

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY



Education  
and Training

# Evaluation of the School Breakfast Clubs Program

Final report

February 2019

Dr Fiona MacDonald

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I respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Victoria and pay respect to the ongoing living cultures of First People. I acknowledge the Elders, their families and forebears who are the Traditional custodians of Victorian land for many centuries. I acknowledge that the land on which we work is the place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal and that the First Nation people's continuous living culture has played a significant and unique role in the life of this region.

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# About

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# Abbreviations

DET	Department of Education and Training Victoria
SBCP	School Breakfast Clubs Program
SS	Special School <sup>1</sup>
SFOE	Student Family Occupation Education

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, Special Schools refers to all schools who provide special education for students with moderate to severe disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and physical, mental or health impairment. These include specialist development schools, schools for Deaf Children and schools for Autism.



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This is the final report from the evaluation research of the School Breakfast Clubs Program (SBCP). In 2015, the Victorian Government committed \$13.7 million to partner with Foodbank Victoria and establish breakfast clubs in 500 of Victoria's most disadvantaged primary schools. The overarching aim of this evaluation research was to evaluate how well the program achieved its stated purpose of tackling the disadvantage students experience through hunger and poverty, to help student learning and engagement with school, and to build connections between students, families, school communities and local communities.

## Evaluation research of the School Breakfast Clubs Program

The research investigated the implementation and operation of breakfast clubs, identifying effective aspects of the program and aspects that require improvement. The evaluation research investigated the impact of the program on student learning and connectedness to school and how schools built connections between breakfast clubs, school communities and local communities. The Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SBCP M&E), comprising representatives from Foodbank Victoria and the Department of Education and Training Victoria, provided guidance and feedback on the evaluation research, including assistance with the refinement of data collection instruments. The data were collected and analysed by the report author in consultation with colleagues from Victoria University as acknowledged.

The evaluation research was guided by the following questions:

1. How does the SBCP address the needs of students who attend school without eating breakfast and provide them with the opportunity to participate and engage with all aspects of school?
2. How does the SBCP improve student learning and connectedness to school?
3. How effective is the SBCP and how can it be improved and evaluated in the future?

## Key findings

### Frequency and attendance

Foodbank Victoria, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) has established breakfast clubs in 500 Victorian government schools. Many schools had identified a need to provide food to students who arrived at school hungry. Schools were responding to the need as best they could. Some schools handed out muesli bars or a piece of fruit while others provided cereal, toast, or juice served at a sit down breakfast.

Foodbank Victoria guarantees delivery of healthy, nutritious long-life and fresh food to schools twice a term. Between 2016 and 2018, Foodbank Victoria delivered over 1.8 million kilograms of food to SBCP schools.

The SBCP enables 30% of all Victorian government primary school students to access a breakfast club, providing healthy and nutritious food to students who may otherwise come to school hungry.

Over 50,000 breakfasts are served every school week in SBCP schools.

More than 40% of SBCP schools conduct their program five days a week. The frequency of breakfast clubs in SBCP schools has increased consistently between 2016 and 2018.

On average, every SBCP school serves 33 students, each day the breakfast club is conducted. The overall attendance at breakfast clubs represents 21% of the total enrolments in SBCP schools.

The findings suggest that breakfast clubs are meeting the needs of more than the one in five children identified by welfare agencies who arrive at school without eating breakfast.<sup>10,11,12,13,59</sup>

Non-metropolitan schools provide breakfast for more of their students: 40% of non-metropolitan schools serve breakfast to over 25% of their student population, compared to 12% of metropolitan schools.

Schools with the highest level of disadvantage, as determined by their Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index, have been the most responsive to student need with 51% of the 237 schools with the highest SFOE index conducting their program five days a week. The frequency of breakfast clubs is consistent across metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools.

Approximately 165 schools conduct their program one or two days a week. The findings indicate that staffing is the greatest barrier to offering their program more frequently. Other issues include insufficient space to run the program and storage for the food provided by Foodbank Victoria.

### Improved student learning

Teachers report that breakfast clubs have had a significant impact on student learning:

- 95% of teachers note an improvement in concentration
- 90% have observed greater levels of engagement and focus for students who attend
- 88% of teachers report improvements in student's social skills
- 85% of teachers note a positive impact on the academic outcomes of students who attended breakfast club.

Teachers indicate that the combined improvement in concentration, engagement, social skills and other educational factors has had a positive effect on students' capacity to learn and educational attainment.

Increased attendance and punctuality to class are attributed to the SBCP by 85% of teachers. They have observed an improvement in students' attitudes toward school and their readiness to learn at the start of the day.

Students also recognise the benefits of the SBCP, linking the healthy food they eat at breakfast club with an improvement in their capacity to learn.

Breakfast clubs enable schools to teach children about the benefits of eating breakfast, healthy nutrition to their learning and overall development:

- 89% of schools use breakfast clubs to teach the importance of breakfast
- 89% of teachers note improvements in student's awareness of healthy eating
- 92% of teachers report that breakfast clubs have a positive impact on the health-promoting environment of their school.

Schools have made strong links between breakfast clubs and their welfare and wellbeing practices. Schools value the opportunity to informally touch base with students on a regular basis, particularly those in need of additional support.

## Operational practices

Foodbank Victoria provides an extensive menu, including grab-and-go options such as fruit cups or an apple, to schools who are able to order as much food as they need to conduct their breakfast club.

The flexibility of the SBCP is acknowledged as a significant strength of the program. The capacity to adapt breakfast club practices to the unique needs of their school community is highly valued by schools, contributing to the positive response to the invitation to participate in the SBCP.

Staffing the breakfast club is the most significant challenge for schools, over 72% identify this as an ongoing barrier to the frequency and reach of their breakfast club. Despite this barrier, schools have made a significant commitment to running breakfast clubs.

The findings show that school staff are largely responsible for delivering the program, with 88% of breakfast clubs conducted by school staff. Teachers are supportive of the program however the findings indicate that education support and wellbeing staff have made the greatest commitment to operating breakfast clubs.

Many schools engage volunteers from their school community and local community to assist with the running of breakfast club. Schools with regular volunteers are very appreciative of their commitment to the breakfast club.

The findings indicate that some schools prefer not to engage volunteers with their breakfast club with 30% reporting that they prefer to run the program with their own staff.

Around 25% of schools report that they pay staff to conduct the program.

Schools have created leadership roles for senior primary school students at breakfast clubs with over 50% of schools reporting that students assist with daily operations.

More than 85% of schools provide additional food at their breakfast club. Schools report that their students prefer breakfast food that is not part of the Foodbank Victoria menu, with toast and spreads the most popular additional item. Preparing toast adds to the preparation time of breakfasts clubs.

Approximately 40% of schools have entered into partnerships with local businesses to donate the additional food for their breakfast club, over 75% purchase items from school funds, with some doing both.

## Connectedness and Relationships

The evaluation research shows that the SBCP successfully addresses aspects of disadvantage for students. Nutrition is the focal point of breakfast clubs, responding to the immediate hunger needs of students, but the wrap around benefits of the program provide greater avenues for connection and engagement with students improving their capacity to learn.

Breakfast clubs enable schools to create nurturing, caring environments, where students can start the day having eaten a healthy breakfast and be better prepared for learning.

Schools report that breakfast clubs strengthen relationships:

- 95% of teachers observe a positive impact on social relations between students and school staff
- 89% of teachers report a positive impact on social relations between students and community members

Breakfast clubs build connections with students, enabling schools to create safe and welcoming spaces, where children and families can connect with volunteers, teachers and the broader school community.

The case study research demonstrated the commitment of schools to the inclusive nature of the SBCP, breaking down the shame and stigma that children and families living with disadvantage experience.<sup>14,16</sup>

The food provided by Foodbank Victoria is vital to the success of breakfast clubs but the invaluable support and assistance provided through its staff, induction program and communication is highly valued by SBCP schools.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations for the SBCP emerged directly from the evaluation research findings:

**Recommendation 1:** That the Department of Education and Training and Foodbank Victoria investigate the possibility of providing additional practical assistance to schools to reduce the time required to prepare food for breakfast clubs. The aim is to reduce the time commitment for schools and make breakfast clubs more efficient. For example, the provision of larger (4 slice) or commercial sized toasters to schools would cut the preparation time for schools offering toast.

**Recommendation 2:** That the DET and Foodbank Victoria investigate ways to support schools to increase the frequency of breakfast clubs and provide breakfast to students every day where possible. For example, the DET could increase the scope of Foodbank Victoria to provide more support, or facilitate funding, for schools who are finding it difficult to offer their breakfast club more frequently.

**Recommendation 3** That schools be encouraged to consider the days of the week they offer breakfast clubs when not operating every school day. The aim is to recognise the challenges for children going without food for extended days when breakfast clubs do not run every school day. For example, the Foodbank Victoria toolkit and induction program could be amended to include information to encourage schools to consider the impact of long periods between breakfast club for students living with hunger and poverty.

**Recommendation 4:** That schools be encouraged to keep accurate records of attendance numbers. The aim is to support schools to monitor their own breakfast club and implement a quality improvement program to ensure the program continues to meet the needs of their school community. The records would also assist with future evaluation of the overall program.

**Recommendation 5:** That the breakfast-for-all approach of the SBCP be maintained and schools encouraged to promote the inclusive nature of their breakfast club. The aim is to ensure that all children are able to share the benefits and experience of a healthy, communal breakfast.



# 1 Introduction

This is the final report from the evaluation research of the Victorian Government's School Breakfast Clubs Program (SBCP). The program, run in partnership with Foodbank Victoria, established breakfast clubs in 500 primary schools across Victoria. The findings reported here draw from the 412<sup>2</sup> annual surveys completed by principals or coordinators in 2018 and the teacher survey completed by 735 school staff in 2018. The following questions guided the evaluation research of the School Breakfast Clubs Program:

1. How does the SBCP address the needs of students who attend school without eating breakfast and provide them with the opportunity to participate and engage with all aspects of school?
2. How does the SBCP improve student learning and connectedness to school?
3. How effective is the SBCP and how can it be improved and evaluated in the future?

The aim of the final report is to:

1. Provide a full description of the Victorian program
2. Locate the program in the international literature
3. Provide Foodbank with insight into the implementation and impact of the SBCP on students and school communities in 500 Victorian primary schools, and to identify effective school level practices and aspects that need improvement.
4. Convey the views of students, principals, teachers, school staff and volunteers and the parents who participated in the case study research
5. Provide Foodbank Victoria and the Victorian Government with evidence about the impact of the SBCP on the significant disadvantage experienced by students living with hunger
6. Make recommendations for improvement and future evaluation research

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated the percentages quoted in this report are based on the 412 responses received from principals, vice-principals or coordinators in 2018.



## 2 Current Knowledge

### The Early Years

Adequate nutrition is vital for students' physical, mental, social, emotional, language and cognitive health and development, particularly in the early years.<sup>1,2</sup> The physical, mental and social development acquired in a child's early years are prerequisites for success in education, the workplace and community.<sup>1</sup> Adverse effects in the early years, including hunger and poverty, extend into adulthood, impacting on wellbeing, mental health, physical development, literacy and numeracy proficiency and economic participation across the life course.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In the context of Australia's education systems, the early years have largely been aligned with the pre-school years, for example, The Early Years Compact<sup>4</sup> and the Early Years Learning Framework,<sup>5</sup> yet the science of early childhood development and the World Health Organisation defines the early years as pre-natal through to the age of eight.<sup>1,2</sup> The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework recognises the significance of the first eight years of children's development and extends programs into primary schools where possible.

Emotional wellbeing and social competence underpin the basic foundation of human development.<sup>1</sup> Alongside the nutritional benefits of food, research has identified responsive caregiving and learning environments have a significant impact on children's healthy development.<sup>3</sup> Research suggests that behavioural issues are more likely to emerge in students who are living in poverty.<sup>6</sup> The negative effect of family social and economic resources contribute to differences in children's wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that nurturing care provided by caregivers and communities alongside families can have a positive impact on student's health, growth and development.<sup>7</sup>

### Diet

Concern about childhood nutrition in western nations has increased in recent decades as research suggests that children's diet has deteriorated.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Additional concerns about the negative consequences for students living with hunger and poverty, and the impact on their health and capacity to learn, have been raised by welfare advocacy organisations across Australia, including Foodbank<sup>10</sup>, Anglicare<sup>11,12</sup>, and the Australian Council of Social Service.<sup>13,50</sup> A UNICEF review of Australia's progress on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child revealed that 603,000 students live below the poverty line and that social disadvantage is entrenched in certain communities, both urban and rural.<sup>15</sup> It has been reported that as many as one in five Australian students live in a food insecure household.<sup>10,11,13</sup> A similar number of students go to school without breakfast at least once a week and 15% go to school without lunch.<sup>10</sup> Going hungry can be considered as a measure of absolute poverty. Access to adequate food is a basic need and a child's experience of hunger is not a relative condition.<sup>16</sup> While the provision of food in schools is not a Victorian public health policy, the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) encourages government schools to adopt a healthy eating culture.<sup>27</sup>

Increasingly, schools are responding to the hunger needs of their students and provide emergency food or have established regular food programs when needed.<sup>18,19,20</sup> Internationally, the provision of breakfast at school has been likened to an increase in household income as children's needs are looked after outside the home.<sup>62</sup> In the United Kingdom, the provision of food in schools is part of public health policy and is predicated on the understanding that school meals are one of the most obvious policy interventions in students' diet.<sup>8</sup> The decision to turn to schools to address hunger needs is part of a broader engagement with the benefits of food for learning, both formal and informal, and the welfare and wellbeing of students and young people.<sup>17</sup>

## Food programs in schools

Breakfast is widely considered to be the most important meal of the day with a range of health benefits that support cognitive development, enabling students to concentrate and become more engaged in their learning.<sup>22,23,24</sup> With one in five students unable to access breakfast food at home, or missing this important meal, some state governments around Australia have supported the establishment of breakfast club programs in schools.<sup>18,20,25,26,27</sup> The aim of breakfast programs in Australian schools is to provide healthy, nutrient rich food that enhances student's growth and development.<sup>28,29</sup> Breakfast skipping is also a concern and is more prevalent in students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>23,61</sup>

Food programs in schools provide students with practical learning about the importance of nutrition for health. School gardens, such as the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation<sup>30</sup>, or those created by school communities<sup>28,30</sup>, help students to learn about where food comes from, how to grow vegetables and herbs, as well as the importance of organic produce, compost, waste and sustainability. Free range chickens have become a familiar sight in many schools, teaching students about the care of animals and providing fresh eggs to be used in breakfast clubs or cooking classes.<sup>31</sup> The literature also reports on the positive benefits of communal eating and the social dynamics of food.<sup>17,31</sup> The benefits of providing food at school to support students and young people with complex social and learning needs is also evident and many alternative learning environments incorporate food and meal times into their daily activities.<sup>32</sup> The provision of food is also part of a larger debate around the responsibility of parents and the position of students as health advocates in families.<sup>19,33</sup>

## Breakfast at school

Breakfast programs operate in schools around Victoria and throughout Australia<sup>18,20,27,34</sup>. Programs are generally provided through the state based Foodbank organisations, although other welfare agencies and local communities also provide food in schools. The nutritional benefits of eating breakfast are evident, however the benefits of providing breakfast at school extend beyond the student's immediate nutrition and physical health needs. Assessment of successful breakfast programs point to the significance of social dynamics and cultural dimensions of food.<sup>29,31</sup> Extensive research has investigated the impact of breakfast at school on social skills, concentration, friendships, relationships, connection to school, welfare and wellbeing.<sup>18,20,31,35</sup> A large body of evidence demonstrates that students who are well nourished perform better at school.<sup>1,7,22,36</sup> Teachers have reported that students are unable to concentrate and have reduced capacity to learn every day when they come to school hungry.<sup>63</sup> However, the benefits of providing breakfast at school are not conclusive.<sup>20,36</sup> The challenge for schools, systems and funding bodies is that many factors may contribute to improvements in student performance. However, some studies of breakfast programs in schools have shown an improvement in academic performance,<sup>8,37,38,39</sup> cognitive function,<sup>22,23</sup> attendance,<sup>8</sup> and behaviour.<sup>37,38</sup> It has been asserted that the benefits are greater for nutritionally at-risk and undernourished students and for those who participated in a breakfast program more regularly.<sup>36</sup>

When examining the relationship between food and learning, it is widely acknowledged that school communities are reflective of their broader community and the need to provide breakfast in schools should not be considered in isolation.<sup>2,34</sup> Research shows that children and young people avoid environments where they experience shame or social exclusion.<sup>14,16</sup> Research shows that the negative consequences of hunger and poverty can easily result in marginalisation at school. As the impact of not having breakfast is considered, it is important to remember that students have very little control over their home lives, including what, how, and when they eat.<sup>31</sup> Providing breakfast as a whole-school approach, without constraints or the targeting of specific students, creates an environment where students can eat without shame and the stigma of admitting to being hungry or living in poverty.<sup>35,40,41,42</sup> Studies show that whole-school, health-promoting models can address stigma and build connectedness for students and families in Australian schools.<sup>43</sup>

# 3 School Breakfast Clubs Program

## 3.1 The Victorian Government commitment

The School Breakfast Clubs Program (SBCP) commenced in 2015 when the Victorian Government committed \$13.7 million over four years to establish breakfast clubs in 500 government primary schools. The establishment of breakfast clubs in schools acknowledges that some Victorian students live with hunger and poverty which has a negative impact on their capacity to learn.<sup>44</sup> In partnership with Foodbank Victoria, the SBCP provides breakfast food to students in 500 of Victoria's most disadvantaged primary schools. The program began in Term 1, 2016 and the current funding cycle will conclude at the end of Term 2, 2019.

Figure 1. Schools currently participating in the School Breakfast Clubs Program, by school type<sup>3,4</sup>



The aim of the SBCP is to establish breakfast clubs to tackle disadvantage and make sure that every student, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to reach their potential.<sup>45</sup> Delivery of the program is designed to help student learning and attendance and to assist in building connections between students, families, school communities and local communities. The provision of a healthy, nutritious breakfast aims to enable students, regardless of their circumstances, to fully participate and engage in all aspects of their learning.<sup>46</sup> The Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) identifies schools for the program based on the Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index. The program is an opt-in initiative, with eligible schools invited to participate.

<sup>3</sup> Prep-12 Colleges, Special Schools and Language Schools are eligible for the program due to their primary component. For the purpose of this report, 'primary schools' refers to all 500 schools participating in the School Breakfast Clubs Program.

<sup>4</sup> In this report, Special Schools refers to all schools who provide special education for students with moderate to severe disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and physical, mental or health impairment. These include specialist development schools, schools for Deaf Children and Schools for Autism.

## 3.2 The role of Foodbank Victoria

The Victorian Government partnered with Foodbank Victoria, the largest food charity and provider of food relief in the state, to deliver the SBCP to schools. The SBCP commenced in Term 1 2016 with a staggered implementation, and by Term 3, 2016, the 500 schools had commenced operation.

Foodbank Victoria acts as a centralised food distribution service, sourcing and delivering a menu of healthy food options to schools using their existing warehouse, storage and freight networks. All SBCP schools are able to order the amount of food required to meet the hunger needs of their students. In addition to delivering healthy breakfast food supplies to all 500 schools, Foodbank Victoria plays a significant role in providing support to schools to assist them to establish their programs. The following is an overview of the role of Foodbank Victoria in the SBCP.

The process for this initiative begins with a school accepting the invitation to participate. Once Foodbank Victoria is notified, they arrange an induction to the program session with the nominated SBCP coordinator. Foodbank Victoria provides schools with a Toolkit that contains detailed information about how to run a breakfast club, ordering practices, recruitment of volunteers and common issues that may arise. As part of their agreement with schools, Foodbank Victoria provide an ongoing and regular supply of nutritious and healthy food, originally once a term but delivery increased to twice a term as fresh produce was introduced on a regular basis.

Foodbank Victoria organises the delivery of food to schools around Victoria, managing the logistical challenge of delivering to metropolitan, regional and remote schools. Products are packed onto pallets at the Melbourne warehouse twice a term, although schools can place emergency orders if they run out of products or have an increased level of attendance.

Foodbank Victoria plays a significant role in the ongoing support and development of every breakfast club. The Foodbank Victoria Coordinators are committed to developing relationships with SBCP schools. Schools are contacted to ensure that the program is running efficiently and products received. Foodbank Victoria provides assistance with issues raised by the schools, which can include insufficient volunteers, inefficient delivery, decreased attendance and limited physical space to operate the breakfast club. Coordinators also make annual visits to schools. Foodbank Victoria produces a newsletter that is distributed to all 500 schools, once a term. The newsletter includes information about new products, ordering and delivery timeframes, case studies of unique approaches as well as photos and quotes from students.

Foodbank Victoria's pro-active response to the needs of schools ensures the program has evolved and grown over the first three years of operation. Comments from principals and coordinators show that the support of Foodbank Victoria and their response to the issues and barriers that schools face undoubtedly contributes to the success of the program.

