

magic breakfast fuel for learning

Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT

18 February 2021

Dear Minister,

We are writing to ask you to commit to new funding for school breakfasts to ensure no child starts the day too hungry to learn.

COVID-19 has led to rising levels of food insecurity amongst children. The Food Foundation estimates that 14% of families with children experienced food insecurity between March 2020 – August 2020, with 2.3 million children affected. At the same time, disadvantaged children have been worst affected by school closures, with research indicating a widening educational attainment gap.

As the country looks towards recovery from COVID-19 and beyond, school breakfasts can contribute to tackling classroom hunger and closing the educational attainment gap. Combined with free school lunches, free school breakfasts ensure that children at risk of food insecurity are able to concentrate on lessons, leading to improved academic attainment.

An evaluation conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation and Institute for Fiscal Studies found that Year 2 pupils who attend a school with a universal, free school breakfast provision make two months additional academic progress compared to children who attend a school with no such breakfast provision. New research recently published by Pro Bono Economics, in partnership with Magic Breakfast and Heinz, finds that this improved academic attainment has important long-term benefits for the economy. Their research finds that providing pupils completing Key Stage 1 with just one year of school breakfasts could generate approximately £9,000 in long term economic benefits per child. This means that every £1 invested in school breakfasts has the potential to generate £50 in long term economic benefits.

With such compelling evidence in support of school breakfast provision, we are deeply concerned that the Department for Education's National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) is scheduled to end in July 2021. We understand that the Government is currently

considering its future approach to school breakfasts, but time is running out and, unless new funding is announced swiftly, there is a real risk of a gap in provision. Already, government funding for the first batch of schools (Phase 1 schools) supported by the NSBP has ended.

We support the proposals set out in the School Breakfast Bill led by Magic Breakfast and Emma Lewell-Buck MP and supported by Feeding Britain. The Bill proposed scaling up school breakfast funding to all 8,700 schools meeting the Government's current eligibility criteria for the NSBP. It also proposed making this support long term, guaranteeing the funding in legislation and incorporating it into the National Funding Formula. This would bring the commitment to free school breakfasts up to par with the existing commitment to free school lunches.

Now that the School Breakfast Bill has been postponed indefinitely, we are calling for the Government to implement the content of the Bill even before it can become law. We believe that the 3rd March Budget is the right opportunity for the Government to make this commitment and we urge the Government to act decisively to ensure that children at risk of food insecurity have the chance to benefit fully from the education system and reach their full potential.

The challenges associated with current school breakfast funding are just one example of why we are urging the Government to conduct an urgent review into school food policy across the UK. This review would provide the Government with the opportunity to future-proof its policy on school food, and to carefully consider how best to support children and families living on low incomes in the aftermath of the pandemic. It would also demonstrate the Government's commitment to tackling child food poverty and health inequalities in the longer term and be a significant step towards a comprehensive long-term plan.

Sincerely,

Alysa Remtulla, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Magic Breakfast

Stephanie Slater, Founder/Chief Executive, School Food Matters

Barbara Crowther, Coordinator, Children's Food Campaign

David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive, Family Action

Liza Dresner, Community Outreach Officer, 4in10 London's child poverty campaign network

Anna Garrod, Policy and Influence Director, Impact on Urban Health

Kate McFarlane, Chair, The De Beauvoir Association

Zoe McIntyre, Project Manager, Children's Right2Food Campaign

Josephine Namusisi-Riley, Lead, PACT Southwark, Citizens UK

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director, UK Women's Budget Group

Paul Wright, MFPH, FRSPH, Children First Alliance

Naomi Duncan, Chief Executive, and Nicole Pisani, Co-Founder and Executive chef, Chefs in Schools

James Toop, CEO, Bite Back 2030

Andrew Forsey, CEO, Feeding Britain

Jon Richards, Head of Education, UNISON

Church Action on Poverty

Sam Butters and Gina Cicerone, Co-CEO's, Fair Education Alliance

James Bielby, Chief Executive, Federation of Wholesale Distributors

Kerry Melville, Coordinator, Belfast Food Network

Melissa Green, General Secretary, National Federation of Women's Institutes

Rob Percival, Head of Policy, Soil Association

Judith Moran, Director, Quaker Social Action

Laurence Guinness, Chief Executive, The Childhood Trust

Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary, National Education Union

Jonathan Pauling, Chief Executive, Alexandra Rose Charity

Sara Jayne Stanes OBE, Chief Executive, Adopt a School

John Coleby, Director, Caritas Westminster

Project 17

Holly Charnock, Chef, Sefton Council

Professor Greta Defeyter, Director of the Healthy Living Lab, Northumbria University

Lindsay Boswell, Chief Executive, FareShare

Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Health Equalities Group