Breakfast Clubs

Healthy children and better learning

Call 01273 431700 or www.bhfood.org.uk
Introduction

Most of our primary schools have Breakfast Clubs and a recent review of provision by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership has highlighted the many ways in which they contribute to learning outcomes and full participation in school life for children.

Breakfast Clubs vary. To differing extents they:

- Feed children who might otherwise go without breakfast, so supporting learning and concentration
- Encourage healthy eating habits and provide sound nutrition
- Provide a nurturing space for children improving punctuality, attendance and social skills
- Make it possible for many parents to work or study

We conducted a survey of Breakfast Clubs across the city and everyone we spoke to expressed an interest in what other schools are doing. Some of what you read might be familiar but we hope you find some new ideas too.

For the full report go to www.bhfood.org.uk/resources

Healthy Eating

Eating a nutritious breakfast encourages wellbeing and provides children with the energy required to think and learn.

Guidance for ‘school food other than lunch’ was issued in May 2015. It recommends ‘to limit the amount of fat, sugar and salt provided by food across the school day’. This guidance now includes food served in breakfast clubs as well as school lunches. www.schoolfoodplan.com

TIP: Is this where the child is eating their only breakfast? Find this out because if children have already eaten at home one slice of toast may be all they need. You don’t want children to be over-eating.

TIP: Swap white bread for wholemeal. Staff at Rudyard Kipling commented on how quickly the children adapted to wholegrain options. Try moving to half and half bread first to help children get used to it.

TIP: Fruit is better served whole than as juice. Whole fruit contains fibre which helps children stay full longer. Fibre is removed in juice. Chop up fruit into easy eat portions.

TIP: Water or milk are the best choices of drink.

Note: A few children have severe allergies to eggs and where this is the case, eggs should not be served.

Eggs are an excellent source of protein which has the advantage of filling children up for longer. Some schools expressed concern about eggs and food safety but if basic safeguards are in place, eggs could be on the breakfast menu at many more schools. The Food Safety team at the Council are keen to support schools to serve eggs and are happy to answer any questions. Tel: 01273 294266 or email: ehl.food@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership – Call 01273 431700
Breakfast Clubs – Visit www.bhfood.org.uk
The Healthy Choice Award rewards settings serving nutritious and age-appropriate choices at breakfast. If you are running a breakfast club, Food Partnership nutritionists can support you with healthy breakfast menus and in applying for the award www.bhfood.org.uk/hca-breakfast-clubs

**TIP:** Watch portion sizes. A portion is equivalent to a handful, so smaller hands mean smaller portions!

**TIP:** Vary your menu. Variety ensures balance and encourages children to have broad tastes. Consider beans (low sugar variety) on toast once a week, porridge in the colder months, natural yoghurt, seasonal fruit, vegetable sticks and a range of cereals on rotation.

**TIP:** Consider serving protein rich foods at breakfast. Cheese, ham or eggs are all good choices.

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**Sugar Smart**

Sugar is hidden in many foods so it soon adds up. Brighton & Hove Sugar Smart city challenges everyone to do their bit to reduce sugar consumption.

Children are eating up to three times more sugar than is healthy.

It’s all too easy: 150ml fruit juice contains 15g sugar which is more than half the recommended daily amount for a 7 – 10yr old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Recommended maximum added sugar intake</th>
<th>Number of sugar cubes</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-6 yrs</td>
<td>No more than 19g per day</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-10 yrs</td>
<td>No more than 24g per day</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 yrs +</td>
<td>No more than 30g per day</td>
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**TIP:** Pick low sugar content jams and spread it thinly. One teaspoon of jam contains 5 grams sugar. Some clubs have a one slice with jam rule – second slices have to be plain or with a savoury topping.

**TIP:** Replace pre-sweetened yoghurt with plain, with a topping of a little fruit muesli (popular at Carlton Hill), fresh fruit or some raisins.

**TIP:** If fruit juice is served, make sure it’s unsweetened, diluted 1 part juice to 10 parts water.

**TIP:** Swap jam and honey on toast for cream cheese, Marmite, mashed banana or hummus.

If you want to see quickly how much sugar foods contain, use the free Change4Life Sugar Swaps app. Change4Life have useful info www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/low-sugar-healthy-snacks.aspx They also have ideas for activities to do with healthy eating www.campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools

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Hunger and Food Poverty

Increasing numbers of families are struggling to manage on low incomes. Food Poverty is a real and growing issue. Hunger quickly affects concentration and the ability to learn so Breakfast Clubs can have a direct impact on learning outcomes and children’s ability to enjoy and participate fully in the morning.

We know that some parts of our city are particularly disadvantaged but all the clubs we spoke to said they provide breakfast for some children who might otherwise go without. For them Breakfast Clubs can make the difference between struggling through the morning on an empty stomach and starting the school day nourished and alert.