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*I am pleased with the support and efficiency of Foodbank. It has been a game changer for us (Annual survey).*

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### 3.3 Delivering the program in schools

The program model at school level is flexible, with local decisions made about the frequency of breakfast clubs, food offered, operating times, staffing needs, and the role of students. The approach gives school the autonomy to make their own decisions, based on the need of their students and school community, about how to implement and conduct their breakfast club. This has proven to be successful for the Western Australian breakfast program, which has been running since 2001.<sup>18,34</sup>

The overall aim of the SBCP is to run breakfast clubs as inclusive programs, allowing all students to attend, regardless of their family circumstances. The breakfast-for-all approach is significant as it enables all students to attend without the fear of being labelled as different from their classmates who eat breakfast at home. While schools encourage those in need to attend, the overall inclusive nature is designed to remove the shame for children and stigma for families living with hunger and poverty.<sup>14,16</sup>

Schools are encouraged to conduct their breakfast program as often as possible, but the frequency is determined by schools who take into consideration the needs of students, staffing requirements for the program, cost to the school budget and the school's operational practices. Foodbank Victoria Coordinators provide schools with assistance to support the frequency of breakfast clubs.

The food provided by Foodbank Victoria enables schools to run, 1) sit down breakfasts, where students share a communal meal sitting down to eat with their peers and breakfast club volunteers, 2) grab and go options, including fruit cups, apples and 200ml milk cartons, for students who arrive late at school and have not eaten breakfast, 3) classroom options, where the breakfast club is available in individual classrooms so children can eat and participate in class activities at the same time.

Principals and coordinators determine the level of staffing required to run their breakfast club and are able to decide the most appropriate staffing model for their school. The coordinator of the SBCP is often a staff member however the research shows that teaching staff are not always involved in the daily delivery of the breakfast program. Schools have adopted a variety of approaches to staff their breakfast program, including:

- A volunteer or volunteers from the school community, who may be parents, grandparents or carers, or a member of staff who undertakes this role outside their paid duties
- A member of staff, in many cases wellbeing or education support staff, who is paid to undertake the role
- Additional volunteers, who do not run the program, but provide assistance to the coordinator to conduct the program. These can include volunteers from community organisations, church groups, local council programs
- Students, mainly senior students in Year 5-6, who work with a member of staff to run the program.

Schools can order food for their students without limits, with the exception of vegemite and honey, ensuring they can respond to the hunger needs for students. SBCP food can be used by schools to provide emergency lunches for students and surplus food can be sent home to families who are recognised as being in need of additional support.

Schools are able to source additional food to supplement the menu provided by Foodbank Victoria. Costs for these are borne by schools, although many have entered into partnerships with local organisations to donate food or money.





# 4 Evaluation Research

Foodbank Victoria engaged Victoria University to conduct an independent evaluation research of the School Breakfast Clubs Program. The evaluation research has been undertaken over the first three years of operation, from 2016 – 2018, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

## 4.1 Evaluation research aims

The aim of the evaluation research was to provide evidence about the impact of the SBCP and rich insights into program implementation and outcomes at school level. The research was designed to identify effective aspects of the program, aspects that needed improvement, and the impact of the program on students and school communities. The project aimed to build on the existing evaluation tools used by Foodbank Victoria, including the baseline pre-SBCP survey and the evaluation of a School Breakfast Program being run by Foodbank WA.<sup>48</sup> The evaluation research analysed both quantitative and qualitative data collected from SBCP schools during 2016-2018, and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the SBCP address the needs of students who attend school without eating breakfast and provide them with the opportunity to participate and engage with all aspects of school?
2. How does the SBCP improve student learning and connectedness to school?
3. How effective is the SBCP and how can it be improved and evaluated in the future?

## 4.2 Study design

The evaluation research was originally designed to incorporate three components of research with SBCP schools:

- 1) Analysis of the baseline survey conducted by Foodbank Victoria with principals or SBCP coordinators, followed up by annual surveys, completed online, with all participating schools in 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- 2) In-depth analysis of data collected from 48 schools in 2016, 2017 and 2018, including school level data for individual students attending breakfast clubs, an online children's wellbeing survey and an online teacher survey to analyse their professional judgement of the impact of the program; and
- 3) In-depth case studies, with four SBCP schools in 2017.

School leaders and staff face many competing demands. Due to the extent of time required in the original design and as a result of feedback from participant schools, the data collection methods were redesigned in 2017, in consultation with Foodbank Victoria. The redesigned data collection methods included:

- 1) A comprehensive annual survey with principals or coordinators at all SBCP schools
- 2) An invitation to teachers in all SBCP schools to participate in the online survey
- 3) Expansion of the case studies from four to six schools.

### **4.2.1 Methodology and data collection**

From 2016 – 2018, principals in all 500 schools received an annual email inviting them, or their SBCP Coordinator, to complete an online annual survey. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete. The 2016 survey was developed from Foodbank Victoria's baseline survey and incorporated additional questions to investigate the implementation, operating practices and impact of the SBCP. The 2017 and 2018 versions responded to findings from the first two years of operation, in addition to operational practices and challenges identified during the case study visits in 2017. The 2018 survey also identified the respondent as principal or vice-principal and staff member, parent, carer, grandparent or community volunteer to enable the annual survey to ask principals and vice-principals questions around managing volunteers and the overall cost to schools of running the SBCP. The response rate to the annual survey was high, with 395 schools participating in 2016, 407 schools in 2017 and 412 schools in 2018, representing a response rate of over 80%.

### **4.2.2 Sample of 48 schools**

In 2016, emails were sent to principals in 48 schools, identified by Foodbank Victoria, inviting them to participate in the in-depth analysis of their breakfast club and the attendance of individual students. While the feedback was that this level of data was excessive, nine schools responded, representing 2% of SBCP schools. A total of 189 children's wellbeing surveys and 93 teacher surveys were received although only one school provided some of the school level data requested. Based on the feedback received from the 48 schools this data collection method was not repeated.

### **4.2.3 Teacher survey**

In 2017 and 2018, emails were sent to principals asking them to invite teachers to participate in an online survey that invited them to provide their professional judgement of the impact of the SBCP on students in their class who attend. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete and covered five key areas: educational, wellbeing, nutrition, discipline and social and emotional factors. The response rates to the teacher survey were good, with 376 responses in 2017 representing 26% of participating schools and 735 responses in 2018 representing 47% of SBCP schools.

### **4.2.4 Case study research**

Based on criteria (outlined in 4.2 *Study Design*), developed in consultation with Foodbank Victoria, the lead researcher on this project emailed six principals in 2017, inviting their schools to participate in the case studies research. Of the first six approached, five agreed to participate and the sixth declined on the basis that their school was particularly busy at the proposed time. The seventh school approached agreed to participate. The schools represented the four Department of Education and Training Victoria Regions. Of the six schools who participated, three schools were located in metropolitan Melbourne and three were located in regional Victoria. The case studies also represented a range of school types with four primary schools, one P-12 College and one Special Developmental School included in the sample.

The lead researcher visited each of the six schools for two or three days in term two and three of 2017. The data collected included observational notes, interviews with principals, teachers, parents and volunteers, focus groups with students and an analysis of school level documentation. While schools were paid the equivalent of one day casual relief teacher (CRT) payment in recognition of the work required to set up interviews and focus groups, the schools found it difficult to gain consent from parents for their children to participate and to locate parents who would agree to be interviewed. Despite these limitations, the case study evaluation research has provided rich insights into the implementation, challenges and success of breakfast clubs and informed the annual survey amendments in 2018. Copies of all data collection instruments are available separately by emailing the author.

The breakfast club coordinators in the case study schools invited their school community to participate in the research. The aim was to conduct interviews with the principal, teachers, volunteers and parents and to run focus groups with the students. Engaging the school community with the research proved difficult for some schools. The stigma for some parents and families of admitting to schools that they could not provide breakfast for their children was evident. The parents interviewed all reported having breakfast food at home but said that their children preferred to eat at school with their friends.

The following is a list of participants in the case study research. Insights from the 24 students, 11 parents and grandparents, 28 staff and 8 volunteers made a significant contribution to this report and informed the development of additional questions for the 2018 annual and teacher surveys.

**Figure 2. Participants for case study school interviews and focus groups**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Students</b>	<b>24</b>
Age 6-7	3
Age 8-9	9
Age 10-12	12
Gender – male	14
Gender – female	10
Attendance at breakfast club -	
All days offered	16
Occasionally	8
<b>Parents, grandparents</b>	<b>11</b>
Gender – male	1
Gender – female	10
<b>Staff</b>	<b>28</b>
Gender – male	6
Gender – female	22
Role with school –	
Principal	6
Teacher	18
Education, welfare or wellbeing support	4
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>8</b>
Gender – male	1
Gender – female	7

#### 4.2.5 Student wellbeing survey

The student wellbeing survey was designed for primary school aged children, 5 – 12 years old.<sup>5</sup> A sliding bar response was required, with students asked to move a face along a five point scale. The five point scale included very happy, happy 😊, through to not happy or unhappy, to unhappy 😞 or very unhappy. In 2016, 189 students from nine schools participated in the survey.

<sup>5</sup> The Student Wellbeing Survey was based on The Good Childhood Index, Wellbeing survey developed by The Children’s Society, a UK charity that works with vulnerable children and young people, for children aged eight and over, <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>.



# 5 Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program

This section provides evidence of the impact of the SBCP across a range of factors. The section begins with an overview of the hunger needs of students identified by schools prior to the Victorian Government SBCP. Evidence of the impact of the initiative across the state is provided through detailed analysis of the food delivered by Foodbank Victoria to SBCP schools, the frequency of breakfast clubs and the numbers of students attending. This section demonstrates how breakfast clubs improved student learning and educational attainment and connectedness between students and the school, their peers and local communities. The impact of the breakfast-for-all approach on the welfare and wellbeing programs of schools is also detailed in this section.

## 5.1 Before the School Breakfast Clubs Program

Prior to joining the program, over 65% of the SBCP schools identified that some of their students arrived at school without having eaten breakfast. Schools had responded to this perceived need, providing food to students as best they could. Some schools provided food in an informal way (e.g. by providing fruit and muesli bars in class), others reported that they were running a breakfast program on a regular basis.

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*Some students receive toast and cereal when they arrive at school. This is served in the classroom. Some parents provide the food and sometimes the school provides the food (Baseline survey).*

---

While the schools responded to the immediate hunger needs of some students, it meant that others who had not had breakfast were not identified. Some schools provided food but faced challenges that included sourcing a regular supply of food and staffing the program. These challenges, alongside the cost borne by school budgets, restricted the frequency of some programs.

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*I would like to run it every day, but getting volunteers is for us - the issue (Baseline survey).*

*We often feel that we could be offering more than we are but are held back by funding and time constraints (Baseline survey).*

---

Prior to joining the School Breakfast Clubs Program, half the schools reported that the hunger needs of their students were increasing. The increasing demand made it difficult for them to respond and a further 48% reported that student's hunger needs were remaining steady. Schools reported that they were struggling to provide sufficient food on a regular basis but were committed to ensuring students were given something to eat before they started the school day. The SBCP initiative was timely for many schools who saw the benefits of being part of a larger program. Alongside the benefits of having regular

food provided, schools recognised that the support provided by the Victorian Government and Foodbank Victoria would enable them to better meet the learning needs of their students.

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*We were approached by Foodbank Victoria. Given that our school breakfast club has been quite popular, having donations from the program will significantly help with school budget allocated to Breakfast Club (Baseline survey).*

*To assist us with healthy food items to better support our students and set them up for a successful day having had a good breakfast. The convenience of having items delivered straight to the school will be very helpful (Baseline survey).*

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## 5.2 School Breakfast Clubs Program food

Food is a central component of the SBCP. The need to provide breakfast at school for hungry students acknowledges the negative impact of hunger on children's learning. The SBCP recognises that nutrient rich, healthy food is fundamental for children's health and development. Foodbank Victoria provides schools with a balanced menu of predominately green rated foods (rated according to the Healthy Eating Advisory Service).<sup>6</sup> In 2017, the decision was made to include only products that are produced locally in Victoria.

Providing quality nutritious food to ensure all SBCP schools serve a healthy breakfast to students is the key focus of Foodbank Victoria. The guaranteed delivery of healthy breakfast food by Foodbank Victoria enables all 500 schools to conduct their breakfast club, safe in the knowledge that food will be delivered to them twice a term with the option to place additional orders if demand increases.

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*We are thankful for the deliveries and donations provided to our school. The support and food provided from Foodbank has allowed us to develop and create an inviting, friendly and popular place for our students to start the day. Our numbers have grown significantly and we are serving up anywhere between 250-400 snacks/breakfasts per week (Annual survey).*

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### 5.2.1 Foodbank Victoria products

The range of food provided by Foodbank Victoria evolved over the first three years of operation. The program commenced in 2016 with a small base menu of long-life milk, Vita Brits, oats and canned fruit. The food is delivered at the beginning of each term with an additional mid-term delivery if required. The menu expanded as new products, aligned with the green foods rating,<sup>6</sup> were introduced by Foodbank Victoria. In addition to the original menu, Foodbank Victoria introduced Wholegrain Cheerios, baked beans, muesli, fruit cups and fresh apples. Honey and vegemite were also added to the menu at the beginning of 2018 and a new product, 200ml milk (fruit box size) was introduced in Term 3, 2018. The menu provides students with a broad range of products which can be used for sit-down breakfasts or as grab-and-go options. The grab-and-go options enable schools to respond to the needs of students who arrive late at school. The fresh apples, delivered twice a term, are a welcome addition to the menu. To ensure the freshness of this produce the second, mid-term delivery was formalised in 2017.

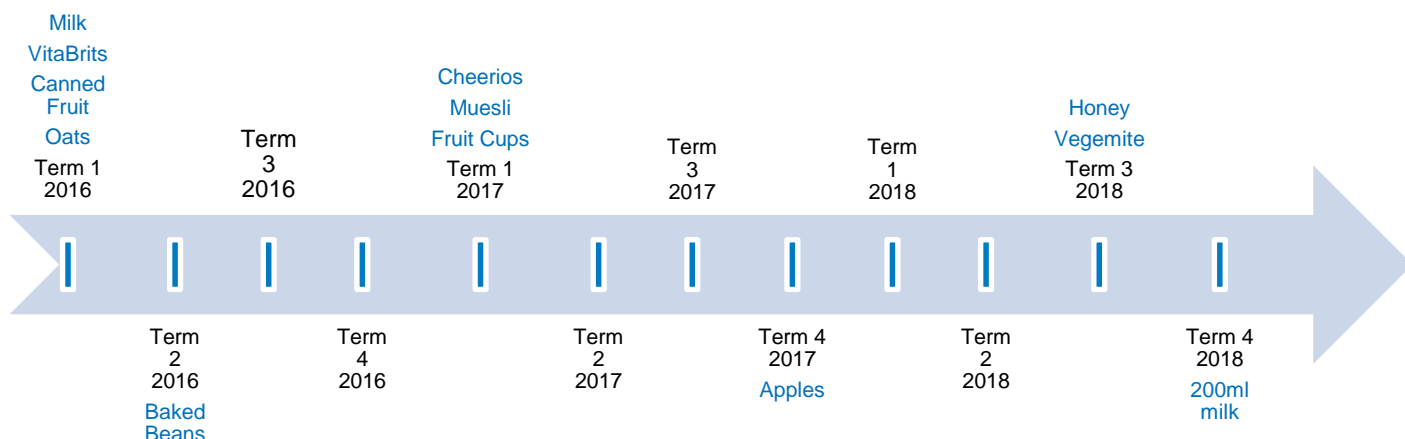
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*We love the fresh apples. When we get the 10 boxes we hand them out to all the children and they love receiving a fresh juicy apple (Annual survey).*

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<sup>6</sup> Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Nutrition Australia Victoria Division, <https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/>.

**Figure 3. Timeline of products introduced to the School Breakfast Clubs Program**



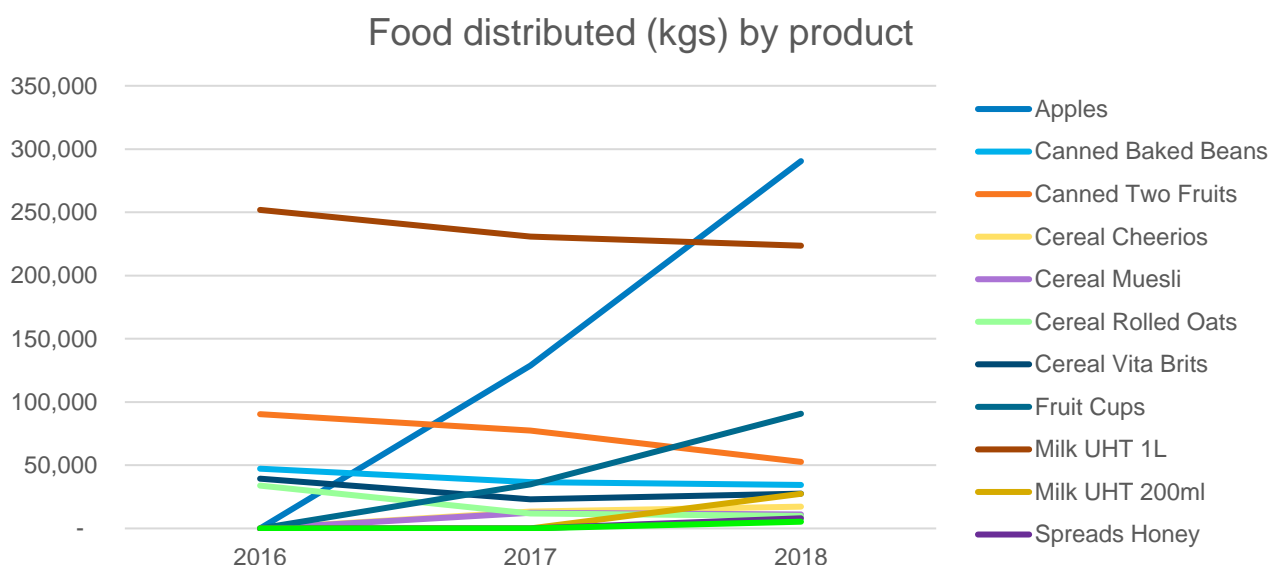
Students in the case study schools acknowledge the nutritional aspect of the food provided by Foodbank Victoria for what they describe as the most important meal of the day. The students also appreciate the yumminess of the menu that is offered to them at breakfast club.

*That it's really, really yummy (Student focus group).*

*Breakfast is one of the most important meals of the day, because it energises you for the day (Student focus group).*

The volume of food distributed by Foodbank Victoria increased over the first two years of operation as breakfast clubs were established and the menu expanded. The quantity of food required for the program levelled out in year two and three.

**Figure 4. Volume of food distributed (kgs) by years and product**





### 5.2.2 Ordering food

The online system allows schools to make choices from the menu items and to order food that their students prefer. There are a number of favourites reported by schools, but for the most part schools use the full range of products. The evaluation research did not ask schools about the ordering and delivery process or quality of food products delivered. However, the qualitative responses indicate that schools have minimal complaints with the service Foodbank Victoria provide.

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*We are so appreciative of the food we receive. It helps us enormously to provide for so many disadvantaged children, in a number of ways. We have also been able to assist families in times of hardship, by providing a parcel of food, with cereal, milk, etc (Annual survey).*

*Thank you for providing the food for our students. Even feeding one student is positive! (Annual survey).*

---

### 5.2.3 Additional food

While Foodbank Victoria provides schools with an extensive menu of breakfast products, over 85% of schools provide additional food for students. Schools report that their students prefer other breakfast foods and they need to provide additional food to encourage attendance at the breakfast club. The most popular additional item is bread, with over 75% of schools offering toast to their students. Schools indicate that students prefer toast for breakfast and purchase bread, margarine and spreads to accommodate their students' needs.

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*With the influx of all the bread and things that we were donated by Coles, we [were] donated a fridge and freezer and that's where that gets stored, so we've always got plenty of gear for the kids. The kids never go hungry (Volunteers, case study school).*

---

Bread is not one of the products Foodbank Victoria provides to schools. Bread has a limited shelf life and schools did not have the storage capacity for the amount required for each term. Sourcing bread from their local community has enabled the delivery of fresh bread to schools on a daily or weekly basis, removing the requirement to store or freeze large quantities. Over 75% of schools report that they purchase additional food from school budgets.

