Increased ability of parents to get to work on time**

‘We have seen a **significant positive impact on pupils’ mental health and wellbeing** since introducing the breakfast club. Children genuinely enjoy attending, and it provides a **calm, nurturing** start to the day. The relaxed atmosphere helps them **to ease into the school routine**, setting a **positive tone for learning.**’

Headteacher, St. Bede’s Primary School

‘The school community has engaged extremely positively with the breakfast club. It has improved our **punctuality and attendance** figures and also enabled our most vulnerable children and families to have the **reassurance** that there is a **free, nutritious breakfast available** any day of the week.’

Headteacher, Willow Bank Primary School

By signing up, you will be agreeing to the conditions of the grant, including to meet the minimum requirements of programme. The next 2 pages set out what these are and how schools taking part in the early adopter scheme have met them through different approaches. See the programme guidance for full details.

Minimum requirement 1: Your breakfast club must be free

In practice this means:

- Not charging parents to access the free club or introducing any charge that could deter access.
- Not requiring pupils to attend paid-for provision to access the free club.
- Offering **paid-for provision before the start of free club**, in line with wraparound childcare expectations.
- *Guidance section for more:* Free breakfast clubs and wraparound childcare.

Holbrook Primary School in Wiltshire, previously offered a paid-for breakfast club costing £4. The club ran from 07:30 – 08:50am with 10-20 pupils attending daily.

The school now offer the free breakfast club from 08:15 – 08:50 with 100-120 pupils attending daily. They have also reduced the cost for the paid-club which continues to run up until the free club begins.

Minimum requirement 2: Your breakfast club must be open to all pupils in reception to year 6 who want it

In practice this means:

- You cannot limit (or 'cap') the number of pupils in reception to year 6 attending your free club but **you can use a booking system** – giving parents & carers a reasonable sign-up period – to anticipate and plan demand.
- Pupils in nursery or year 7+ that attend the club will not be funded but **you can allow them to attend at the same time** (either paid or unpaid).
- *Guidance section for more:* Engaging parents and carers.

Saxton CofE Primary School, a small rural primary in North Yorkshire, asks parents to book their children onto the free breakfast club up to 2 days in advance.

This ensures that they can prepare enough food and appropriately plan staffing to meet demand.

The school also build in some flexibility to allow for children who turn up on the day without pre-booking.

Minimum requirement 3:
Your breakfast club must run for at least 30 minutes before the start of every school day

In practice this means:

- You must provide both food and childcare for at least 30 minutes before the start of compulsory school day – you **cannot claim for a food-only model**.
- But you can serve food in one area (e.g., the hall) & supervise children in other areas (e.g., outdoors).
- You can also offer food-only in *addition to* your free club (funded through other means)
- *Guidance section for more:*
[Delivering free breakfast clubs.](#)

Astley St. Stephen's C.E. Primary School in Manchester have seen the 30-minute soft start to the day have a real impact on pupils.

Children seem to be enjoying the social element before the start of the school day and teachers have commented on a calmer start to their learning.

Minimum requirement 4:
Your breakfast club must provide food that meets the School Food Standards for England

In practice this means:

- Serving **wide range of foods across the week**, ensuring foods are low in saturated fat, sugar and high in fibre.
- Not serving foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.
- Limiting the amount of processed meat products, pastry and deep-fried products and sweet spreads, which applies to the school day.
- *Guidance section for more:*
[Delivering a high-quality food offer.](#)

Devonshire Road Primary School in Bolton use a buffet set up to dish out their free breakfast club food, with Y6 pupils acting as monitors serving food and supporting younger children.

They offer toast, bagels, fresh fruit, sugar free yoghurts, cereals and water. Alongside a daily special hot item such as; veggie sausages, beans, scrambled eggs or mushrooms.