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“We have seen many benefits for children who go to the club and we fund a number of disadvantaged pupils, both through PP funding, but also through the general budget as some of our most disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils are not eligible for PP. We use breakfast club to support specific families and children with attendance, punctuality and ensuring some children get breakfast.”

TIP: Use the Pupil Premium to provide free places (see section on finance) for specific children.

TIP: Remember Food poverty is not just about hunger and food bank use it is also about skipping meals and ‘trading down’ to unhealthier choices. Food poverty isn’t always obvious so make sure all parents / carers are aware of any support your school offers.

TIP: Consider providing free places for children eligible for free school meals ( this happens on an ad hoc basis in many schools).

TIP: Consider applying for support from charities aimed at providing proper nourishment to prevent the phenomenon of tired, inattentive and hungry children ( see finance section).

TIP: Signpost families to other sources of support. More information is available at www.bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice

TIP: Be alert to signs of persistent hunger in pupils. Encourage attendance at Breakfast Club and subsidise costs if fees have proved a barrier. ( NB Three children attending some clubs could cost £45+ a week).

TIP: Consider applying for support from charities aimed at providing proper nourishment to prevent the phenomenon of tired, inattentive and hungry children ( see finance section).

TIP: Ensure Breakfast Club staff have extra supplies to make available to children during the morning break – not all children in food poverty attend Breakfast Clubs.
Other activities – physical exercise, toys and games

Some Breakfast Clubs provide opportunities for daily exercise while others aim to provide a calm space and focus more on games, toys, and places to draw, read and interact with other children and staff.

TIP: Physical exercise doesn’t have to mean sport – at Moulsecoomb children sometimes dance to music on the radio.

TIP: You could split the session into two halves and serve food in the first half and do physical exercise in the second – Whitehawk and Peter Gladwin do this.

TIP: Consider using Breakfast Club time to provide extra support. For instance a teacher at Moulsecoomb provides the older children with IT time.

TIP: Some clubs provide drawing materials, toys and books which are just for Breakfast Club use. This gives the club an identity which is separate from school.

TIP: If you have pre-school sports clubs and Breakfast Clubs, allow children to attend both, which occasionally happens at Middle Street School.

TIP: Staff may lead children in activities like making Christmas decorations, reading stories aloud, textile crafts, singing and model-building.

TIP: Get support from the BHCC School Games team: 01273 292724 or Albion in the Community: 01273 647257

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An idea from the School Games team: Animal Mania

Get into pairs, face each other and jog on the spot. The leader shouts out an action like ‘Sleeping Ant,’ – lie on your back and wiggle your arms and legs in the air or ‘Good Dog’ – kneel on your hands and knees and be still. The group can make up their own animal poses. The leader shouts ‘Jog on the spot’ and then repeats with a new instruction.

Emma from the team said “What’s good about this game is no equipment is needed and it’s all about moving and having fun... the children do make each other laugh with the poses”

Case study: Peter Gladwin Primary School

The Breakfast Club at Peter Gladwin School is run by Albion in the Community. As you might guess that means there is quite an emphasis on physical activity as well as good nutrition. Naomi from Albion helps serve food and interacts with the children in the first half hour and in the second half she leads them in games and sports – ones that children of all ages can join in, and with an emphasis on fun and promoting social skills. She organises monthly food activities like Dippity Dip, vegetable sticks with hummus, or Melon Mix Up, a melon-tasting activity, or a card game called Fruit and Veg snap which has lots of healthy eating messages as well as exercise.
Social skills

Breakfast Clubs provide the opportunity for children of different ages to spend time together and for children to form friendly relationships with adult staff.

TIP: Provide opportunities for older children to look after younger ones – looking after new children, showing them the ropes, organising games or activities, reading together.

TIP: Enable staff to create a warm, welcoming and relaxed space. One member of staff told us she started as a volunteer, bringing her own children to the club because they ate a good breakfast there (cheese toasties and fruit) whereas getting them fed at home was often difficult.

TIP: Interaction between adults and children at Breakfast Club can be different from the rest of the day as it isn’t school. Clubs can provide an opportunity to share interests between staff and children eg craft activities, gardening or music.

TIP: Some children come just to spend time with friends. Given how short the lunchtime break is, this is valuable time for children to spend time with each other.

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“I like having breakfast here because I can talk to my friends and it’s fun.”

Case study: Hertford Junior School

The Breakfast Club was set up by Learning Mentor Julie Roberts.

The menu includes wholemeal toast, baked beans, scrambled eggs, cereals and fruit, and porridge in winter.

Natural Greek yoghurt is on offer too, served with just a tiny amount of honey. In an interesting example of how Breakfast Clubs can shape children’s tastes, some parents now buy this kind of yoghurt who didn’t before.