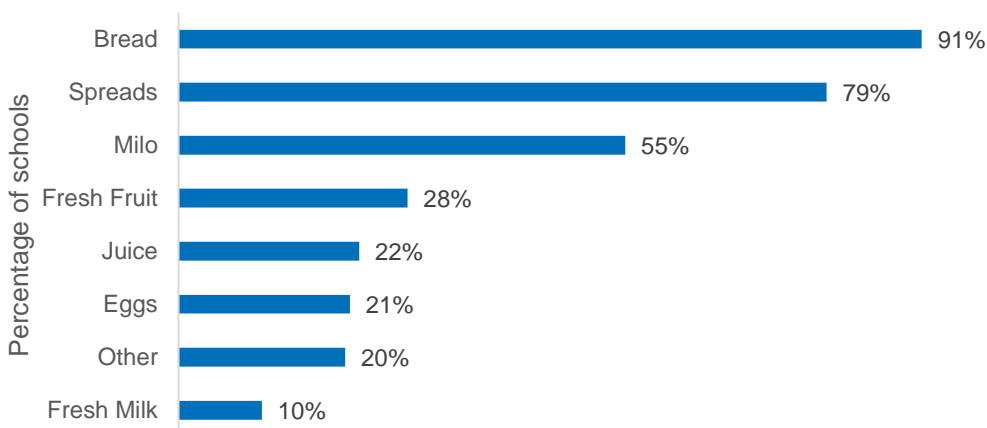
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*Many of our students only like toast, so we are having to use money from our welfare budget to fund the extra food required, although it was good to hear that vegemite and honey is now being supplied (Annual survey).*

---

Spreads, including vegemite, honey and jam are also popular additional items sourced by schools. The honey and vegemite introduced by Foodbank Victoria in 2018 was a welcome addition to the menu. Providing schools with these spreads will assist in reducing the cost of breakfast club for schools.

**Figure 5. Additional food provided by schools at breakfast clubs (n=353)**



Multiple options allowed, graph does not add up to 100%

The introduction of toast as an additional food adds to the preparation time for breakfast clubs. Staff and volunteers in the case study schools offering toast as an additional food arrived as early as 7.45am to prepare sufficient quantity to meet the influx of students and short delivery time. In contrast, a case study school offering the food provided by Foodbank Victoria, arrive at 8.15 to set up for the morning. For schools offering toast, many of whom report that they used two slice toasters, the additional time commitment is considerable.

#### **5.2.4 Creating a menu**

While many schools offer the program menu (11 items) to students in the original form a number of schools had been creative with their menu, creating their own recipes. Schools incorporate the SBCP food into school cooking classes and programs. Fresh produce from school gardens and the eggs from chickens is used to make items such as muesli bars or muffins with the food provided by Foodbank Victoria. In many Special Schools, the Foodbank Victoria products have been incorporated into life skills programs.

### **Stratford Primary School**

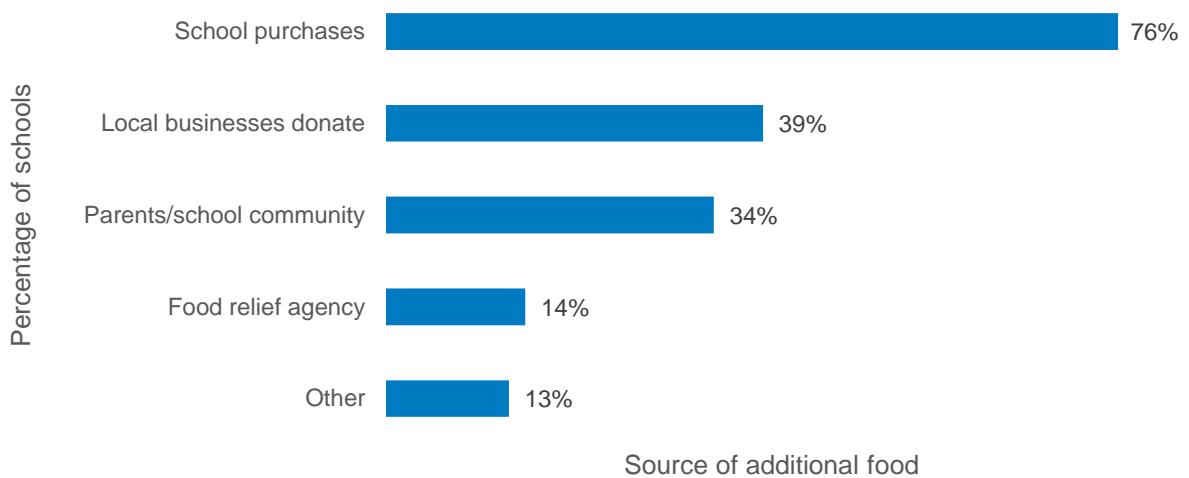
The dedicated parent coordinator of the breakfast club at Stratford Primary School integrated the food provided by Foodbank Victoria into school cooking classes.

The program runs in classrooms rather than a central location to ensure all students have access to the program. In cooking classes, she guides students as they prepare muesli bars and muffins from recipes she sourced on line. Once baked they are sorted into containers ready to be delivered to classes in the morning.

### 5.2.5 Source of additional food

Schools source their additional food from a range of locations. Approximately 40% of schools have established relationships with supermarkets and bakeries as well as local banks and community organisations to donate food or additional funds to spend on their breakfast club. Schools who previously operated a breakfast club, or offered food to students, are more likely to have established relationships with local businesses, with 38% of those with an existing program having food donated by local businesses compared to 22% of those who had not offered food to students prior to the SBCP

**Figure 6. Source of additional food provided at breakfast clubs (n=353)**



Multiple responses allowed, graph does not add up to 100%

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*We are allowed \$20 a week from the local Bendigo Bank to spend at our local supermarket (Annual survey).*

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A further 34% of schools indicate that parents and other members of the school community donate the additional food for the breakfast club. Over 75% of schools report that they are purchasing additional food from the school budget. There is also evidence that principals or school staff are purchasing additional food from their own funds.

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*I purchase them out of my own pocket (Annual survey).*

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Schools reveal that they incorporate products from their own kitchen gardens into the breakfast club. Some schools indicate that Stephanie Alexander gardens provide additional produce for their breakfast club. Schools with their own community gardens also incorporate the fresh produce into their breakfast club menu. School chickens are popular amongst SBCP schools and their eggs were often used in breakfast clubs.

Additional products are often used when schools run a 'special breakfast' for students. In some schools this occurs regularly, on a weekly basis, and in other schools this occurs once a term. Food offered to students includes eggs, cheese toasties, and pancakes as well as the baked beans and fresh apples provided by Foodbank Victoria.

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*We also have special breakfast days e.g. Pancake day once a term and cultural breakfast days (Annual survey).*

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### 5.2.6 Student appreciation of the School Breakfast Clubs Program menu

Students are appreciative of the food they eat at breakfast clubs. There is evidence that some products have become favourites and the introduction of wholegrain Cheerios in 2017, was a welcome addition. The overall feedback on the food is favourable and students report that this is a primary reason for attending breakfast clubs. Students do not however distinguish between the food provided by Foodbank Victoria and the additional food sourced by their school.

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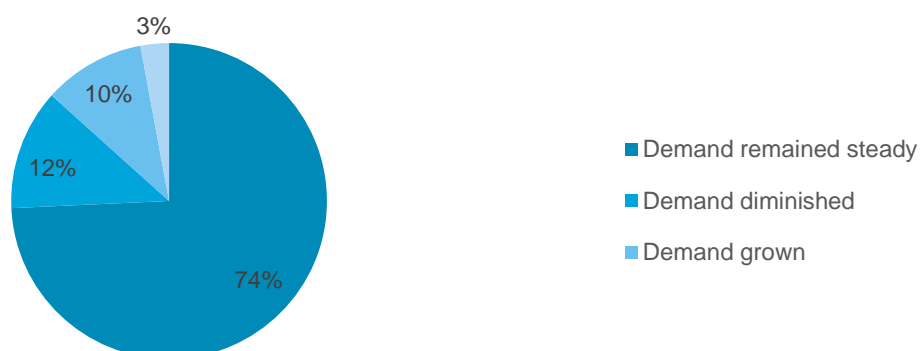
*They give you a lot of choices. They have vegemite toast and jam toast and plain toast and got your fruits, your cereals (Student focus group).*

---

### 5.2.7 Emergency lunches

The consistent demand for emergency lunches in SBCP schools demonstrates the ongoing level of need in these schools and their local communities.<sup>44,58</sup> In 2018, 77% of schools report that the demand for emergency lunches has remained steady over the three years the SBCP has operated. In addition to providing breakfast, many schools use the food provided by Foodbank Victoria for student lunches. The SBCP food enables some schools to provide more suitable lunches for students than they could before joining the initiative.

**Figure 7. Level of demand in schools for emergency lunches (n=409)**



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*We are a school with high welfare needs and this has saved the school money as we can provide breakfast and lunches to students in need (Annual survey).*

---

### **5.2.8 Excess food**

The food provided by the SBCP enables schools to better respond to the needs of families who are experiencing hunger or poverty. Approximately 85% of schools donate their excess food to families in need.

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*We deliver excess Breakfast Program food items to those families which we have identified in need, so they can have breakfast before school and on weekends (Annual survey).*

*The school is grateful for the provisions for our breakfast program and that we can use food to support families. It has been really helpful when families have to go to emergency/safe houses to give them food to take, including cereals and milk and baked beans they can microwave for tea (Annual survey).*

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### 5.3 Frequency of breakfast clubs

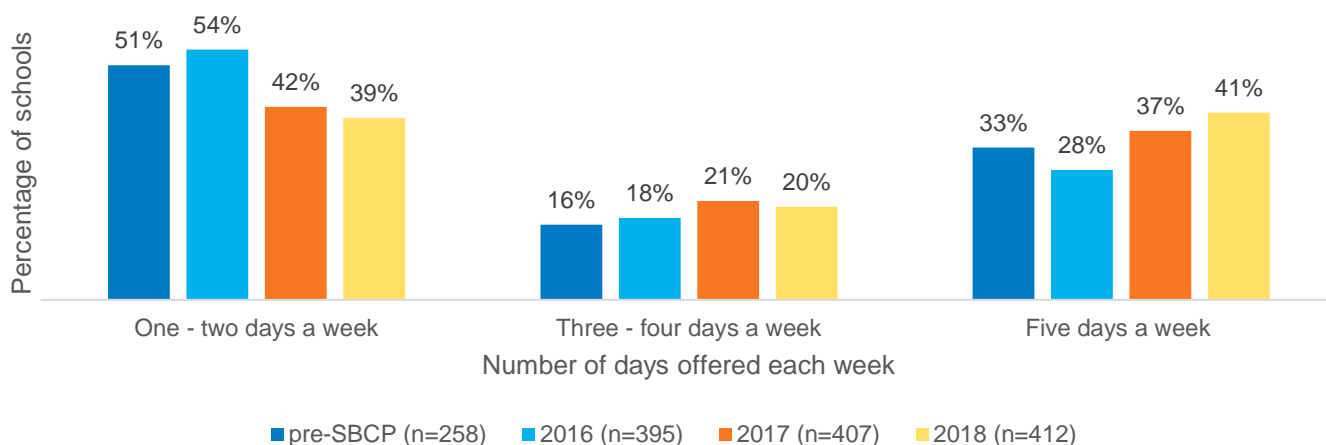
The level of need in some Victorian communities is clear, creating a level of inequality that impacts on children’s capacity to fully engage with their learning.<sup>44</sup>The SBCP is designed to address this inequality and provide schools with sufficient food for all students, every school day if required.

*I think a lot of kids in our population come from quite fractured families, substance issues and violence; domestic violence is rife through the community, not just ours; a lot of lower socio-economic problems, families have very limited support and that sort of thing. So our kids, I think a lot of them do it quite tough. Refugee families as well come here, there’s no support whatsoever and no family here, so really difficult sort of circumstances (Social Worker, case study school).*

In 2018, all 500 schools conduct their program on a regular basis, ranging from one day a week for 15% of schools through to 41% of schools who run their breakfast club five days a week.

Over the first three years of operation, schools consistently increased the number of days they conducted their breakfast clubs. In 2018, 165 schools offer their breakfast club every school day. This represented a 94% increase from the 85 schools who were able to offer breakfast food to students every school day prior to the implementation of the SBCP.

**Figure 8. Frequency of breakfast clubs, pre-program to 2018**



\*In the pre-program baseline survey, 72 schools did not indicate the number of days they offered breakfast to students.

In 2018, 39% of schools offer their breakfast club one to two days a week. The findings show there are a number of factors that restrict the frequency of breakfast clubs. There is evidence that some schools make decisions around the frequency of programs based on the school’s operational demands rather than the hunger needs of students. Barriers reported by schools include difficulty staffing the program, the cost of staff or additional food, and conflicts with dual space and other school activities. The findings indicate that the infrequency of some breakfast clubs impacts on the school’s ability to meet the hunger needs of students.

Approximately 60% of schools report that they provide food for students who arrive at school hungry on the days they do not operate their breakfast club. The food is provided on an individual basis for students and includes Foodbank Victoria food as well as products sourced independently by the school.

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*Why? Why wouldn't you run it five days a week? ... what, the kids are going to not be hungry on the other three days? ... if it takes buttering a piece of toast and giving it to them, to have a better day, and they can learn a little bit better, and not worry about the hunger pains (Welfare Officer, case study school).*

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### **5.3.1 Building on existing programs**

The findings suggest that the experience gained in running the program over several years has assisted schools to deliver the program more frequently. Schools who provide food for students prior to joining the SBCP are conducting their breakfast club more frequently in 2018. There are a number of possible explanations for this; schools had already recognised the level of hunger amongst their students; the guaranteed delivery of food from Foodbank Victoria enables schools to increase the frequency of their program; and these schools have gained confidence to run their program more frequently. Approximately 45% of the schools who ran a breakfast club prior to the SBCP report that they are operating five days a week in 2018, compared to 30% of schools who did not provide any breakfast food to their students prior to joining the program.

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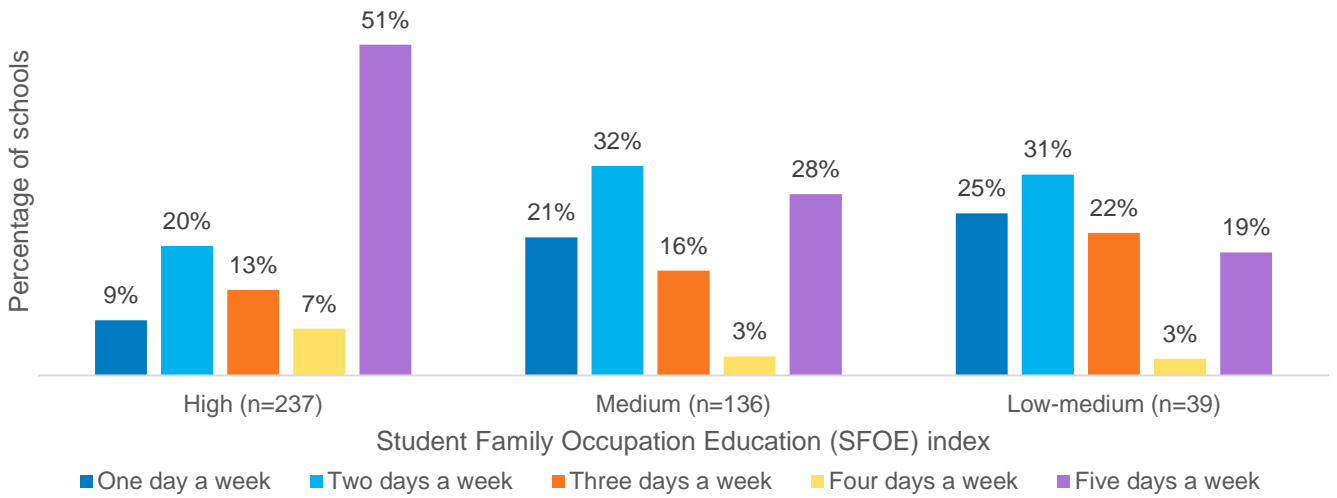
*Foodbank resourcing has seen our breakfast club expand and has encouraged the school to provide much better facilities for this program (Annual survey).*

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### **5.3.2 Responsiveness to need**

The level of need is unique to each school. The findings indicate that schools increase the frequency of their breakfast club in response to student need. Schools ranked with a high SFOE index, the greatest level of disadvantage, offer their programs more frequently than schools with a medium or low-medium SFOE index.

**Figure 9. Frequency of breakfast clubs by Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index**

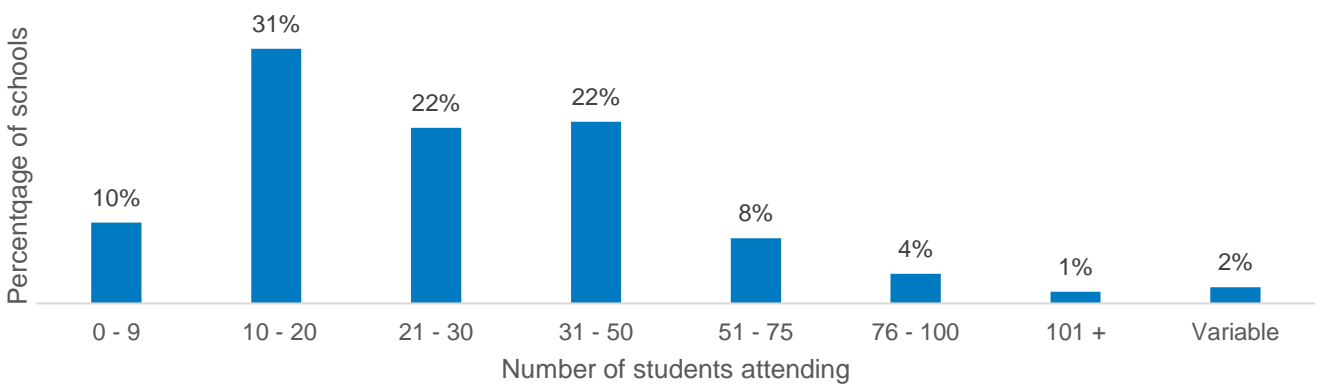


The findings point to the need for some schools to increase the frequency of their breakfast club to better meet the everyday hunger needs of students. SFOE index is a good predictor of food insecurity in schools, suggesting that providing additional support from Foodbank Victoria to schools operating one to two days a week may assist them to overcome barriers and increase the frequency of their breakfast club.

### 5.4 Attendance at breakfast clubs

The SBCP aims to reduce the number of students who start the school day hungry by providing a healthy breakfast for students who arrive at school without eating breakfast. By addressing the hunger needs of students the program aims to enable all students to fully participate at school and engage in all aspects of their learning. Measuring the attendance at breakfast clubs provides evidence of the success of the program in achieving this aim.

**Figure 10. Average number of students attending breakfast clubs each day of operation (n=412)<sup>7</sup>**



<sup>7</sup> This chart includes data from the 412 schools who responded to the 2018 annual survey for whom the average number of students attending is known.



An average of 33 students attend school breakfast clubs in each school, every day of operation. Attendance rates differ between schools, however the average percentage of students who attend breakfast clubs is 21% of the total enrolments (111,536) of all 500 schools.<sup>51</sup>

The findings indicate that schools are addressing the needs of more than the one in five children, identified by welfare agencies, who arrive at school hungry<sup>10</sup> although it is difficult to determine whether all students experiencing hunger or poverty attend. The one in five are not always obvious and research shows that children and families can be reluctant to admit that they are experiencing hunger or poverty<sup>14,16</sup>. An interview from a case study school highlights the need for schools and the school community to reinforce the inclusive, breakfast-for-all nature of breakfast clubs.

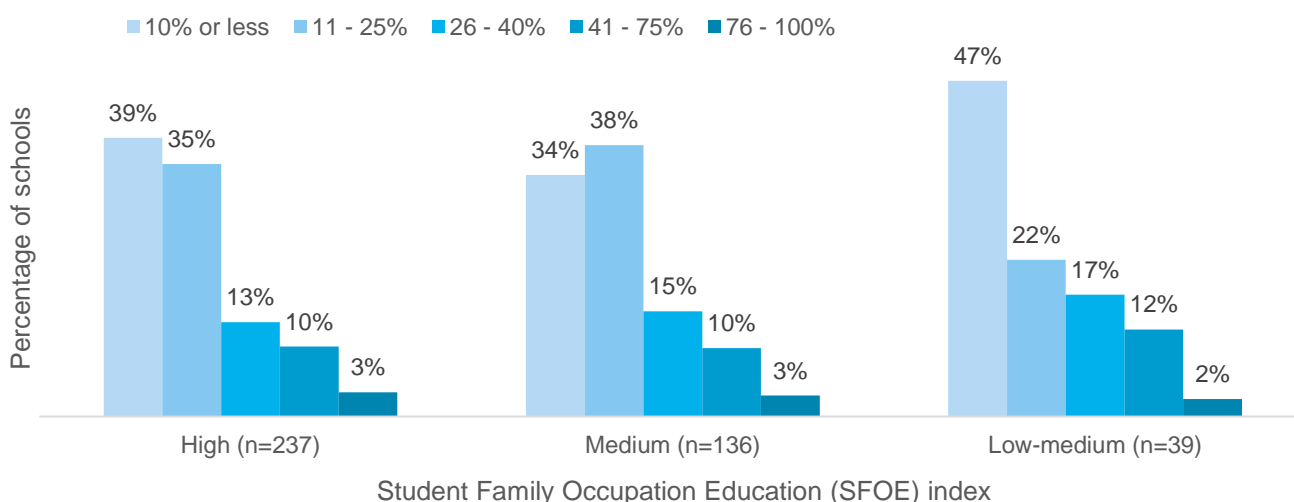
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*He [my neighbor] resisted [the breakfast club] at first, and I said, no, listen, it's for all kids at the school - they're entitled to come. There's no stigma attached because they think they might be poor. Nothing to do with that. (Grandmother, case study school).*

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Research shows that school principals are best placed to assess whether students in need attend their breakfast club. Principals play a crucial role in developing and maintaining relationships with parents and connecting them with the school community.<sup>57</sup> The relationships that principals foster with parents enables them to have a greater understanding of family circumstances than teachers who are focused on the child in their class rather than the overall needs of families. The findings show that almost 90% of schools believe that they are meeting the hunger needs of their students. The reasons schools report for not meeting the hunger needs of students are discussed in *Section 6.2.1, Operational Practices*.

