

# DRAFT: Free breakfast club attendance register guidance, September 2026

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**Note:** This is **draft** guidance. We want your feedback so that it is as useful as possible and answers the questions you have. Please share your feedback [here](#).

Finalised guidance will be shared in June. For now, schools should begin preparing to record attendance at free breakfast clubs for pupils in Reception to Year 6 in their systems daily from September 2026.



## Who this guidance is for

1. This guidance is for schools and trusts taking part in the government's [Free Breakfast Club Programme](#). It may also be of interest to local authorities and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) childcare providers involved in supporting, or delivering, free breakfast clubs.
2. From autumn term 2026, schools participating in the programme must record attendance at free breakfast clubs for pupils in Reception to Year 6 in their systems daily.
3. This data will be collected and reported to the Department through two routes:
  - a. **The school census:** From the spring 2027 school census onwards, attendance data for pupils who attended at least one session during the specified collection period will be collected for the previous term (i.e., in the spring term 2027 census, schools must report data for autumn term 2026). See the [School census 2026 to 2027 business and technical specification](#) for further information.
  - b. **Wonde:** From September 1 2026, free breakfast club attendance data will be collected **directly** from management information systems (MIS) in the same manner as school attendance data through the data aggregator Wonde. Schools will be prompted to agree to share free breakfast club attendance data with Wonde and the Department in summer term 2026. See [Share your daily school attendance data - GOV.UK](#) for further information on how the school attendance data collection works.
4. The Department for Education is working with MIS suppliers to build a free breakfast club field into school attendance registers. Each supplier's system will operate differently, and schools should contact their MIS supplier with any questions about how to record data in their system.
5. For further information on the minimum expectations of schools and running a free breakfast club, schools should consult [Free breakfast clubs: guidance for schools and trusts - GOV.UK](#).

## Why this data is important and how it will be used

6. The Government is committed to rolling out free breakfast clubs in all state-funded schools with primary-aged children. By reporting free breakfast club attendance data, you are helping us to monitor and assess the impact of the programme and continue to learn what works in delivering free breakfast clubs.



7. In autumn term 2026, this data will be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes only. We will assess the quality and robustness of the data before we consider using it for any other purposes, including to inform funding allocations. **Schools will be required to continue to report the number of pupils attending the free breakfast club over a one-week period through the grant monitoring form once a term.** This data will continue to be used to determine their in-arrears per pupil funding. Further information is available at [Free breakfast clubs grant 2025 to 2026 academic year - GOV.UK](#). Arrangements for future terms will be communicated in due course.
8. As stated in the [free breakfast club guidance](#), schools are expected to:
  - a. consider how to encourage sustained take-up among children who are vulnerable to food poverty and hunger, or those who require extra support in areas such as attendance, behaviour, or wellbeing
  - b. use their knowledge of pupils and families to promote inclusive access and ensure the offer reaches those who need it most.
9. Regularly reviewing free breakfast club take-up data and identifying trends in attendance will support schools in meeting these expectations. The Department is currently working with schools and local authorities to understand what information they would like, and in what format, to be displayed back through [View Your Education Data](#) (VYED). Further information on how you will be able to view and access your take-up data will be provided in due course.

## Free breakfast club attendance and absence codes

10. Schools should use the appropriate code to mark the attendance of pupils in reception to year 6 at the free breakfast club or record the partial or full closure of the free breakfast club.
11. Schools do not need to record non-attendance at the free breakfast club when the club is fully or partially open. Pupils without a code (or a 'blank' mark) will be considered not to have attended and be coded as FBC0 (not present at the free breakfast club). Reasons for non-attendance do not need to be recorded in the register.
12. The codes enable schools to record, in a consistent way, pupil attendance at the free breakfast club and cases where free breakfast club provision was not available to all or some pupils.



## Attending the breakfast club

### Code FBC1: Present at the free breakfast club

13. The pupil has attended the free breakfast club before the start of the school day.
14. The aims of the universally accessible free breakfast clubs are not only to provide pupils with a breakfast ahead of the school day, but to provide pupils with a soft start to the school day and to reduce financial burdens of childcare on parents and carers. Schools should record only those pupils whom they judge to arrive in time to benefit from an earlier start to the school day. See the 'Reporting pupil numbers' section of the [free breakfast club guidance](#) for further information.

### Full or partial closure of the free breakfast club

15. As set out in the free breakfast club [guidance](#) and [conditions of grant](#), schools participating in the Free Breakfast Club Programme are expected to run a free breakfast club open to all pupils in reception to year 6 daily. The following codes should be used in exceptional circumstances where the free breakfast club is not available for any pupils or is available for some pupils but not others. Schools facing significant challenges in delivering their club should seek support from the Department.
16. Where the club is fully or partially closed for the reasons below, the appropriate code should be used at a whole-school level. Marks are not needed against individual pupils.
17. Where the club is partially closed, pupils who attend should be marked as attended as normal.
18. Where the school is closed in full on a planned basis (for example, during half term), free breakfast club attendance closure does not need to be recorded for that day.

### Full closure

#### Code FBC2: The free breakfast club is fully closed due to staff shortages

19. All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to staff shortages, such as where the school has judged that there is an insufficient number of staff to meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety to open the club.

#### Code FBC3: The free breakfast club is fully closed due to unsuitable space or premises



20. All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to unsuitable space or premises, such as where part of the school premise is unavoidably out of use and the breakfast club cannot practicably be accommodated in those parts of the premises that remain in use.