Minimum requirement 5:
Your breakfast club must be located on, or in the vicinity of, the school site

In practice this means:

- You can use space(s) on the school site or off-site, as long as pupils can be safely escorted to the school and it is convenient for parents.
- *Guidance section for more:* [Off-school-site provision.](#)
- You can also **use a private, voluntary or independent (PVI) provider** to run your club on or off-site.
- *Guidance section for more:*
[Working with PVI childcare providers.](#)

Court Lane School in Portsmouth is working with Farlington Wrap Around Service (FWAS) to offer their free breakfast club.

FWAS and the school operate a split-site model, with FWAS delivering morning wraparound from 07:15 to 08:10am in a community building on the school site, before walking the children over to the school hall where FWAS deliver the club.

Mainstream funding rate from April 2026

From April 2026, funding will be calculated on a **daily** basis. You will receive:

£25 a day guaranteed for fixed costs (inc. staffing), no matter how many pupils attend
AND
£1 per pupil per day that attends the free breakfast club on average

You will also receive a **£1,000 start-up grant** to cover the costs of equipment & other costs associated with launching your free club. In exchange for funding, you must follow the grant conditions [here](#).

Example estimated* funding based on example take-up rates

Take-up	Per pupil payment	Daily fixed payment	Total daily payment	Start-up grant	Total annual payment (daily payment x 194 days + grant)
20 pupils	£20	£25	£45	£1,000	£9,730
50 pupils	£50	£25	£75	£1,000	£15,550
100 pupils	£100	£25	£125	£1,000	£25,250
200 pupils	£200	£25	£225	£1,000	£44,650

**Where applicable, rates will be multiplied by an area cost adjustment (ACA) multiplier, according to their geographical location.*

Estimate your likely funding

You can use this [ready reckoner](#) to estimate how much your school will receive.

- Regardless of how many pupils attend your club, you will receive at least £5,850 in FY 26/27.
- On top of that, you will receive £1 per pupil per day that attends. Payments will be calculated based on the average number of pupils attending your free breakfast club. You will be asked to report this average to the Department once a term.

When you will be paid

When*	Payment type	Amount
Late May (maintained schools)/ early June (academies)	Start-up grant + Daily payment for Summer Term (63 days)	£2,575 (£1,000 + £1,575)
Late October/early November	Per pupil payment for Summer Term + Daily payment for Autumn & Spring terms (131 days)	£TBD (Per-pupil based on take-up + £3,275)
To be confirmed	Per pupil payments for Autumn & Spring terms	£TBD (Per-pupil payment)

**Dates are to be confirmed and subject to change.*

Special and AP funding rate from April 2026

From April 2026, funding will be calculated on a **daily** basis. You will receive:

£18.95 a day guaranteed for fixed costs (inc. staffing), no matter how many pupils attend
AND
£3.23 per pupil per day that attends the free breakfast club on average

You will also receive a **£1,000 start-up grant** to cover the costs of equipment & other costs associated with launching your free club. In exchange for funding, you must follow the grant conditions [here](#).

Example estimated* funding based on example take-up rates

Take-up	Per pupil payment	+ Daily fixed payment	= Total daily payment	Start-up grant	Total annual payment (daily payment x 194 days + grant)
20 pupils	£64.60	£18.95	£83.55	£1,000	£17,209
50 pupils	£161.50	£18.95	£180.45	£1,000	£36,007
100 pupils	£323.00	£18.95	£341.95	£1,000	£67,338

**Where applicable, both rates will be multiplied by an area cost adjustment (ACA) multiplier, according to their geographical location.*

Estimate your likely funding

You can use this [ready reckoner](#) to estimate how much your school will receive.

- Regardless of how many pupils attend your club, you will receive at least £4,676 in FY 26/27.
- On top of that, you will receive £3.23 per pupil per day that attends. Payments will be calculated based on the average number of pupils attending your free breakfast club. You will be asked to report this average to the Department once a term.