**Figure 11. Comparison of average attendance at breakfast clubs by Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index**



The findings reveal that 74% of the 237 schools with a high Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index serve breakfast to less than 25% of their student population. SBCP schools are identified by their SFOE index, suggesting that high SFOE schools indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

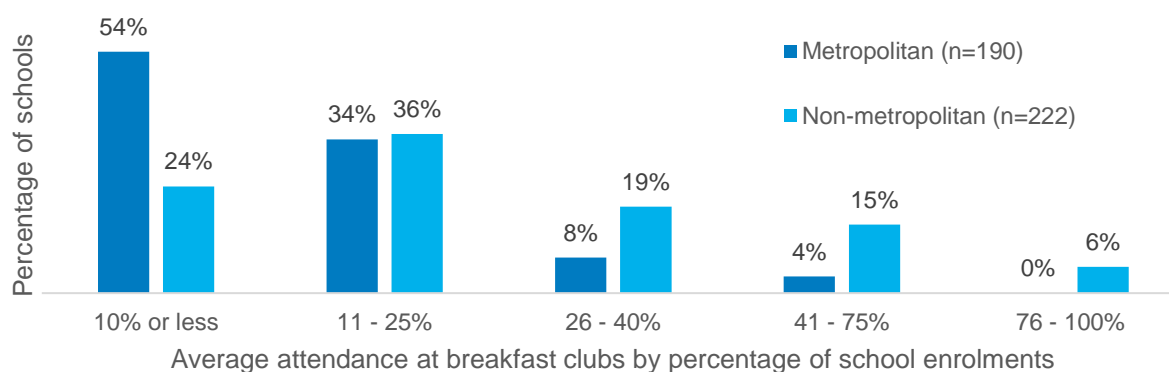
While the breakfast-for-all approach makes it difficult to determine the exact level of need, the broader understanding that one in five children arrive at school hungry<sup>10</sup> suggests that the level of need in these

schools may be higher. High SFOE schools report that they are meeting the hunger needs of their students and report the same barriers to attendance as medium and low-medium SFOE schools. A closer evaluation by the research team of the hunger needs for students in these schools may identify opportunities to increase the level of attendance in high SFOE schools.

A closer evaluation of the level of need in low-medium SFOE index schools also warrants closer investigation from the research team, as 47% of the 39 schools serve breakfast to less than 10% of their student population and 11 schools were conducting their breakfast club one – two days a week.

The findings reveal that non-metropolitan schools serve breakfast to a larger percentage of their school population than schools located in metropolitan Melbourne. Approximately 40% of the 222 non-metropolitan schools serve breakfast to more than 26% of their students compared to 12% of the 190 metropolitan schools. School size may be a possible explanation and the level of need may be another. There are 88 non-metropolitan schools with less than 100 students participating in the program, compared with 14 metropolitan schools with similar enrolments. The additional level of need in regional Victoria may be explained by recent evidence that suggests regional Victoria experiences higher poverty rates than metropolitan Melbourne.<sup>50</sup>

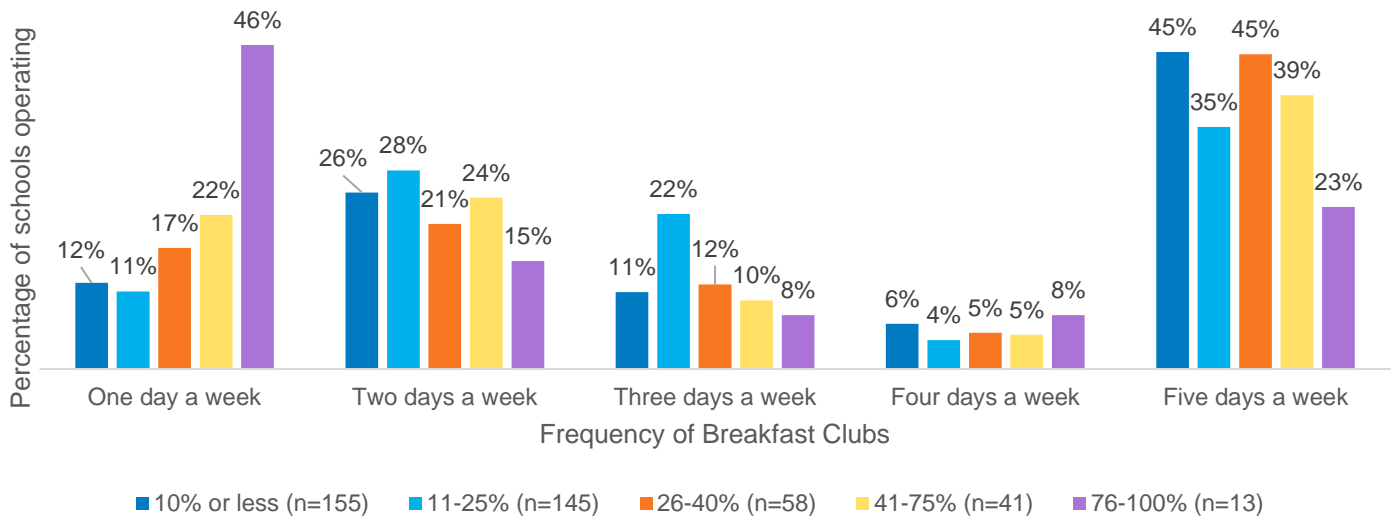
**Figure 12. Comparison of average attendance at breakfast clubs between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools**



#### 5.4.1 Frequency of operation by the daily average attendance at breakfast clubs

The 155 schools who serve 10% or less of their students offer their program more frequently, with 45% of these schools running their breakfast clubs every school day, compared with 23% of the 13 schools who serve over 75% of their student enrolments. The frequency of breakfast clubs does not appear to be influenced by the percentage of students who attend, with the exception of schools serving over 75% of their enrolments. This may be explained by the smaller size of these schools, who have fewer than 80 students, making it easier to serve the whole school population.

**Figure 13. Comparison of the frequency of breakfast clubs by percentage of student enrolments who attend (n=412)**

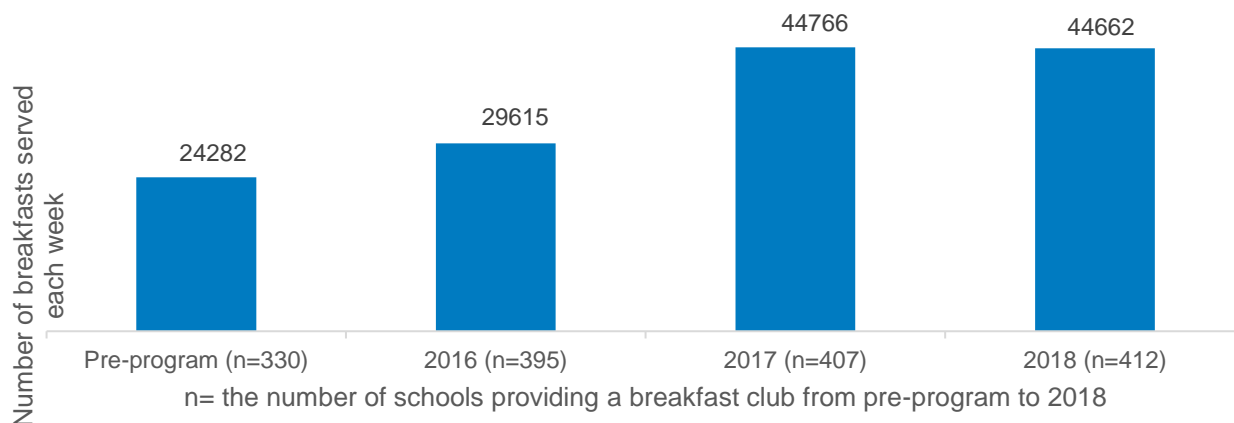


### 5.4.2 Average weekly attendance

Based on the level of student attendance, the 412 schools who participated in the 2018 annual survey were serving around 45,000 breakfasts every school week. Combined with the breakfasts served in the 88 schools who did not participate in the survey, the findings show that the SBCP served over 50,000 breakfasts every school week in 2018. The SBCP has increased the number of breakfasts served every school week in participating schools across the state, by 85% from the approximately 24,000 breakfasts they served prior to joining the initiative.

The increased numbers of breakfasts served can be attributed to the introduction of the program in 2016, the increased number of schools running breakfast clubs, the number of students who attend programs each day of operation and the increased number of schools who offer their program every school day.

**Figure 14. Comparison of the number of breakfasts served every school week, based on average number of students attending breakfast clubs, from pre-program to 2018, in schools who participated in the annual survey.**



### 5.4.3 Student motivation

Students in the case study schools provide valuable insights into their motivation to attend breakfast club. Food is a key motivator and many of the students explain the items they like. Food is not their only motivation for attending. Students appreciate the caring and welcoming environment of breakfast clubs and the enjoyment of sharing breakfast with their friends.

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*It's good because you get to sit down and talk to your friends (Student focus group).*

*The people there are really nice as well. The workers and the kids. You can make friendships, you can talk to friends, chat, talk about things (Student focus group).*

---

Students value the opportunity to develop relationships across year levels, and the attention of the staff and volunteers who run the programs.

For some students the chance to have a breakfast later in the morning is an important consideration. Several students report that they do not feel hungry at home as soon as they get out of bed. Others report the benefit of sleeping in or having a second breakfast. This is particularly important in the regional schools where many of the students arrive by bus, with some leaving home as early as 7.30am.

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*I find breakfast club really helpful because some kids don't really like to eat as soon as they get up. So, they can go to school and wait a while and then eat it. I really like it (Student focus groups).*

---

The students did not admit that poverty or extreme hunger is a key motivator for their attendance at the breakfast club. Yet all students in the focus groups attend breakfast clubs on a regular basis. The following quote provides evidence that hunger is a real issue for some of these children and may

demonstrate the engagement of avoidance strategies by suggesting that their attendance at breakfast club is a choice rather than a necessity.<sup>14,16</sup>

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*To help all the kids that either can't get breakfast in the morning or aren't really hungry until they get to school because that happened to me. So normally I'd go without breakfast and then I wouldn't have play lunch or fruit during the day, and I'd go have lunch and then when I get home I have a lot of food (Student focus groups).*

---

The reluctance to share their own experience of hunger supports the argument that children may avoid admitting the shortcomings of their families or their own experiences of adversity.<sup>16</sup> The students' commented on what hunger might feel like, pointing to their own experience but framed as what others would feel.

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*It fills them up so they're not, so they don't have an empty stomach and they're not hungry (Student focus groups).*

*It would make me feel like we get, when we have it, we wouldn't get stomach aches. Like we'll feel hungry, we won't feel that. We'll feel like we have lots of energy in our body, and when we play we can run around and we won't feel sick or something (Student focus groups).*

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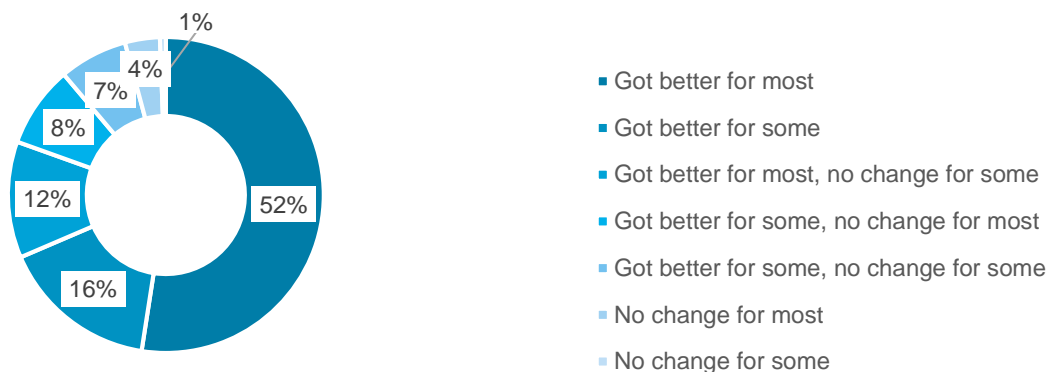
## 5.5 Learning outcomes

This section presents an analysis of the impact of breakfast clubs on student's capacity to learn. Analysis of the 735 surveys from classroom teachers, principals, specialist teachers, education support, and welfare and wellbeing staff indicates that the SBCP has had a positive impact on students' capacity to learn, engagement with learning and educational outcomes.

### 5.5.1 Impact on education factors

The findings show that the greatest impact of the SBCP on student learning is on their capacity to concentrate in class, with 95% of the 671 teachers who responded to this question reporting a positive impact. Teachers observe improved levels of concentration for students that enables them to focus on tasks and be more attentive to their learning. These findings were consistent with the evaluation conducted in Western Australian and Tasmanian schools.<sup>18,20</sup> Teachers who participated in the evaluation research of the SBCP linked the improvement in concentration to positive changes in student's attitudes towards learning and the school.

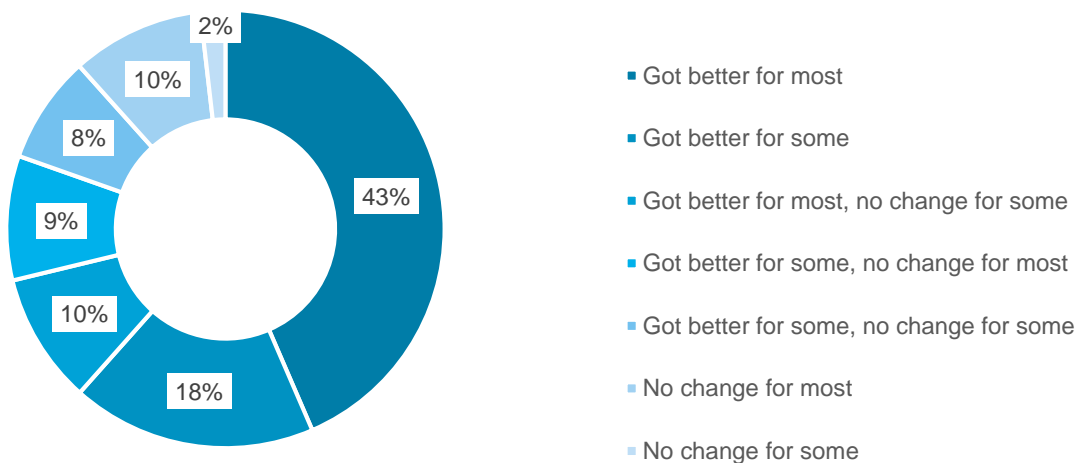
**Figure 15. Impact of breakfast clubs on student concentration, reported by teachers and school staff (n=671)<sup>8</sup>**



*The students I have in the first 2 sessions of the day are more settled and able to focus if they have had breakfast. Breakfast club provides the only food a number of these students have prior to recess so it makes a big difference (Teacher survey).*

The benefits of breakfast clubs on students' capacity to learn is not restricted to improved concentration. Almost nine out of ten teachers observe positive improvement in students' social skills and interactions with other students or school staff. These findings are consistent with findings from the Western Australian and Tasmanian evaluations and international research.<sup>18,20,23,31</sup>

**Figure 16. Impact of breakfast clubs on student social skills (n=661)**



<sup>8</sup> See Section 8.1.1 for an overview of the teacher survey design and the scale reported on here.

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*The breakfast club has provided a forum for our students to feel welcome, safe, secure and cared for. They enjoy the experience and look forward to attending this program each day. They continue to develop good social skills and independence, and this has created a flow on effect across the school (Teacher survey).*

---

*The breakfast club is a busy and social place. Students look forward to the days that the club runs and it is an opportunity to practice social skills, and the school values of respect, cooperation, friendliness and equality (Teacher survey).*

---

Nine out of ten of the 660 teachers who observe an impact on student engagement identify an improvement for students in the classroom. Teachers note that these improvements resulted in positive social interactions between students. Teachers report that students require less intervention to keep them on task.

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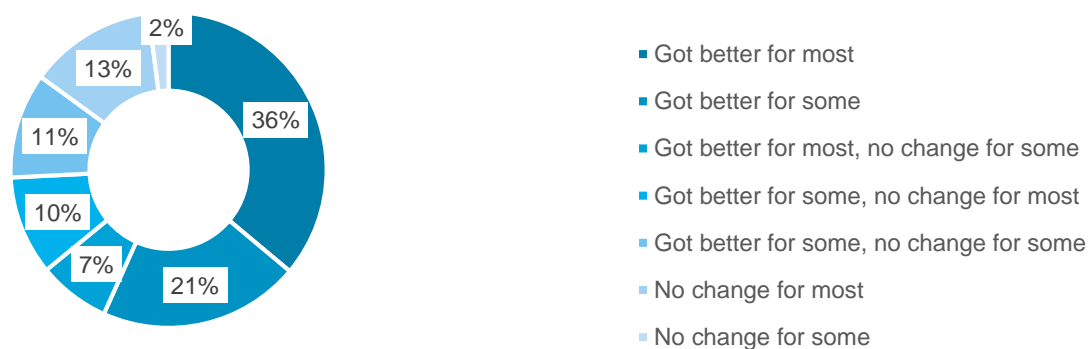
*Student / staff interactions are positive and engaging. Peer relationships have improved and we have seen a decrease in disengagement (Teacher survey).*

---

The impact on student concentration, engagement with class, social skills and behaviour noted by teachers led to improvements in their educational attainment and academic outcomes. Approximately 85% of the 640 respondents to this question note that academic outcomes have improved for students who attend the breakfast club.

It is difficult to attribute improved education attainment solely to eating breakfast at school. However, the findings from this evaluation research support other in the United Kingdom<sup>35,38,39</sup> and United States of America<sup>22,23</sup> that link improved academic outcomes with the provision of breakfast in schools.

**Figure 17. Impact of breakfast clubs on student academic outcomes (n=640)**



### 5.5.2 Great start to learning

The aim of the SBCP is to feed children who may not eat breakfast at home or have less healthy options available to them, in order to enhance their capacity to learn. The principals in the case study schools report that they are addressing this basic need through the breakfast-for-all approach and the frequency of their breakfast club.

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*But at the school level, the message is it's inclusive. Yes, and I often say to them [students and families] don't worry about having brekky at home. Have it here with us. (Principal, case study school).*

*We'd had a Breakfast Club here many years ago that was sporadic so it wasn't always consistent, so then the kids weren't always sure that breakfast would be here. So, it was trying to get that message across that every day it would here no matter what (Principal, case study school).*

---

The understanding that student learning and educational attainment can only be enabled when children's nutrition needs are met is clearly evident in the findings.<sup>3,7</sup> While concerns around the role of teachers in breakfast clubs and workload pressures are evident, the benefits of eating breakfast with students before they start the school day is clear. Over 80% of teachers surveyed believe that breakfast club have become an essential program at their school, integral to student learning and engagement.

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*Healthy mind=healthy body. It is essential that students are nourished and ready to start the day and engage in [their] learning (Teacher survey).*

*We believe that if children are hungry they can't learn. (Teacher survey).*

---

The focus group research reveals that students are aware that feeding their bodies and minds will enhance their learning. They attribute their understanding of these messages to families and teachers. The benefits of being healthy, safe and active and the distinctions between 'always' and 'sometimes' food are also taught to students as part of the first year curriculum.<sup>52</sup>

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*You have energy so you can learn more, so you don't fall asleep or anything (Student focus group).*

*Because some days I haven't had anything, so I'm hungry and I'm growing, so of course I need to eat in the morning. Some days I've eaten and [I'm] full so I just go and waste my energy playing outside (Student focus group).*

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### 5.5.3 Special Schools: doing things differently

A strength of the SBCP is the capacity for schools to adapt the program to suit the needs of their students. This approach has proven to be successful in other Australian programs.<sup>34</sup> The research shows that all SBCP schools have embraced this opportunity, with a range of different operating models evident in the findings, as outlined in *Section 3.3, Delivering the program in schools*.