One thing that’s very special about the club is that Julie makes use of fruit from the school garden, eaten fresh or cooked.

As a Learning Mentor, Julie is aware of the nurturing role that Breakfast Clubs play. There was a warm atmosphere in her club. Families experiencing difficulties, resulting in children being late or not coming to school, are encouraged by Julie to come to the Breakfast Club.
Support for children and families

Breakfast Clubs can provide a ‘soft edge’ to the school, a nurturing space, that makes the transition from home to school more achievable for particular children. Breakfast Clubs can be a great resource for Learning Mentors who in some cases run the club.

Thousands of families benefit from Breakfast Clubs because they provide childcare, allowing parents to work or study.

**TIP:** Families experiencing difficulties resulting in poor attendance or frequent lateness, can be encouraged to bring their children to Breakfast Club.

**TIP:** Consider operating an official drop-in system (instead of on an unofficial emergency basis) because clubs offer a lifeline to parents whose work is sporadic or offered at short notice. As work is the main route out of poverty, this role of Breakfast Clubs is crucial for some families.

**TIP:** The usual noisy, boisterous playground start to the day can be a barrier to school attendance for some children. A welcoming, friendly Breakfast Club can make all the difference.

**TIP:** Some parents too find schools daunting – Breakfast Clubs that welcome parents who want to stay for a while or volunteer in running the club can help to break down barriers.

Case study: St Bartholomew’s C.E. School

The Breakfast Club at St Bartholomew’s is set up as a café. There is a menu and examples of foods on display that children can choose from – for instance porridge 30p, egg on toast 50p, fruit bowl 50p.

Attendance itself is free so some children come simply to spend time in a safe, warm place before school with friends. Parents can come too.
Oral hygiene
Tooth-brushing at Breakfast Clubs can make it more likely that children will do the same at home, according to the Oral Hygiene Team, based on the experience of Moulsecoomb Primary School. Preventable tooth decay is the number one reason children undergo a general anaesthetic – nearly 300 children each year in our city are hospitalised for tooth extractions.

The Oral Hygiene Promotion Team is happy to advise schools on how to promote tooth-brushing. Call 01273 267345 or email alison.mcnealy@nhs.net

Food safety
Premises must register with the Environmental Health Department, who also provide food hygiene training and advice. The Food Safety Team are happy to support the broadening of breakfast club menus to include cooked food and school-grown food such as fruit, vegetables and eggs. They welcome enquiries by phone or email. They are approachable and happy to give advice if contacted.

Call 01273 249226, email ehl.food@brighton-hove.gov.uk or visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/foodsafety

TIP: Consider basic nutritional training for staff.

TIP: Provide staff with access to activities and games which broaden children’s understanding of nutrition and enjoyment of new foods.

TIP: All staff should have training in food safety (see below).

Staffing
Teaching Assistants, Learning Mentors, Midday Supervisors, teachers and volunteers all get involved in running Breakfast Clubs. Some schools contract outside organisations to run the club on their behalf.

Finance
There is wide variation in the fees charged, subsidised and free places offered and the use of other sources of funding.

TIP: The Pupil Premium may be used to run Breakfast Clubs. An Ofsted report on successful uses of the Pupil Premium highlights examples of schools where ‘breakfast and support’ sessions are used to aid attendance and hence learning outcomes.

TIP: Schools where 35% or more children are eligible for Free School Meals may apply for support from the charity Magic Breakfast or the Greggs Foundation. Both provide finance and food through donations from food companies.

TIP: Operate a sliding scale of fees to make your club more accessible. Consider reduced fees or free access for lower income families/children eligible for free school meals/Pupil Premium. Many schools operate this kind of system.

TIP: Save costs and reduce food waste! Make links with local food producers and shops. They may be happy to pass on surplus food to your club. Try also redistribution groups such as The Food Waste Collective: Email foodwastecollective@gmail.com or visit www.foodwastecollective.org

Brighton & Hove City Council
This report was commissioned by the Public Health Schools Programme: an initiative that takes a whole school community approach to health and wellbeing. The Public Health Schools Programme provides schools with bespoke health profiles and supports them with health improvement for pupils, staff, parents and carers.

For info contact Louisa Scanlon at Louisa.Scanlon@brighton-hove.gov.uk
We are a hub for information, inspiration and connection around food. We’re a not-for-profit organisation that delivers a range of community projects such as:

- Cookery courses for beginners and those looking to teach others
- Helping people grow food in their communities
- Tips and advice on reducing food waste at home
- Setting up community composting sites across the city
- Healthy eating advice and workshops
- Advice on food poverty and support for food banks
- Weight management programmes for adults and families

Sign up it’s FREE!
Call 01273 431700 or www.bhfood.org.uk