When you will be paid

When*	Payment type	Amount
Late May (maintained schools)/ early June (academies)	Start-up grant + Daily payment for Summer Term (63 days)	£2,294 (£1,000 + £1,194)
Late October/early November	Per pupil payment for Summer Term + Daily payment for Autumn & Spring terms (131 days)	£TBD (Per-pupil based on take-up + £2,482)
To be confirmed	Per pupil payments for Autumn & Spring terms	£TBD (Per-pupil payment)

**Dates are to be confirmed and subject to change.*

How you'll be supported

You will be supported throughout the programme to ensure that schools are set up for success and have confidence to deliver. We've developed a 3-tier support offer. Check out the [Available Support](#) page for more.

If you are facing significant challenges running your free club, you can request tailored, hands-on support from an expert breakfast club adviser.

Tier 3: Bespoke support

If your application is successful, you will be connected with a peer support network to share ideas, troubleshoot challenges and learn from others.

Tier 2: Peer-to-peer support

Support materials, including the [free breakfast club blueprint](#) with practical tools and templates, to design & deliver a club.

Tier 1: Self-service support

At any point you can contact the Department for help and support by submitting a query [here](#).

What information and data you will need to share

As part of the programme, you will be required to share data and information with us so that we can direct support where it is needed, inform payments and evaluate the impact on pupils, families and schools.

Calculating per pupil funding	What	When	How
	How many, and which, pupils attend your free breakfast club.	- In Summer Term 2026, you will need to provide this data for a one-week period in June (exact week TBC). - Arrangements post Summer Term will be shared in due course.	- In Summer Term 2026, you will need to complete two forms (a grant monitoring form & a pupil-level data form). - Arrangements post Summer Term will be shared in due course.
Monitoring delivery & directing support	What	When	How
	Pre-launch (Spring term): How ready you feel to deliver & challenges you are facing. Post-launch (Summer term onwards): Delivery status, take-up estimates, challenges you are facing.	Pre-launch: You will need to complete 2 readiness surveys (in Jan & March, exact dates TBC). Post-launch: You will need to complete a short pulse survey once a month.	Complete the quick surveys online through the support portal.
Evaluating the programme	What	When	How
	- Information on how you deliver your free breakfast club. Your views and experiences of delivering a free breakfast club. Pupil and parent views and experiences of the free breakfast club.	The evaluation will take part throughout the programme – about once a term you may be asked to take part in an evaluation activity. Exact dates and requirements will be shared well in advance.	- Attending focus groups & interviews - Completing evaluation surveys online. - Receiving visits from researchers. Sharing surveys with parents.

Ready to sign up? Here are the key dates for you to know and the top things you need to do at each stage.



Express your interest by 5 December

- Consider how you'll run your club by [estimating how much funding you will receive](#) and reading [case studies](#) of how other schools are running their free breakfast club.
- Talk with others at your school and secure agreement to take part (e.g., governors & trustees as needed)
- Fill out the expression of interest form on the [portal](#).



We'll let you know if you're successful by mid January

- We will consider levels of disadvantage, current participation in the National School Breakfast Programme, and geographical spread when selecting schools.
- In the meantime, check out the resources in [free breakfast clubs blueprint](#) to begin preparing.
- You can also begin assessing likely demand, by asking parents if they would use a free breakfast club if available.



Use Spring Term to prepare you free club, including:

- Deciding [how will you run & staff your club](#) – in-house with existing/new staff or externally through a PVI?
- Choosing [where you will run your club](#) – you may choose to do it all in the hall, in classrooms, outside, a space nearby or a mix!
- Planning what [food you will serve](#) and what activities you will offer.



Launch on the first day of Summer Term

- Be ready to welcome pupils on the first day of term – you can use a booking system and ask parents to book in advance to anticipate numbers.
- If at any point you face any issues, let us know. We will get you the support you need – whether it's speaking with another school or receiving advice from an expert adviser – to deliver a successful club.