Over 80% of Special Schools report that the SBCP enables them to create significant links between the food provided by Foodbank Victoria and their curriculum. Alongside the provision of a healthy breakfast, Special Schools incorporate the SBCP into their life skills programs, using the Foodbank Victoria products every day.

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*Yeah, so we try to use the food in a range of creative ways that are embedded within our work experience themed curriculum for our students, and that's an internal work experience focus. So, lots of catering programs run across the senior campus to give the students chances to develop skills on a supported level that hopefully they might take out of their school life (Teacher, case study school).*

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### 5.5.4 Impact on student behaviour

There is a body of research around the positive impact that breakfast at school can have on student behaviour.<sup>18,37,38</sup> Findings from this study also point to a positive impact on student behaviour for those who attend breakfast clubs.

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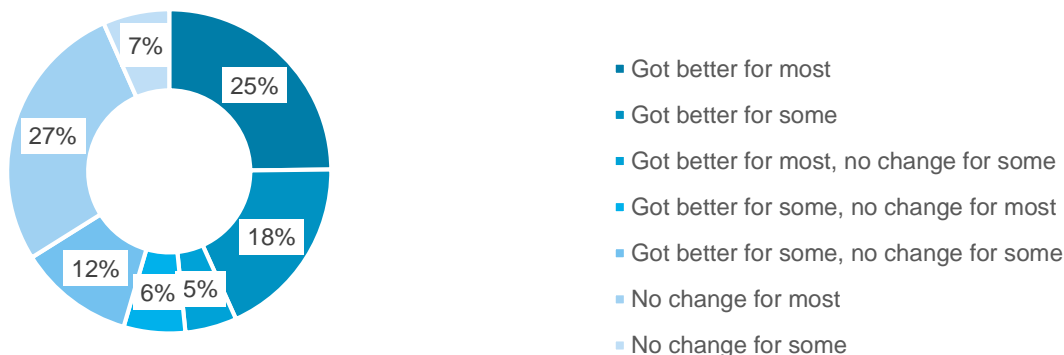
*I think, overall, our suspension and detention rates have lowered over time. I think breakfast club is part of many initiatives across our school (Teacher survey).*

*Our detention, suspensions and major behaviour rates have all decreased (Teacher survey).*

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While discipline intervention is not a concern for many SBCP schools, around 65% of the 407 teachers who responded to this question note less behavioural problems with students who attend. The evaluation of the Western Australian program also identified improvements in student behaviour and reported on the added value for the whole class with less disruptions or inappropriate behaviour.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 18. Impact of breakfast clubs on removal from class (n=407)**




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*Our behaviour data has shown less behavioural problems on days we have had breakfast club. Students enter class in the morning relaxed with higher concentration levels. Concentration levels last longer than the typical 10am dip from students who have not had breakfast (Teacher survey).*

*Attitudes to school improved from all students. We are continually encouraging students to come for breakfast, especially for our students that disengage or have social and emotional issues (Teacher survey).*

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The benefits of running breakfast clubs extend beyond the classroom; teachers report a positive impact in the playground. Breakfast clubs are used alongside other intervention programs to change student behaviour in schools.

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*We have found that on breakfast club days we have less problems in the yard (Teacher survey).*

*Some of our more challenging children love to go to our breakfast club and stay [to lend a] hand [and] help clean up. They know and trust our school chaplain who often advises them about positive behaviour (Teacher survey.)*

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## 5.6 School punctuality and school attendance

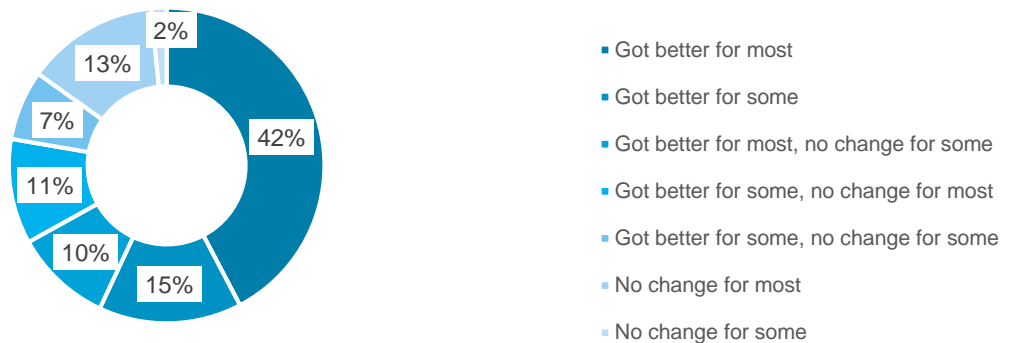
The benefits of regular attendance at school, being on time and ready to learn, are widely acknowledged. Regular attendance at schools helps students to succeed in education. There is a strong link between poor or irregular attendance at schools and adverse outcomes that can include unemployment or poor health outcomes across the life course.<sup>53</sup> Research shows that any improvement in a student’s punctuality and attendance has a positive impact on their capacity to learn and their future outcomes.

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*Students have improved their attitude to school and with teachers. They have improved in concentration and academic ability. They all look forward to arriving to school early to have breakfast with their friends and teachers (Teachers survey).*

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**Figure 19. Impact of breakfast clubs on student punctuality (n=646).**



Teachers and school staff report that the breakfast club has had a positive impact on the punctuality of students. The findings indicate that breakfast clubs have changed the morning routines of students, over 85% of teachers note that students arrive at school early to attend the breakfast club. Some teachers report a school-wide improvement in student punctuality.

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*Children's attendance has been better, they don't want to miss breakfast club (Teacher survey).*

*Some students who were previously late to school most mornings are now attending breakfast club, and that gives them at least two mornings where they are on time for school and in a better frame of mind to start learning (Teacher survey).*

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Teachers link the benefits of being in class on time, to an improvement in student attitudes towards school and readiness to learn at the start of the school day.

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*Coming to school early gets the students in a positive frame of mind. They are at school for the start of the day when reading occurs (Teacher survey).*

*Students have improved their attitude to school and with teachers. They have improved in concentration and academic ability. They all look forward to arriving to school early to have breakfast with their friends and teachers (Teachers survey).*

---

Teachers attribute increased attendance at school to the breakfast club. Some teachers note a significant improvement for an individual student, while 75% of 641 teachers and school staff report a general improvement for students who attend the breakfast club. The benefits for students being in class every school day are significant, with research showing that missing a day of school every fortnight adds up to a tenth of the school year.<sup>21</sup>

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*One of our students whose attendance was below 50% is now 74%, he is also happier and engaged in class (Teacher survey).*

*Children's attendance has been better, they don't want to miss breakfast club. Kids with full tummies have better concentration (Teacher survey).*

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## 5.7 Wellbeing outcomes

The welfare and wellbeing of students is a primary concern for educators who recognise that student resilience and wellbeing are essential for children's academic and social development.<sup>53,54</sup> Student wellbeing has been linked to their connectedness and satisfaction with life at school.<sup>54</sup> The launch of the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (October 2018), demonstrates the commitment of Federal and State Ministers of Education to ensuring schools have best-practice advice on how to build positive learning environments that support student learning, safety and wellbeing.<sup>53</sup> The aim is to create learning environments where the whole school community can feel connected, safe and respected. The Department of Education and Training Victoria has prioritised wellbeing in their Strategic Plan 2018-2022.<sup>56</sup> Findings from the evaluation research highlight the strong links that schools have made between breakfast clubs and their welfare and wellbeing practices.<sup>31,43</sup>

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*Well, from a wellbeing point of view, I think the kids know that there's something there if they need it. I think it's a bigger picture wellbeing, in that they feel cared about. You know, it's not just come to school and do your work, there's other bits to it as well. I'd really love a way of making a connection between those kids that are specifically not having anything to eat and how it impacts on their learning. Because at the moment, as much as we try, it's all anecdotal really to be able to do that. And it's hard.  
(Principal, case study school).*

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### 5.7.1 Wellbeing staff involvement

SBCP schools are identified by the level of disadvantage of their student population, as calculated by the Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index. Many SBCP schools have staff dedicated to the wellbeing of their students to provide appropriate support services for the level of disadvantage across their school community. These can include full time or part time, wellbeing officers, youth workers, chaplains and social workers. The findings show that schools identify the benefits of involving these staff and education support staff in the daily running of breakfast clubs.

Over 30% of the 242 principals who responded to the 2018 annual survey indicate that wellbeing staff are running, or assisting with, the daily operation of their breakfast club. This figure is considered to underestimate their level of involvement as 248 schools report that education support staff and 181 schools indicate that wellbeing staff assist with the daily running of their breakfast club. Some schools report that they have had both education support and wellbeing staff running their breakfast club.

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*It is run by our school chaplain. Records are kept of attendance, informal welfare checks occur during this time (Annual survey).*

---

The benefit of having education support and wellbeing staff involved with breakfast clubs are acknowledged by schools. The opportunity to check in or touch-base with students who are identified as vulnerable or at risk first thing in the morning is considered a key benefit of the program. The informal nature of breakfast clubs enables wellbeing staff to initiate conversations first thing that may flag the need to follow up with certain students later in the day.

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*It's a great time to catch up with children at risk in a less formal way (Teacher survey).*

*Our students are now greeted every day as they walk through and most stop for breakfast. It enables us to keep a close eye on our students and see how they come into school, often after a fairly rough night (Teacher survey).*

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### **5.7.2 Nurturing, caring environments**

The findings demonstrate that the breakfast club environment assists schools to address aspects of disadvantage. The nurturing environment of breakfast clubs enables students to be fed and feel cared for before they start the school day. Schools create safe and welcoming environments to conduct their breakfast club. The case study research demonstrates how staff and volunteers greet children and invite them to join in and eat breakfast. The schools incorporate music, couches, café style tables and chairs to make the environment a safe and welcoming space for students.

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*Students feel connected to school and safe within the various age groups. This enhances wellbeing. I think that breakfast club days would be the favourite days of the week for some students because it's such a welcoming environment and having breakfast prepared is such a nurturing thing. There is great excitement among the small children when someone calls out that Breakfast Club is on (Teachers survey)*

*The quality of the staff and the expectations of respect mean that the area is nurturing and caring and calming (Teacher survey)*

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## Glengala Primary School

Glengala Primary School runs their breakfast club out of their school canteen. The space is well lit and brightly coloured. Café style tables and chairs allow the students to sit with their friends.

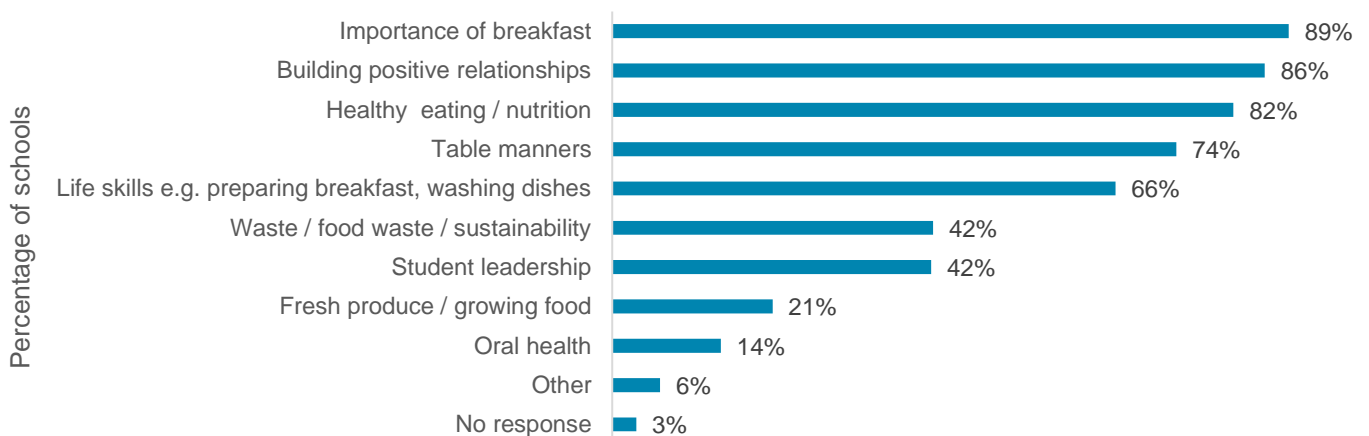
The canteen manager and school social worker greet the students by name as they arrive and engage in conversation about their life outside of school.

### 5.7.3 Healthy nutrition

A healthy diet is vital for children's development and the adverse effects of poor nutrition in the early years can have significant effects across the lifecourse.<sup>1,2</sup> The findings show that schools have embraced the opportunity presented by the SBCP to educate children about healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.<sup>52</sup>

Time constraints around the delivery of breakfast clubs and the staff or volunteers who run the program restrict the opportunity for intensive learning about healthy eating while the students are eating breakfast. The dilemma of time constraints was also evident in the evaluation of the Western Australian program.<sup>18</sup> Informal learning was evident in the case study research and over 90% of schools report that the SBCP helps them teach students about the importance of breakfast. Other important learning opportunities include teaching table manners and life skills, such as washing up and the preparation of breakfast food.

**Figure 20. Informal learning linked to the School Breakfast Clubs Program (n=412)**



\*Annual survey responses, principals and coordinators were invited to respond to multiple learning opportunities

Approximately 90% of 635 teachers indicate that the SBCP has a positive impact on students' awareness of healthy eating and the importance of breakfast. The impact is particularly significant for students in the first years of school, where teachers note improvements in students understanding of the importance of healthy eating.

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*When we are working on healthy foods and lifestyles, the children are able to relate to the food we serve, as being good choices, still tastes great and they feel better for it (Teacher survey).*

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With reports that contemporary families are less likely to sit down and share meals together, teachers indicate that breakfast club help to educate students about the benefits of sharing a communal meal.<sup>31</sup>

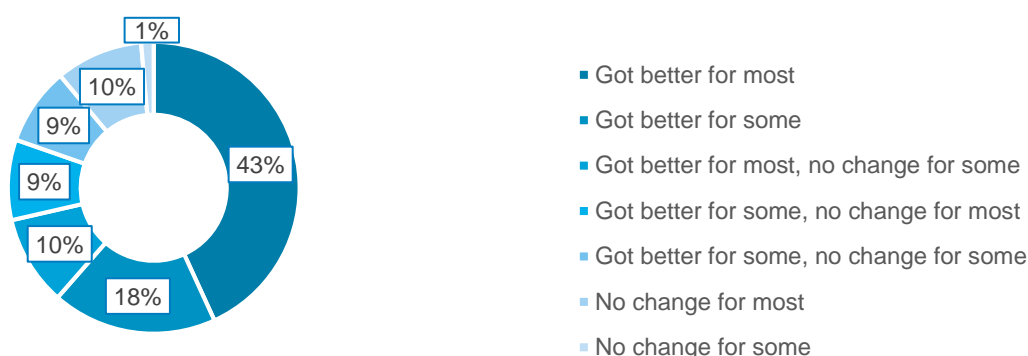
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*Some of the students who attend breakfast club from my class haven't experienced sharing a meal with others regularly. It is a great experience to sit and eat together using proper etiquette. (Teacher survey).*

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The findings also highlight the benefits of breakfast clubs for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of students. Nine out of ten teachers (632 respondents) observe that the breakfast club has a positive impact on student's mental health for those who attend and 89% of teachers note a positive impact on their physical health.

**Figure 21. Impact of breakfast clubs on the physical health of students (n=651)**



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*Students of my class are becoming healthier, being exposed to healthy foods has got them feeling interested in what they're actually eating (Teacher survey).*

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### 5.7.4 Student Wellbeing Survey

Findings from this aspect of the evaluation research highlight the student's happiness with their breakfast club. Over 90% of the students indicate that they were happy or very happy with the program. Approximately 80% of students reported that they were happy or very happy with the food provided. The wellbeing survey included general questions about student's happiness at school. The findings are of interest but are not directly relevant to the evaluation research of the SBCP so are not elaborated on further.

Figure 22. Findings from student wellbeing survey (n=189)

How happy are you ...	Very happy	Happy
With breakfast club?	78%	13%
With your relationships with your teachers?	68%	19%
With the food at breakfast club?	68%	19%
With your relationships with your friends?	68%	17%
With your life as a whole?	65%	23%
With your health?	63%	23%
The amount of energy you have?	59%	26%
About how safe you feel at school?	57%	24%
About how you are doing with your school work?	57%	28%
With your relationships with other children at school?	50%	32%
That you get enough sleep and rest?	43%	22%

## 5.8 Shame and stigma

The role that stigma played in children’s non-attendance at breakfast clubs was not reported in the annual survey by principals and coordinators. However, the shame of living with hunger or poverty is widely recognised as one factor in the limited take up of schemes designed to tackle poverty.<sup>14</sup> Classroom teachers in the case study research, report a stigma for some families that restricts children’s attendance at breakfast club. When questioned about this finding, principals and teachers acknowledge that shame and stigma continue to present a barrier for some children and families.

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*I think if we can overcome that stigma, or what they believe they may not be providing for their family, ... I think [breakfast club] would be well used across our school. Most of our families would make use of it. But I think that’s a long-term process and a wider community perception as well (Principal, case study school)*

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### 5.8.1 Stigma for parents and families

An underlying stigma was further evident in the case study research. A youth worker reported that parents of students participating in the program declined to participate in the case study research as they said that ‘our kids don’t need to have brekky at school, they eat at home, we feed them’.

The challenges of interviewing parents and running focus groups with children in the case study research highlighted the challenges of speaking to those who stand to benefit most from the SBCP. Despite the best efforts of the case study schools, 11 interviews were conducted with parents across five schools and all described their children’s attendance at breakfast club as a choice rather than a necessity, reporting that the children chose to eat breakfast at school with their friends.



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*We actually heard some kids say, 'my mum and dad told me I'm not allowed to go. I'm not allowed to go to Breakfast Club, because we [parents] feed you' (Teacher survey).*

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### 5.8.2 Shame for children

Research shows that children living with disadvantage actively engage in avoidance strategies rather than experience the feeling of shame.<sup>16</sup> The desire to avoid being marginalised or judged by their peers was particularly evident during a focus group with older students. They value the inclusive nature of breakfast club and suggest that the judgement of others would stop them from attending.

---

*Just being able to not have to answer personal questions. So people won't have to ask why you're having breakfast here, and they're not judging you as well (Student focus group).*

*And no one judges you as well, if you don't have breakfast in the mornings (Student focus group).*

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### 5.8.3 Reducing stigma

The SBCP was designed as a breakfast-for-all approach. The approach is designed to address the shame and stigma experienced by students in targeted programs that require them, or their families, to admit that they are living with hunger and poverty. The findings demonstrate how schools have embraced the inclusive nature of the SBCP and are committed to breaking down the underlying stigma for families. Schools are actively promoting the program to all students and families.

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*I think that's the way it used to be, that there was this huge stigma that came with brekkie program. We've had some information in the newsletters. We've done more talking at assemblies ... So, we're trying to make it as a normal part of your day. It's normal to have breakfast, it's not normal not to have breakfast and then come ... and not being able to focus and concentrate. ...we're just steering in the direction of breakfast is a normal part of every kids day (Welfare Officer, case study school).*

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## 5.9 Connectedness

Achieving a sense of connectedness or belonging at school, is acknowledged as a key protective factor for children's health, education, and social well-being.<sup>43,52,56</sup> The importance of primary school students feeling connected to school is a key focus of the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) and is a measurement indicator for the DET's wellbeing objective in their 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.<sup>56</sup>

### 5.9.1 Developing relationships and connecting with students

The benefits of breakfast clubs to building relationships and connectedness between students, families and schools emerged as a strong theme across all aspects of the research. Relationships strengthen as students share a communal meal with friends.

Principals, teachers and school staff identify the nurturing, caregiving environments of breakfast clubs as an ideal space to build relationships and connect with students outside the constraints of the classroom and a busy curriculum. The benefit of breakfast clubs to building relationship between students and staff was reported by 95% of teachers as a key impact of their breakfast club. For students, connecting with friends and developing relationships at their breakfast club is a key motivator for attending.

**Figure 23. Impact of breakfast clubs on social relations between students and school staff (n=630)**



Principals in the case study schools provide valuable insights into the significant role that breakfast clubs played in building relationships with students and connecting them with school. The value of SBCP extends beyond the food, and one case study principal clearly articulated the wrap around benefits of breakfast clubs that help address the complex risk factors many of their student’s experience.

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*So, it’s food, it’s people, it’s relationships, it’s connection and it’s trying to build those; or probably mitigate against the risk factors that our kids have in their lives and to build that strong feeling of connectedness and belonging. Food is an integral part of that (Principal, case study school)*

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### 5.9.2 Getting to know students

In many schools, teaching staff have taken on the role of co-ordinating the SBCP but are not actively involved in the everyday delivery of the program. The findings indicate that education support, welfare and wellbeing staff have made the greatest commitment to running breakfast clubs.