#### **Code FBC4: The free breakfast club is fully closed due to other reasons**

21. All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to other reasons, such as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g., due to adverse weather).

#### **Partial closure**

#### **Code FBC5: Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to staff shortages**

22. Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to staff shortages.

23. The staff-to-child ratios of the free breakfast club depend on the age of the children and the qualification levels of staff. Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Schools and providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, especially while eating, and decide how to use staff to ensure children's needs are met.

24. When EYFS children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room. The staff member must have a valid paediatric first aid certificate for a full course, consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the [EYFS statutory framework](#).

#### **Code FBC6: Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to unsuitable space or premises**

25. Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to unsuitable space or premises, such as where space or facilities are unavailable to meet a child's needs and safely allow the child to attend.

#### **Code FBC7: Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to other reasons**

26. Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to other reasons.

## **Frequently asked questions**

**How do I code pupils who arrive after the 30-minute breakfast clubs has started?**



27. The aims of the free breakfast clubs are not only to provide pupils with a breakfast ahead of the school day, but to provide pupils with a soft start to the school day and to reduce financial burdens of childcare on parents and carers. With this in mind, you should only record pupils as present at the free breakfast club (FBC1) whom you judge to have arrived in time to benefit from an earlier start to their school day.
28. Pupils accessing a separate food-only model provided by your school should **not** be coded as present at the free breakfast club and should be left blank. Please see the [free breakfast club guidance](#) for further information.

### **If nursery-aged pupils or children in year 7 and up attend my club, should I code them as present?**

29. The Free Breakfast Club Programme provides funding for pupils in reception to year 6 (i.e. the qualifying primary pupil cohort for the purposes of the legal reporting requirements). Any younger or older pupils who attend the club will not be funded through this scheme and should not be coded as attended and should be left blank.

### **Do I need to record the number of pupils that attend my paid-for club?**

30. Only pupils who attend the free breakfast club should be recorded as present (FBC1). If you run an extended paid-for offer for your pupils, which commences and ceases ahead of the free 30 minutes, you do not need to report the number of pupils who attend this provision. However, you should record all primary-school aged pupils who attend the free 30 minutes, even if they also attended the paid for offer.

### **A private, voluntary or independent (PVI) provider delivers our free breakfast club. They do not have access to our MIS system. What should we do?**

31. Schools are responsible for recording attendance at free breakfast clubs in their MIS system and completing the school census. Schools that work with a PVI provider should put appropriate data sharing agreements in place to enable the provider to share data on which pupils attend the free breakfast club securely and in line with relevant data sharing regulations and duties.

### **Why do we need to continue to complete the grant monitoring form if you can access our data daily and through the census?**

32. As this is a new data collection, we want to assess the quality and robustness of the data before we consider using it for any purposes beyond monitoring and evaluation, including to inform funding allocations. We are conducting user research with schools to explore how free breakfast club attendance data can be displayed on VYED to make it easier for schools to complete the grant monitoring form. Further information will be shared in due course.



### **Will the data I input into my MIS and reported through the census affect the funding my school receives for our free breakfast club?**

33. In autumn term 2026, schools will be required to report the number of pupils attending the free breakfast club over a one-week period through the grant monitoring form once a term. This data will continue to be used to determine their in-arrears per pupil funding; the data recorded in MIS and reported through the census will **not** be used to inform funding allocations. However, this information may be used for assurance purposes.

34. Arrangements for future terms will be shared in due course.

### **Do we still need to complete the pupil-level form with the UPNs of pupils that attend our free breakfast club?**

35. Data reported through the pupil-level form is used to evaluate the Free Breakfast Club Programme and is essential for assessing the impact of the programme. Given its importance, we want to be sure that the data collected daily and through the census is high enough quality before we rely on it for these purposes. We will communicate whether it is necessary to complete the pupil-level form in the autumn term in due course.

### **How can we view our free breakfast club attendance data?**

36. The Department is currently working with schools and local authorities to understand what information they would like, and in what format, to be displayed back through [View Your Education Data \(VYED\)](#). Further information on how you will be able to view and access your take-up data will be provided in due course.

## **Contact us**

DfE will support schools in delivering free breakfast clubs. If schools have any questions about guidance, implementation, or requirements, contact us through the [customer help portal](#).



## Annex: Free breakfast club attendance and absence codes summary table

Code	Type	Definition	Description
FBC1	Attendance	Present at the free breakfast club	The pupil has attended the free breakfast club before the start of the school day.
FBC2	Absence due to full closure	The free breakfast club is fully closed due to staff shortages	All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to staff shortages.
FBC3		The free breakfast club is fully closed due to unsuitable space or premises	All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to unsuitable space or premises.
FBC4		The free breakfast club is fully closed due to other reasons	All pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is fully closed due to other reasons.
FBC5	Absence due to partial closure	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to staff shortages	Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to staff shortages.
FBC6		Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to unsuitable space or premises	Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to unsuitable space or premises.
FBC7		Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to other reasons	Some pupils are unable to attend because the free breakfast club is partially closed due to other reasons.
FBC0	Absence due to any other reasons	Not present at the free breakfast club	The pupil has not attended an open free breakfast club before the start of the school day.  <b>This is the default code – schools do <b>not</b> need to record non-attendance at the free breakfast club when the club is fully or partially open.</b>