The case study research suggests that classroom teachers engage with their breakfast clubs to build relationships. Many of the 15 teachers interviewed indicate that they enjoy the informal nature of breakfast clubs. Teachers report that they visit breakfast clubs to touch-base with their students before school. The informal nature of the breakfast club enables them to get to know their students and their lives outside the classroom.

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*I’ll stop and have breakfast with the kids, it’s a good time to just hang out with the kids and gauge how they’re going to be for the rest of the day (Teacher, case study).*

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*Often ... a couple of teachers will sit down when the kids are eating and will have breakfast with them too, and just be able to have that informal relationship building kind of exercise, chat about the weekend, you know it's not about school, it's just about us getting to know each other (Teacher, case study school).*

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Other teachers note the benefits of building cross-age relationships. Breakfast clubs promote a whole school atmosphere where students, staff, volunteers and families come together to share a meal.

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*I think it really helps to bring our school community together in terms of the kids at brekky club. It just helps to build that because everyone just sits at the table together, they chat, they're practicing those social skills, conversational skills, which a lot of our kids don't have (Teacher, case study school).*

*Connected to peers. Feeling of belonging and interaction of different ages. Relaxed feelings coming into class means less behaviour problems and greater acceptance from peers (Teacher, case study school).*

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Teachers identify the role of breakfast clubs to help students avoid the shame of hunger, enabling them to achieve a sense of belonging and connectedness through their participation in the program.<sup>16</sup> Teachers suggest that students feel just like their peers in this space.

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*We have a number of children who do not bring lunch and do not have breakfast. In their case, eating with the other students makes them feel very 'normal' (Teacher survey).*

*The breakfast club has given the students a sense of belonging at school and that [the] teacher, and the school really does care about them as a person (Teacher survey).*

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### **5.9.3 The benefits of eating with friends**

Students reveal that food is a key reason for attending the breakfast club, but they also comment on the opportunity to strengthen relationships with their friends. The opportunity to touch base with friends before they move into the classroom is highly valued.

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*Yes, most of my friends are always there, and I'm just looking for my friends (Student focus group).*

*I like going to Breakfast Club because they have nice food, and you can interact with your friends in the morning (Student focus group).*

---

Children also acknowledge the significance of building new relationships at their breakfast club. They appreciate the opportunity to get to know students in other year levels.

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*It helps because if you don't know other people that come to Breakfast Club, like grade five, sixes, or year fives, you get to know them, and then you can chat with them and you can have breakfast with them (Student focus group).*

---

Students also comment on the daily interactions with the staff and volunteers. For some students, the greeting they receive from breakfast club staff and volunteers is the first positive interaction in their day. The importance of breakfast clubs to addressing some of the challenging family circumstances children experience is evident in the findings.<sup>32,56</sup>

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*The people there are really nice as well. The workers, and the kids. You can make friendships, you can talk to friends, chat, talk about things (Student focus group).*

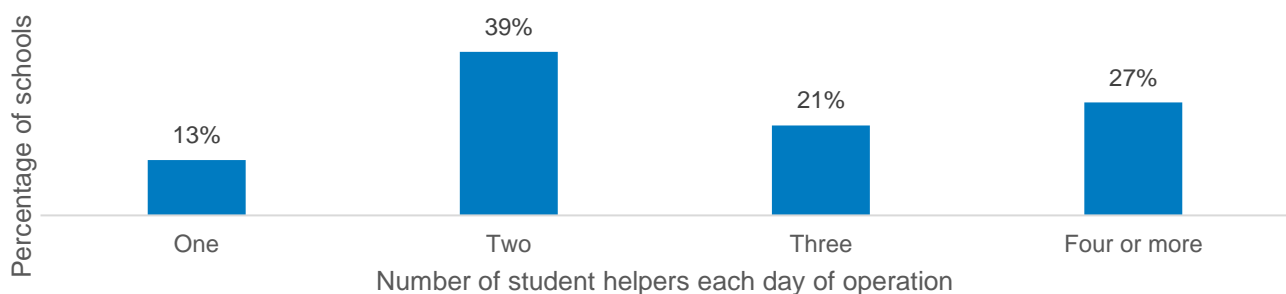
*Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, we have my mum, Ben's Nan and sometimes John's mum come in. And Sally, which is Ollie, Archie and Tom's mum. And they serve us toast and fruit and cereal, in case you didn't have any breakfast at home (Student focus group).*

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#### 5.9.4 Student helpers and breakfast club captains

Schools report that they engage students with breakfast clubs in a variety of ways. Schools identify a leadership opportunity for senior students to help with the daily conduct of breakfast clubs. Over 50% of schools report that they run their program with student helpers, with roles including Breakfast Club Captain or Leaders.

**Figure 24. Number of schools with students helping at School Breakfast Clubs Program (n=219)**



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Foodbank Victoria provide badges for students and some schools also organise special items, including aprons, to acknowledge the role of student leaders in their program.

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*We came up with the Breakfast Club Captains. You've got kids who don't necessarily shine because they're not academic or not out there in terms of how they present or getting in front of kids at assembly. But you want to acknowledge that they've got some unique skills sets that they can develop (Principal, case study school).*

---

Student leaders and helpers acknowledge the level of responsibility they have taken on in breakfast clubs. They have clearly embraced the opportunity and recognise the role they play in helping other students to participate in the program.

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*It's nice ... you realise how well you're doing, because some kids don't get breakfast and then they start feeling sick and then they have to go home and then just feel that they're sick, but it's actually because they didn't have breakfast (Student focus group).*

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Other children commented on the role that student program leaders play in making them breakfast and helping them to feel welcome at their breakfast club.

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*They're nice, they don't complain that it's too hard to get. They either check, for example, if you want a breakfast but it's not there, they won't say, 'no it's not here'. They'll just be, 'sorry, but we don't have any of that' (Student focus group).*

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## 5.10 Engagement with school communities and local communities

Life events, family circumstances, poverty, deprivation, limited capabilities and social exclusion continue to result in entrenched disadvantage for some Australian children.<sup>50</sup> While the majority of Victorian students fare well, the State Government recognises that social and economic disadvantage has become concentrated in some local communities.<sup>44</sup> Caught up in a destructive web of disadvantage and inequality some Victorian students are unable to fully embrace their educational opportunities, creating an inequality that has become a leading contributing factor to their future outcomes. The establishment of the SBCP has created an opportunity for school communities and local communities to work together, building connections between students, their families, and the local community.

A strength of the SBCP is the flexible nature of each program. The program allows schools to overlay their own unique needs, running their breakfast club to best suit the needs of their students and school community. The findings identified a willingness by many schools to engage with families, school communities and local communities which are discussed in this section.

### 5.10.1 A communal breakfast

The findings show that many schools use their SBCP to engage with families. While some schools promote the program to families in need to encourage their children to attend, others invite parents and families to stay and share breakfast with their children.

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*Many families come along to breakfast club and we have conversations with them, this is a safe, not confronting space to chat generally about home and wellbeing (Principal, case study school).*

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*Many of our needy families attend breakfast club, including parents and younger siblings. Our Student Welfare Officer follows up on students who are short of food (Annual survey).*

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Communal eating spaces have been created, where families can engage with volunteers, teachers and the school community. The opportunity to get to know parents in an informal environment is a key benefit of this approach. The importance of eating a healthy, nutritious breakfast to assist with learning, alongside the benefits of social eating are conveyed to families as well as students. Younger siblings become familiar with the school environment, making transitions to school easier.

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*Breakfast club is an informal weekly opportunity for families to mingle and socialise while their children eat breakfast. We also have some families bring their pre-schoolers and toddlers in for breakfast. It is also a great opportunity for pre-schoolers to transition when they come in and have breakfast prior to commencing school (Annual survey).*

*The brekky club at our school has been such an important part of rebuilding the cohesion of our school community. The mums that oversee it have become engaged where they weren't before, it has connected the parents with each other. We only have 16 kids from 12 families, however the parents now know each other (Annual survey).*

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### **5.10.2 Promoting the School Breakfast Clubs Program**

The case study visits to schools demonstrate the level of engagement with SBCP across the school community. Students promote their breakfast club on notice boards, in newsletters and at school assemblies. Notice boards remind students and families of the days of operation alongside the benefits of eating breakfast, sharing visual reminders of the food provided. Stories in local newspapers also share the benefits of the program and photos of students. The articles help to inform local communities about the SBCP and encourage them to volunteer or engage with the program.

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*On our website there's stuff about breakfast club, how it's for everybody even if you've had breakfast (Student focus group).*

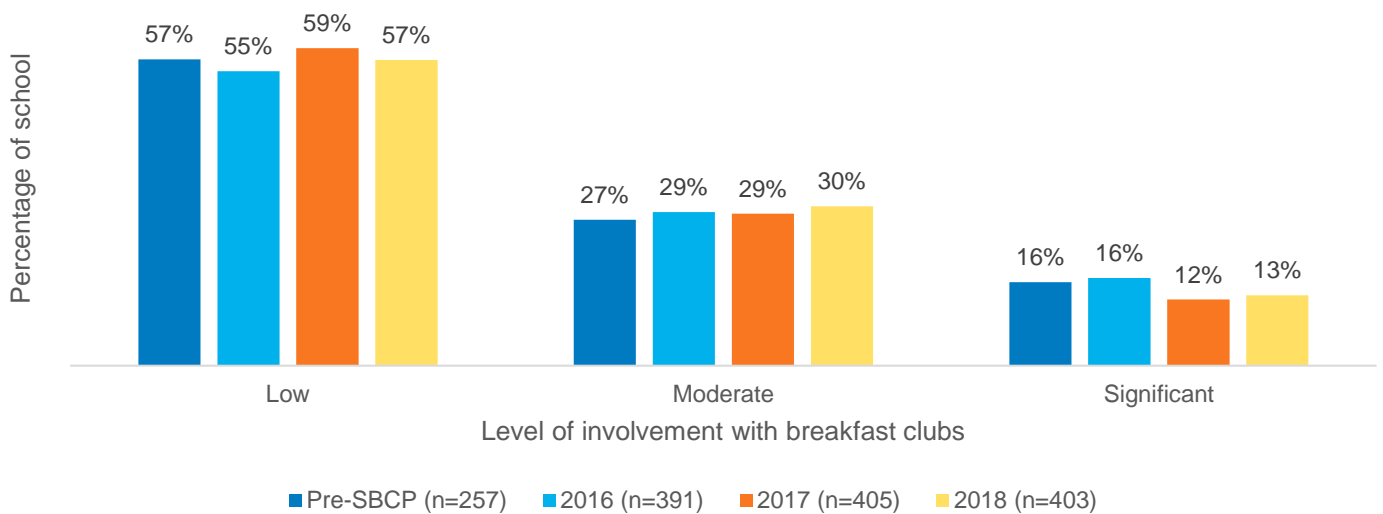
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### 5.10.3 Volunteering for breakfast clubs

Volunteering to help run, or to assist with the delivery of breakfast clubs has been identified as a way for families, school communities and local communities to be involved with the school. It is also a way to increase the frequency of the SBCP that helps schools to address staffing issues for their program.

**Figure 25. Comparison of parent, school community and local community volunteer involvement with breakfast clubs, from pre-program to Term 3, 2018**



The findings indicate that the level of parent, family, school and community involvement with breakfast clubs remained consistent across the first three years of operation. In 2018, 43% of schools report that they had a moderate or significant level of parent, family, school community and community involvement with their breakfast club. The level of involvement is consistent when allowing for school size, student attendance, SFOE index, metropolitan or non-metropolitan schools. Special Schools and Language Schools, however, report a lower level of involvement. This can be largely explained by the student population at Special Schools and the arrival mode of students, with many arriving by bus.

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*It's a very different kind of community here, and really for a lot of families this is respite. If you've had a really tough night and your child doesn't sleep and they've got really challenging behaviours, the last place you want to go when they've left on the bus in the morning is to school, and I think as a school we respect that a lot for parents too. (Principal, case study).*

---

The level of family and school community and local community involvement with breakfast clubs presents challenges for many SBCP schools. Schools who conduct their breakfast club less than five days a week, report staffing or sourcing volunteers as the greatest barrier to the frequency of their program.

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*I am thrilled that the school supports this program but our own staff volunteer, which is admirable. I would like to involve those families who are in need to occasionally volunteer but this is a major challenge. It is however a wonderful program! (Annual survey).*

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#### **5.10.4 Anticipated level of involvement**

The level of family and school community involvement in breakfast clubs was not surprising for many schools. Many have school communities who are not actively engaged with the school. Approximately 70% schools indicate that the level of parent, school community and local community involvement with their breakfast club aligns with their expectations. Some of the specific challenges they identified for the SBCP include:

- The early start to the day for volunteers
- Parents are busy at that time of day
- Working parents
- Dropping students off and heading to work or to drop off other children
- Lack of understanding of the value of the program and need for breakfast clubs in schools
- Challenges with connecting with diverse school communities

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*We're a really diverse school, so we've got 37 languages in the school, English is the third most spoken. Vietnamese and Arabic are the highest in our school, so we've got a barrier to start with (Principal, case study school).*

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Approximately 30 schools report that the level of parent, carer, grandparent and school community involvement with the breakfast club exceeds their expectations. For some parents, carers or grandparents, the breakfast club enables them to be involved in their child's school and feel confident about the tasks they are performing.

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*We are a small school, however the mums that run our brekky club were not engaged in other areas. This is something they can contribute (Annual survey).*

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Schools with good volunteers, described as being reliable, committed and enthusiastic are very appreciative of their involvement.

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*Volunteer recruitment and introductions is an activity that takes up the most time to support the implementation of the program. Once this is done, it is fairly self-managed and the program runs well (Annual survey).*

*The two main volunteers are committed and organise their own replacements if they can't attend. We have no other parent commitment like it (Principal, case study school).*

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The findings show that breakfast clubs enable family members and members from the extended school community, who might not be comfortable volunteering to help in classrooms, with an opportunity to be involved in their children's school life. The case study research revealed a number of grandparents who are actively involved in running or assisting with breakfast clubs in their grandchildren's school.

## **Talbot Primary School**

**The breakfast club at Talbot Primary School is run by a team of dedicated volunteers from the school community. The parents and grandparents bring their children along with them in the morning and have created a welcoming space to run their program. The local Coles supermarket donates bread for their program and toast is a popular menu item.**

### **5.10.5 Community volunteers**

For some schools, the involvement of community volunteers has been more successful than engaging parents, carers or grandparents. Schools report that volunteers from their local community help to run their breakfast club. Volunteers from organisations such as Rotary, local church groups and local council programs have made a regular commitment to some breakfast clubs.

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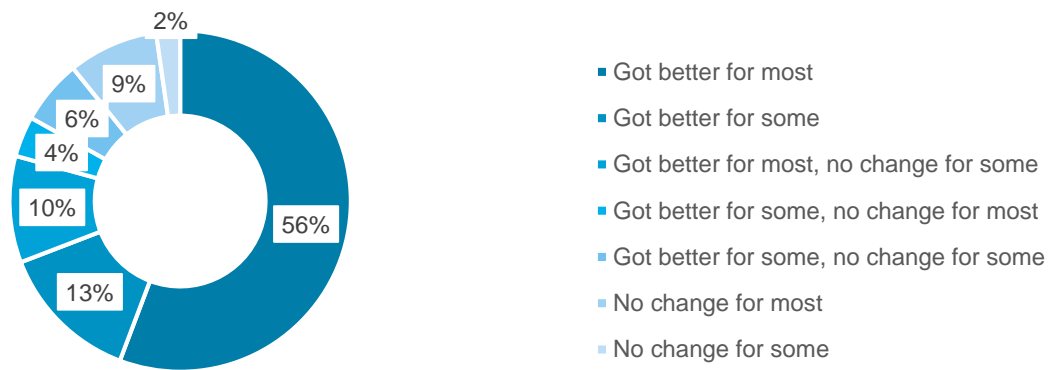
*Consistent Rotary Club volunteers every week staff the Breakfast Club along with [the] Welfare Officer (Annual survey).*

*[Our] School Breakfast Clubs Program is a partnership with Communities with Students and Swan Hill Rural Council (Annual survey).*

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Teachers observed that the SBCP improves social relations between students and their local community, with around 90% of the 574 respondents reporting a positive impact for students who attend their breakfast club.

**Figure 26. Impact of breakfast clubs on social relations between students and community volunteers (n=574)**



The findings show how community volunteers see the SBCP as a valuable way of engaging with students and schools. The opportunity to build relationships with students and families is a primary motivator for the Victoria Police, local church and Department of Education and Training Victoria staff who volunteer across the four campuses of Benalla P-12 College.

## Benalla P – 12 College

The Welfare Officer at Benalla P – 12 College has worked hard to connect the local community with their School Breakfast Clubs Program. Volunteers from the Department of Education and Training Victoria work alongside members of the local Anglican church and Victoria Police.

Sue, from the Proactive Team at Benalla Police, sees their weekly involvement with the School Breakfast Clubs Program as an important part of their community engagement:

“A lot of our children and young people, if they’ve had experience with Police in the area there’s a greater likelihood of that being a negative experience. So, we are trying to build trust and confidence in their engagement with us, and communication with us, that was the primary reason for getting involved’ in the School Breakfast Clubs Program” (Victoria Police volunteer).



## 6 Operational practices

### 6.1 Staffing breakfast clubs

Staffing remains the greatest barrier to the frequency of breakfast clubs. The findings indicate that teachers use the early morning before school time to prepare themselves for the day ahead and they do not feel they have time to staff a breakfast club. Approximately 70% of schools who conduct their program less than five days a week report that staffing and attracting volunteers remains the greatest barrier to increasing the frequency of the program. Despite these challenges, the findings reveal that the role of co-ordinating and conducting breakfast clubs falls predominantly to school staff.

In 2018, 88% of programs are co-ordinated and run by school staff, including principals, teachers, education support staff or welfare support staff. Approximately 7% of breakfast clubs are coordinated by a parent, grandparent or carer of students enrolled at the school. Community volunteers, with no children currently enrolled at the school, coordinate less than 5% of breakfast clubs. This section provides valuable insights into the commitment school staff have made to breakfast clubs.

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*Some believe that they do not have time in the morning or it is not their responsibility. Other staff give over and above to make sure the program runs (Annual survey).*

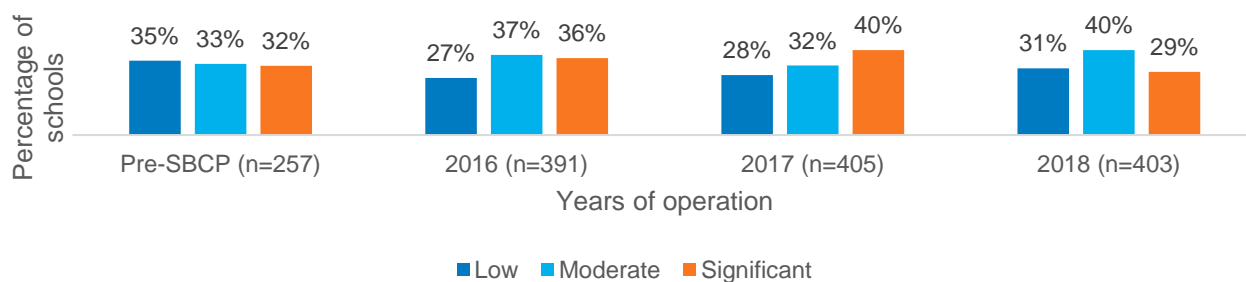
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#### 6.1.1 Level of staff involvement: comparison from pre-program to 2018

Principals or SBCP coordinators were asked to assess the level of staff involvement in their breakfast club. These findings may be based on the number of their staff conducting the program, the number of hours staff spent on their program, or the operational frequency. The question was asked to provide some insight into the level of staff involvement with breakfast clubs. A full cost analysis of the SBCP was beyond the scope of the evaluation research.

The findings indicate that there is less staff involvement with breakfast clubs in 2018 than the first two years of operation. Despite this, an additional 11% of schools offer their breakfast club every day of the school week. This suggests that schools have become more efficient in the operation of their breakfast club requiring fewer staff, volunteers or students to run the program.

**Figure 27. Comparison of school staff involvement with breakfast clubs, from pre-program to 2018**



Over 40% of schools now run their breakfast club every school day. The breakfast club has become an essential part of school operations for 78% of schools in 2018. The integration of breakfast clubs into standard operational practices, combined with the experience schools gained over the first three years of operation, suggests that schools have streamlined their practices in 2018 and operate the programs more efficiently. The findings reveal a strong commitment from staff to ensure the success of their breakfast clubs.

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*We only have 70 students, it only takes one of us to implement breakfast each morning. Teaching staff occasionally come and say giddy but otherwise it is run by one staff member (Annual survey).*

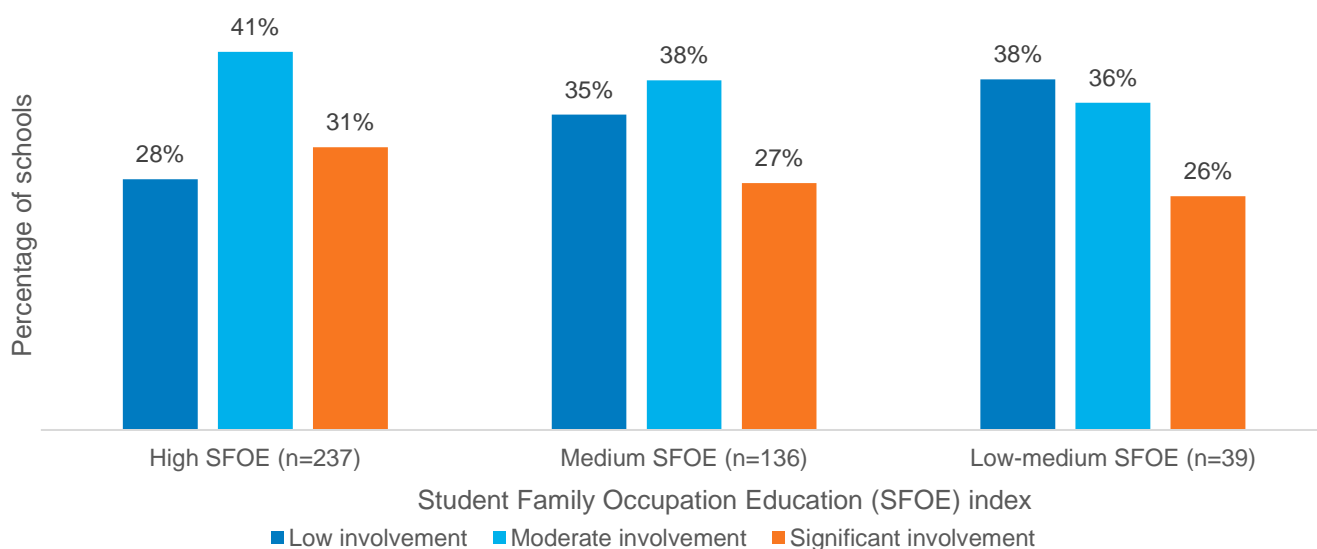
*The Breakfast Club runs smoothly with just me managing it, it is a little amount of time twice a week (Annual survey).*

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### 6.1.2 Level of staff involvement by Student Family Occupation Education index

The findings suggest that schools with a higher level of disadvantage report a higher level of staff involvement. Over 30% of the 237 schools with a high SFOE index report a significant level of staff involvement compared to 26% of schools who are calculated with a low-medium SFOE index.

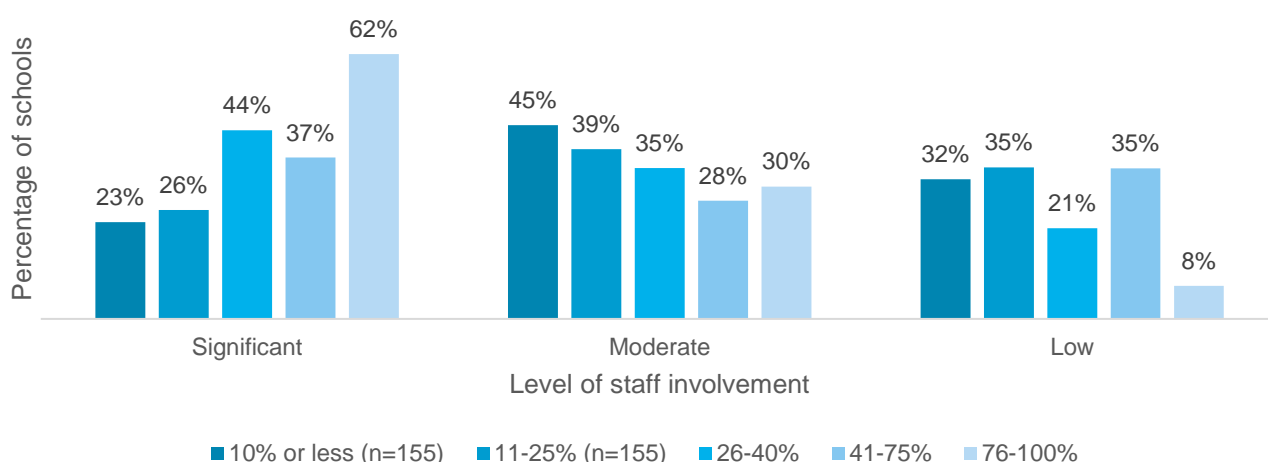
**Figure 28. Comparison of the level of staff involvement by Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index**



### 6.1.3 Level of staff involvement with breakfast clubs by average attendance and school size

Despite concerns around the additional workload of running the SBCP, the findings indicate that staff respond to the level of need when demand increases. The 13 schools who serve breakfast to the majority of their students (76 – 100% of enrolments) have a higher level of staff involvement than those who serve 10% or less of their students. There is no obvious trend in the level of staff involvement when analysed by school size, although smaller schools, those with less than 20 students, report a higher level of staff involvement.

Figure 29. Level of staff involvement with breakfast clubs, compared by average attendance



### 6.1.4 Level of staff involvement by school type

Special Schools report a higher level of staff involvement, with 57% of these schools having significant staff involvement, reflecting the different approach to the program and their higher ratio of staffing to students. Special Schools incorporate the SBCP food into their life skills program, using the food in a variety of ways. Students also use the SBCP food for sensory experiences, food preparation and customer service. Incorporating the food across the curriculum suggests that staff are more likely to be involved with the SBCP.

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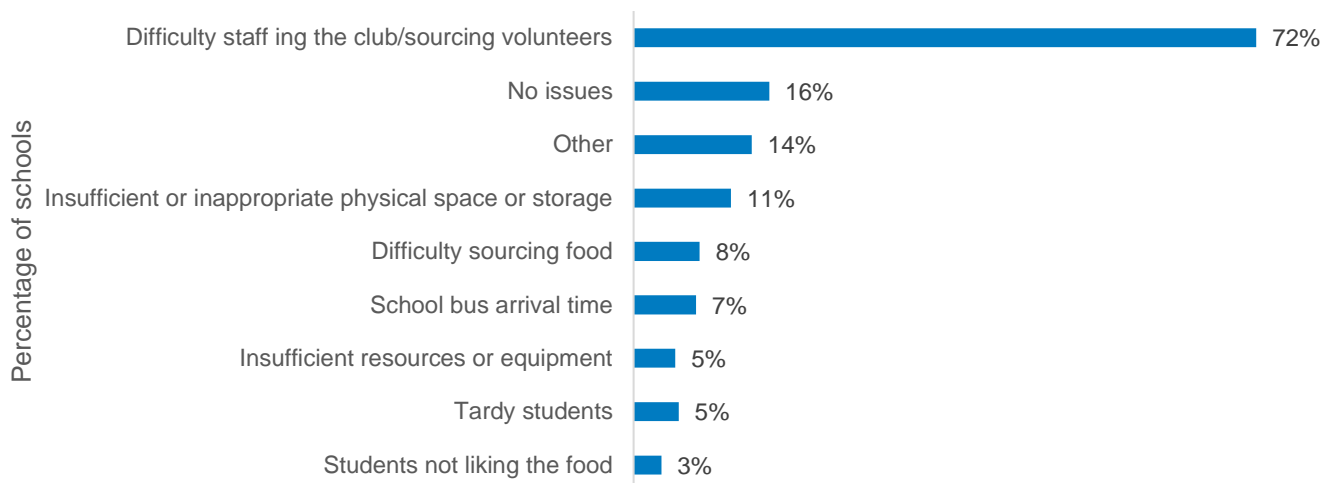
*As a special school we run an extensive daily living skills program which includes food preparation and consumption. The School Breakfast Clubs Program is separate but incorporated into this program and culture (Annual survey).*

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### 6.1.5 Barriers to frequency

The greatest barrier to schools running their breakfast club remains staffing and sourcing volunteers. Other barriers have largely been overcome with fewer schools reporting issues with physical space or storage capacity in 2018.

Figure 30. Barriers to increasing the frequency of breakfast clubs (n=247)



Multiple options possible, graph does not add up to 100%

### 6.1.6 Number of staff and volunteers running breakfast clubs

SBCP schools report a variety of approaches to staffing their breakfast clubs. The flexibility of the program delivery enables schools to adapt the program to suit their needs. School size, number of days offered, number of students attending and food options all impact on the staffing requirements of breakfast clubs.

The research indicates that school staff coordinate the SBCP. Over 85% of schools report that their breakfast club is run by a staff member, 7% by a parent, carer or grandparent and 5% by a community volunteer. However, the findings indicate that teaching staff are less likely to be involved in the daily serving of breakfast to students than education support, welfare or wellbeing staff.

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*There would be concerns about time if staff were required to run the program (Annual survey).*

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The number of adults required to run breakfast clubs differs between schools. While 20% of schools are run by four adults or more each day of operation, approximately 50% report that they ran the program with one or two adults.

Schools who offer their breakfast club one or two days a week are more likely to have more adults running their program. Approximately 60% of these programs operate with four or more adults. Interestingly, schools who did not offer a program prior to the SBCP appear to be more efficient, with 36% of programs conducted by one staff member, compared to 15% of schools who previously ran a program.



A number of schools were sceptical about their capacity to run the SBCP before joining the program but indicate that the programs require less involvement from staff than they had anticipated. This was reflective of research that suggests that concerns about school's capacity to run a breakfast club can be eased over time, particularly when programs run efficiently and staff have to commit little time or effort.<sup>58,62</sup>

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*We initially refused the offer to run a School Breakfast Club thinking it would be a drain on staff resources. As it has turned out, parents' co-ordinate the event and it has proven to be a unifying event for our school community (Annual survey).*

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### 6.1.7 Paying staff

In 2018, 25% of principals indicate that they pay the coordinator of their SBCP while others pay additional hours for support staff. Approximately 50% of teachers and school staff report that they are paid to run the program. It is unclear from the findings if staff are paid for their additional hours or whether this is incorporated into their existing salary. Salary costs were identified by many schools as a barrier to the frequency of their breakfast club, however a cost analysis of the SBCP was beyond the scope of this evaluation research. Further investigation into the salaries borne by schools would provide a more detailed analysis of the full cost of the SBCP.

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*Ability to financially staff the program (Annual survey).*

*Cost of employing staff and supplementing items. Like bread, cups, plates and the like (Annual survey).*

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The decision to pay staff to run the SBCP is motivated by a range of factors, but a key aspect appears to be the reliability of school staff compared to volunteers. Some schools have made the decision to operate their breakfast club in house and approximately 30% of schools report that they would not welcome additional volunteers.

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*Our volunteers are unreliable. If we give them a job and they don't turn up, it makes it harder for staff (Annual survey).*

*Volunteers are not always the most helpful ... and can bring their own challenges (Annual survey).*

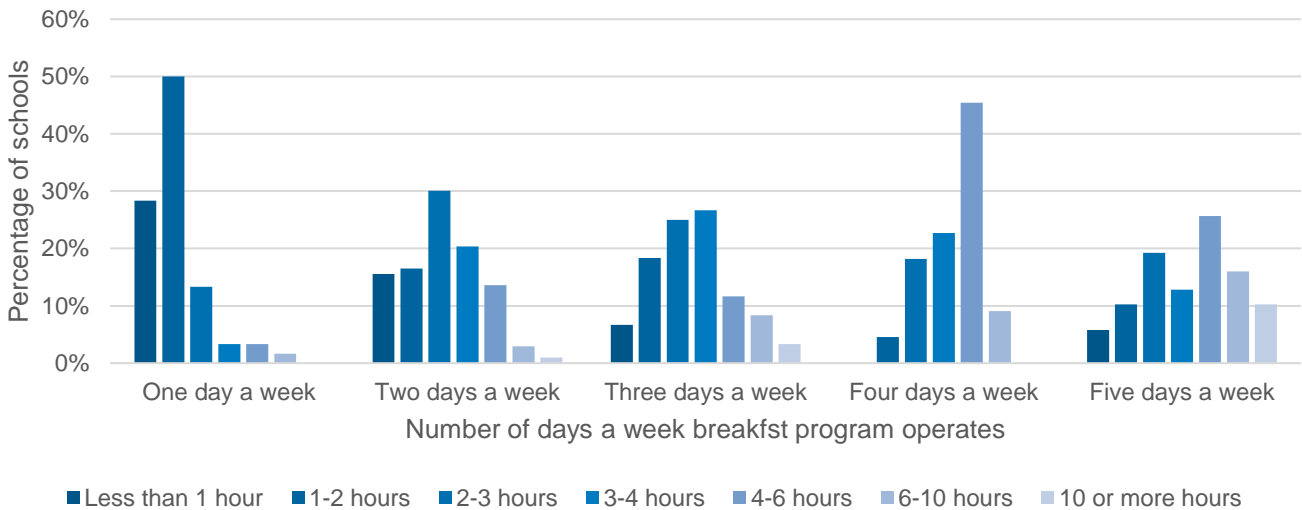
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The research suggests that paying staff to run breakfast clubs may increase their frequency. The findings showed that 50% of breakfast clubs run by paid staff operate five days a week, compared to 33% that were conducted by volunteers. The findings did not clarify though if staff were being paid additional hours or if the activity is undertaken as part of their current role. Further investigation would enable this to be clarified.

### 6.1.8 School staff commitment to breakfast clubs

It is difficult to determine the exact amount of time staff spend on their breakfast club with different levels of engagement in every school. However, the findings indicate that staff spent more time on their program when they run it more frequently. Staff in schools conducting their program five days a week indicate that staff spend more than ten hours a week on their program. This time can be accounted for if two or more school staff run the program. Staff arrive as early as 7.45 am to set up the breakfast club and stay until 9am to finishing serving and cleaning up.

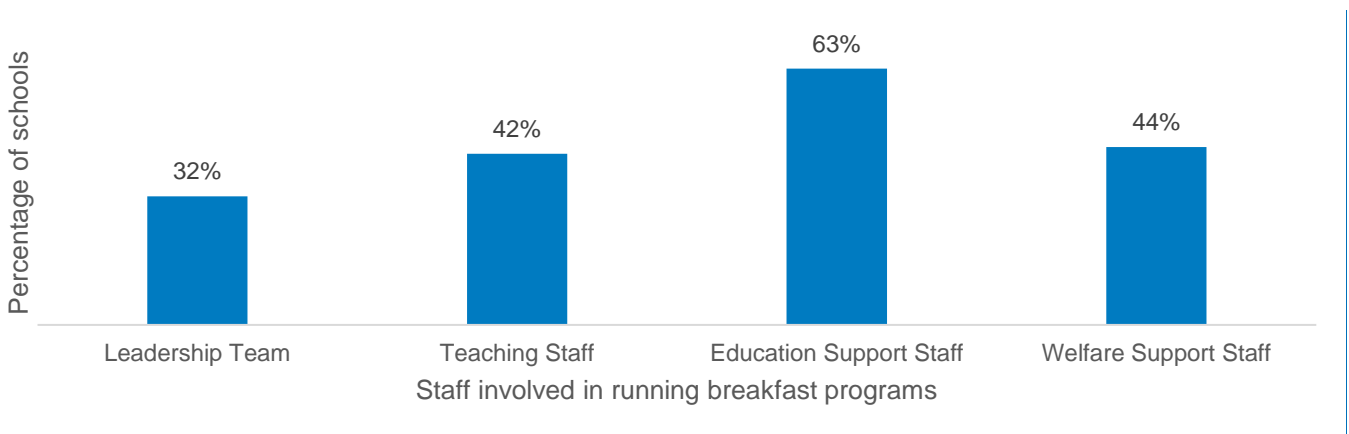
Figure 31. Number of weekly hours spent on breakfast clubs by frequency of operation



### 6.1.9 Education, welfare and wellbeing staff

The findings reveal that education support, welfare and wellbeing staff have made the greatest commitment to the SBCP. Over 60% of schools indicate that education support or wellbeing staff run their programs or provide additional support to the coordinator.

Figure 32. Role of staff spending time on running and coordinating breakfast clubs (n=412)



Multiple responses allowed, graphs do not add up to 100%

Schools report that there are many benefits in engaging education support and wellbeing staff in the operation of breakfast clubs. Schools identified relationship building with students as a key benefit.

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*It's a nice way of getting to know the kids, it's a nice way of them getting to know me. It's an everyday sort of task, it's not like you have to sit across from the table from me and tell me about your worries (Annual survey).*

*So, it gives you a good indication, which is good for my role and then obviously to register which kids are there and whether the families need some extra support or anything like that (Social worker, case study school).*

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### **6.1.10 The challenges of family, school community and community involvement**

While schools are very appreciative of good volunteers a number of schools indicate that volunteers bring their own challenges. Approximately 70% report that they would welcome additional help from volunteers if available. Issues for the 30% of schools, who would not welcome additional volunteers, include the unreliability of parents, grandparents and carers, which adds pressure on staff who are already focused on preparing for the school day.

A number of schools' report that volunteers have been judgmental of some students who attend their breakfast club. This appears to be a particular problem for smaller regional schools where students and families are more likely to be known in the local community. While the issues of managing volunteers were raised in the case study research, only 7% of principals surveyed in 2018 report that they spend additional time on a weekly basis managing their breakfast club volunteers.

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*We don't include parents as we had difficulty with perceptions of who came and conversations [that questions] why [some] students didn't have breakfast; it was easier to run with just teachers (Annual survey).*

*I don't seek out volunteers because if they don't turn up, it puts more pressure on staff (Annual survey).*

---

A number of schools have made the decision not to seek out volunteers for their breakfast club. These schools are running their breakfast club with staff and students, with over 50% of schools engaging their senior students in the program. These schools reveal that they see an opportunity to build relationships between staff and students through the breakfast club. Schools who adopted this approach report that their breakfast club runs efficiently.

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*We don't ask for parental assistance, we like the chance for staff to build relationships with the students in the informal atmosphere (Annual survey).*

*Help isn't needed as our student leadership team helps out with breakfast (Annual survey).*

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## 6.2 Barriers to attendance

The SBCP is run as a breakfast-for-all program in the 500 participating schools. With over 110,000 students enrolled in the 500 schools, almost 30% of children in Victorian Government primary schools have access to the program.<sup>51</sup>

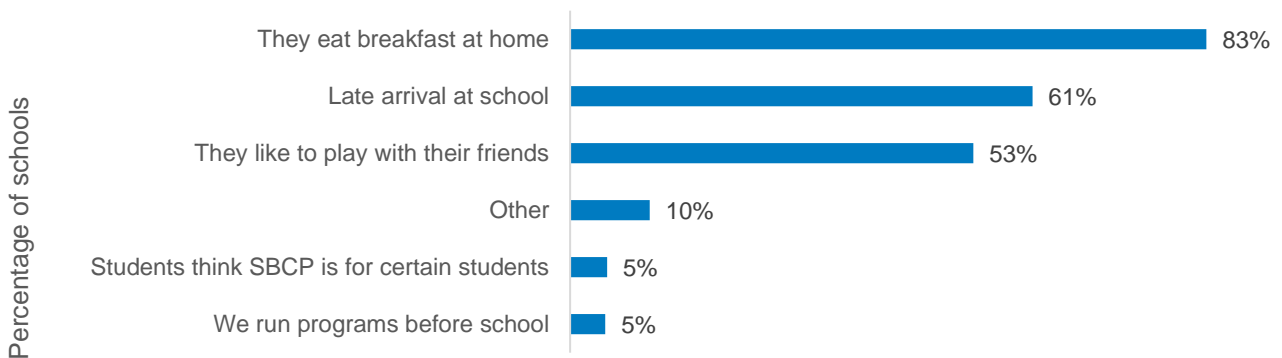
Schools report a number of reasons why students do not attend their breakfast club. The findings also reveal other barriers that are less obvious but limited the attendance at some clubs.

### 6.2.1 Barriers

SBCP schools identify a number of reasons that more students do not attend their breakfast club:

- 83% believe that students eat breakfast at home
- 61% believe that late arrival at school results in some students missing out
- 53% believe that students like to play with their friends in the morning

Figure 33. Reasons that students do not attend breakfast clubs (n=412)



Multiple responses allowed, so graphs do not add up to 100%

Despite these barriers, 88% of schools believe that they were meeting the hunger needs of their students. The remaining schools identify a number of reasons for not meeting student need.

- Students are arriving at school hungry on days that the program does not run, with staffing the program often given as the reason for not increasing the frequency.

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*We have kids turn up on other days hungry and looking for breakfast (Teacher survey).*

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- The food did not meet the needs of some students, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds, although this concern has decreased in 2018 as the menu has expanded.

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*Yes it is, except for the tastes of our Burmese children. They tend to choose the fruit and apples but not the cereal (Annual survey).*

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- Late arrivals and bus arrival times at school results in some students who would benefit from attending the breakfast club miss out. While schools encourage all students to arrive on time they recognise that students are not always in control of their travel to and from school. Bus arrival times are an issue for some non-metropolitan schools, although this is less of a barrier for schools with the introduction of grab-and-go options introduced by Foodbank Victoria in 2017 and 2018.

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*We always accommodate for lateness, feed the student and let the teacher know they are on the premises (Annual survey).*

*Kids are never too late, staff will ensure that everyone has had breakfast (Annual survey).*

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- Attendance at the program is voluntary but some schools suggest that not all students who would benefit from the program attend. The findings indicate that schools are investigating ways to attract students to the program.

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*We need to get the kids who need the breakfast to attend - currently brainstorming (Annual survey.)*

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### **6.2.2 Monitoring attendance**

A key aspect of measuring the success of the SBCP is monitoring the attendance of students. The toolkit provided by Foodbank Victoria, encourages schools to keep accurate records of attendance at breakfast clubs. The evaluation research shows that formal attendance records are kept by around 35% of schools, with others keeping a record of the overall number of students attending. A number of schools indicate that they kept a mental note of students who attend, particularly if they are in a welfare or wellbeing role at the school. While informal or less detailed data collection approaches may work in the short term, and lessens the work required at breakfast clubs, analysis of the program at school or program level would be enhanced by accurate attendance records.

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*My sense is that greater benefit will be for SBCP to operate more days to really make a significant and noticeable difference to learning and/or behaviour outcomes. However, this would need more surveys of students to have data to back this up (Annual survey).*

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The formal recording of attendance at the SBCP enables schools to track attendance at their breakfast club. This is beneficial for measuring the success of the program, individual student attendance and being able to respond quickly to increasing or decreasing participation. The importance of maintaining accurate records could be reinforced with schools. It is acknowledged that this may impact on the level of staffing required but the benefits to measuring the success of the program were evident.

## 6.3 Operational model

Participation in the SBCP is voluntary. Schools are approached after being identified by the DET by their SFOE index. Schools choose whether to participate. Once established, schools continue with the program unless they decide to withdraw from the program. The voluntary nature of the program enables schools to run their programs as many days as they can.

When measured by this criterion Foodbank Victoria has achieved the overall aim of establishing programs in the state's 500 most disadvantaged schools and provides a regular supply of breakfast food. The number of 500 has remained constant as new schools are added when participating schools decide to opt out. This happened for a number of reasons, including the departure of a committed program coordinator or school closure. This occurred infrequently across the first three years of operation and the number of schools withdrawing declined in 2018.

The SBCP reduced the number of students starting the school day hungry in 2018 by providing over 50,000 breakfasts around the state every week. The findings indicated that there were still students though who started the school day hungry. The inability of some schools to conduct their breakfast club every day results in some students missing out. Schools report that they make alternative arrangements to provide food to students who arrive at school hungry on non-breakfast club days. However, 12% of schools report that they are not meeting the hunger needs of their students. The operational practices outlined in this section will enable a greater understanding of the barriers faced by schools.

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*We have kids that could use this service everyday (Annual survey).*

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### 6.3.1 Conflicting demands

While 85% of schools have no concerns about running a breakfast club, the findings point to some tension around the program that relates to broader debates including 1) the role of schools in addressing the hunger needs of their students, 2) the expectation for teachers to support additional programs and activities outside the core curriculum and 3) excessive demand on teachers working hours.

Concerns raised by school staff prior to joining the SBCP included issues around the disruption to their morning lessons, families taking advantage of the free program and the expectation that teachers would run breakfast clubs. These concerns have largely been addressed by principals working with staff to address concerns and reinforcing the benefits of students being well nourished and ready to learn.

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*Teaching staff are concerned about preparing for their day's class activities. Some education support staff may be more willing to commit time. A staff request is planned for Term 3 to generate more regular support (Annual survey).*

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Interviews with principals and teachers in the case study research reveal slight differences in the way the two groups viewed the role of schools in providing breakfast for students. Both groups recognise the value of children being ready to learn, however there is a tension for teachers between meeting the hunger needs of students and the breakfast club impinging on learning time. The case study principals provide valuable insights into their response to these concerns and resolution of the tension.

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*I think initially they felt it was impinging on their teaching time. But once we had the discussion about teaching time needs to be supported by kids that are ready to learn and if they're not ready to learn, it doesn't matter what your teaching time is like, they're not going to take it in. So, allow the 15 minutes or however long it is to let them have their munch (Principal, case study school).*

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Schools running their program fewer than five days a week report clashes with meetings, assemblies and other activities and staffing concerns. The findings suggest though that a number of schools have made decisions around the frequency of programs based on the school's operational demands rather than on the hunger needs of students.

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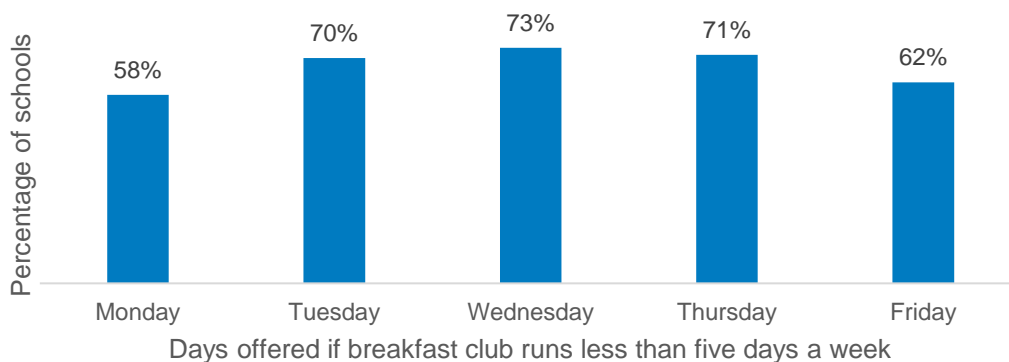
*We share the space with our school canteen so we only do Breakfast Club on the days our canteen doesn't operate (Annual survey)*

*We started with one day per week and have just remained at that. We are extending our admin area so may have more room to consider expanding the program (Annual survey).*

---

The tension between breakfast clubs and school operational practices is particularly evident when analysing the days of the week breakfast club are offered. While 165 schools offer their program every school day, those who operate less frequently are less likely to conduct their program on a Monday or Friday. Reasons given for not operating on these days include the weekly school assembly.

**Figure 34. Operational days for schools offering their breakfast club less than five days a week (n=247)**



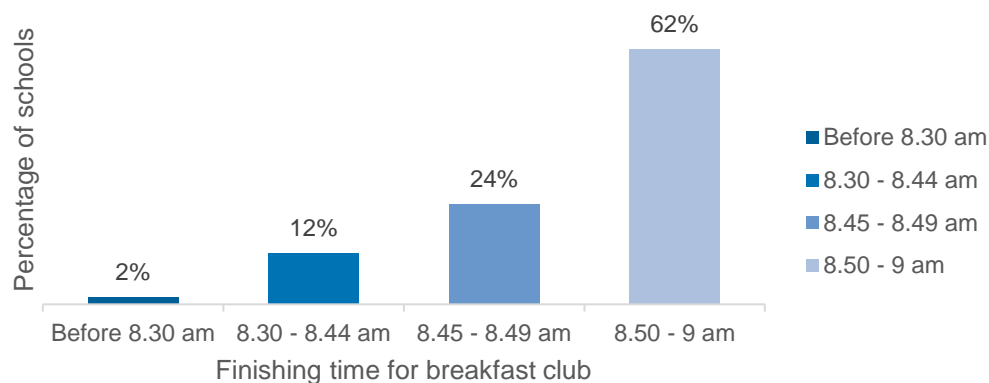
Multiple days reported, graph does not add up to 100%

For children living with hunger a Monday or Friday program may be particularly important if families are unable to provide regular meals. The findings indicate that a number of schools may have prioritised other school activities over the frequency of their breakfast club. Working with these schools in 2019 to identify barriers to the frequency of their program, and the days they choose to conduct their breakfast club, may assist to address this issue. This may need to be undertaken with a level of sensitivity by Foodbank Victoria Coordinators, as the flexibility of the program for schools is highly valued.

### 6.3.2 Timing of breakfast clubs

The timing of breakfast clubs presents a particular challenge for schools as teachers are preparing themselves for the day ahead. The case study research also suggested that the spaces used to run breakfast clubs are required for teaching at 9 am. As a result, breakfast clubs must be finished and the cleaning up completed before 9 am. Analysis of the starting and finishing times of breakfast clubs reveals that 14% of schools finished serving before 8.45 am.

Figure 35. Finishing times of breakfast clubs (n=402)



The competing demands on school space presents a challenge for some schools. Over 60% of schools indicate that students in need may miss out on breakfast club by arriving after the program has finished for the day. Foodbank Victoria has provided a solution to this problem with the introduction of grab-and-go breakfast products. Students can now grab a fruit cup or an apple regardless of what time they arrive at school and eat in class.

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*We have the fruit cups available and children can take these to class with them  
(Annual survey).*

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A number of schools have addressed the challenges of running their breakfast club by running their SBCP in individual classes. Operating breakfast clubs in classrooms has proven to be a successful approach for some schools and the international literature suggests this has worked successfully in the United States of America. The classroom options is an alternate model for schools, particularly for those who struggle to staff their breakfast club.



## 6.4 Cost to schools of the School Breakfast Clubs Program

While the overall funding of the SBCP provides food, guidance and support to run breakfast clubs there are additional costs that are borne by schools. These include staffing costs, both time and monetary, as well as costs for additional food, establishing the club and ensuring space, equipment and infrastructure to operate. This section outlines some of those costs, including staffing and establishment costs, although a full cost analysis was not undertaken.

### 6.4.1 Staffing costs

As previously mentioned, 25% of principals indicate that they pay staff to run their breakfast club. There is also evidence in the findings that some schools also pay parents or members of the school community to run their breakfast club. The actual staffing costs to schools was beyond the scope of this evaluation research. The findings suggest though that costs for teaching staff are incorporated into their salary. The findings indicate that some staff on hourly contracts, for example education support or wellbeing staff are paid for the additional hours they worked. A closer investigation of salary costs in SBCP schools would clarify this and determine the cost to schools of running their breakfast club.

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*I pay two people (to run the daily activity of the SBCP) ... I pay them an extra three hours each week, so that's an extra six hours. That comes out of the staffing, because they need to be there from eight o'clock. (Principal, case study school).*

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### 6.4.2 Incorporating breakfast clubs into staff workloads

A number of schools have established a roster system for their teaching staff, spreading the SBCP workload. The challenge of ensuring teachers do not undertake excessive workloads restricts the frequency of breakfast clubs in some schools. There is also evidence that the load is shared unequally with some teachers believing that running the program is not their responsibility.

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*Teachers are rostered on for 'duty' which adds to their workload. We would love to run the program five days but I do not want to put teachers under more pressure (Annual survey).*

*Some [teachers] believe that they do not have time in the morning or it is not their responsibility. Other staff give over and above to make sure the program runs (Annual survey).*

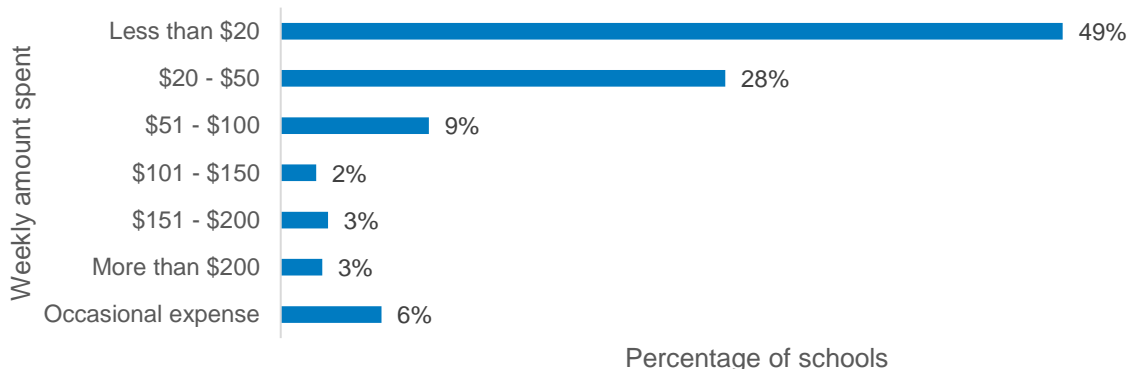
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### 6.4.3 Weekly costs

School spending on the SBCP has been kept to a minimum, with 75% of schools reporting that they spend less than \$50 a week. The findings show that the majority of additional food is purchased through school budgets. Around 70% of schools reveal that their weekly costs go towards the purchase of additional food.

An additional 48% of schools purchase weekly items such as washing up detergent. Schools also purchase one off items, including plates and cups. A small percentage of schools, 11%, indicate that they use their weekly funds to pay staff to run their breakfast club. With 25% of schools reporting that they paid staff it is unlikely that all schools have included salaries into their estimation of the weekly cost.

**Figure 36. Weekly spending on breakfast clubs reported by principals (n=268)**



Schools with a high SFOE index spend less on their breakfast club than low-medium SFOE index schools. Around 15% of the 237 high SFOE index schools do not spend any money on their breakfast club, compared to low-medium schools where all schools spend more than \$20 a week. Schools who were offering students’ breakfast before the SBCP have reduced their weekly expenditure, with 50% of these schools spending less than \$20 per week.

School spending on breakfast clubs has remained consistent across the first three years of operation. In 2018, 76% of schools indicate that their spending on the breakfast club in 2018 is consistent with their 2017 expenditure. Where costs have increased, for 13% of schools in 2018, the additional funds are spent on purchasing additional food or the increased cost of food.

Schools who spend in excess of \$150 per week included staff costs in their estimation. Findings from the case study research suggest that these costs are covered from other areas of the school budget, with some schools drawing on the equity funding school they receive for their level of disadvantage.

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*We’re a very high SFO in terms of equity funding, because we’re very low socioeconomic and have a lot of other things happening (Principal, case study school).*

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#### **6.4.4 Setting up costs**

The cost of setting up breakfast clubs was borne by schools. These costs were assessed from the findings of 407 schools who participated in the 2017 annual survey. Approximately 55% of schools report that they spent less than \$1,000 to establish their breakfast club. Items purchased included fridges or freezers, microwaves, cutlery, bowls, aprons and mugs. A further 35% of schools report that they did not incur any additional costs when establishing their breakfast club. A number of schools updated infrastructure including storage cupboards, kitchen sinks and power points. Less than 2% of schools spent over \$2000 establishing their breakfast club. Where costs were significant the findings suggest that schools applied for grants or assistance to cover costs.

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*We spend \$1000 to \$2000 each year to upgrade equipment and purchase cleaning supplies etc. We usually apply for grants to cover these costs (Annual survey).*

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The Building the Education Revolution (BER) buildings provided many schools with kitchen facilities or spaces to operate their breakfast club. This included space to store food as well as create a welcoming space to run their breakfast club. Comments on the annual survey and the case study research indicate that some schools have created links between the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation program or their own kitchen garden and their breakfast club.

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*We have a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program that links in with the School Breakfasts Clubs Program (Annual survey).*

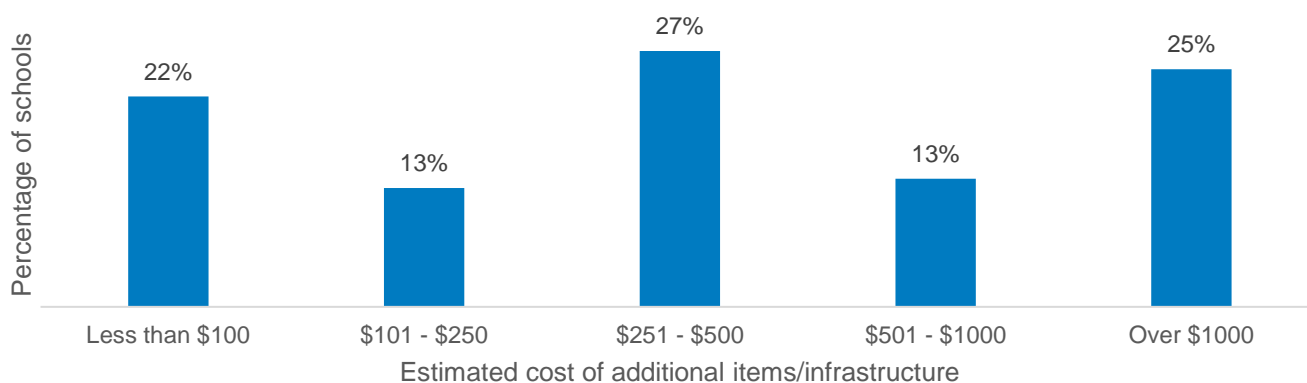
*Our school is a small rural school. We grow vegies in the garden and we have school chooks for eggs (Annual survey).*

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### 6.4.5 Additional items/infrastructure

In 2018, over 75% of schools report that they have sufficient resources to enable their breakfast club to continue under the current model, with Foodbank Victoria providing the food and supporting the program. Around 100 schools indicate that they require additional items or infrastructure for their breakfast club. Approximately 60% of these schools estimate the cost of their desired items or infrastructure would be less than \$500.

**Figure 37. Approximate cost of additional items or infrastructure for schools (n=104)**



Approximately 30% of schools indicate that they require small items such as toasters, kettles, cups and bowls. A number of schools would like to purchase chairs or tables for their breakfast club.

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*I will need two new toasters and a kettle soon. Our current ones are dying (Annual survey).*

*Infrastructure: a bigger space with dedicated furniture for Breakfast Club, currently taking tables and chairs from classrooms (Annual survey).*

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The benefits of the SBCP and the desire to create a welcoming, nurturing space for students to share a communal breakfast has motivated a number of schools to expand their breakfast club service area or initiate plans to create a dedicated space for the program.

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*We are working on getting funding for a more suitable kitchen and serving/eating space, with hot water for cleaning up and tables for students to sit down and eat (Annual survey).*

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# 7 Discussion

## 7.1 Introduction

In 2018, the School Breakfast Clubs Program (SBCP) provided over 50,000 breakfasts to students in 500 of Victoria's government primary schools every school week. Foodbank Victoria has distributed over 1.8 million kilograms of food to SBCP schools, from 2016-2018, providing eleven menu items based on healthy eating guidelines from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service<sup>9</sup>. The guaranteed delivery of food twice a term and the support provided to schools by Foodbank Victoria has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the program. The concluding section of the Final Report provides a summary of key findings organised around the three main research questions. The recommendations that follow draw on the key findings and are offered as overall improvements to increase the efficiency, frequency and reach of the SBCP to achieve its overall aim to tackle disadvantage and ensure every student, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to reach their potential. Providing healthy and nutritious breakfasts in schools is designed to enhance student learning and attendance and enable Victorian students to fully participate and engage in all aspects of their learning.

## 7.2 The evaluation research approach

The evaluation research was informed by current knowledge of the impact of poverty and hunger on children's capacity to learn. Recent research suggests that as many as one in five Australian children arrive at school without eating breakfast.<sup>10,11,12,13,15</sup> The need to provide breakfast in schools acknowledges that the adverse effects of hunger and poverty have a significant impact on children's learning and the effects. Internationally, the provision of food in schools has a longer history and in countries like the United Kingdom is based on the understanding that school meals are one of the most obvious policy interventions for children's diet.<sup>8,22,35</sup> The understanding that children who are well nourished are more prepared for learning and perform better at school is well established.<sup>1,7,22,36</sup> Some research provides evidence that providing breakfast in schools has a positive impact on children's cognitive function, readiness to learn, concentration, attendance and behaviour.<sup>8,22,23,37,38,39</sup> Improvements in social skills, relationships and connectedness to schools have also been reported.<sup>18,20,31,35</sup> Other studies show that the benefits and impact of breakfast in schools are difficult to measure, with many competing factors influencing student outcomes, making it difficult to isolate the impact of the breakfast program on student engagement and learning outcomes.<sup>20,36</sup>

Australian schools are increasingly being asked to respond to the hunger needs of students. Breakfast programs are being run in every Australian state and territory. Many are run with food provided by the relevant state or territory Foodbank organisation. The Foodbank WA program serves 470 schools, Foodbank Queensland provides food for over 170 breakfast clubs. Foodbank NSW/ACT serves 100 schools. The key difference with the Victorian SBCP is the State Government's significant financial commitment to the program and the nature of the partnership with Foodbank Victoria.

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<sup>9</sup> Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Nutrition Australia Victoria Division, <https://heas.health.vic.gov.au>.

## 7.3 Overall findings

Findings from the evaluation research of the Victorian Government SBCP demonstrate that the benefits of breakfast clubs extend beyond the immediate hunger needs of students. The eleven menu items provided by Foodbank Victoria address the nutritional needs of students who arrive at school hungry and enable schools to serve over 50,000 breakfasts every school week. The SBCP has been established in 500 Victorian government primary schools, enabling 30% of all Victorian primary school students to access a breakfast club. More than 40% of schools offer their breakfast club every school day, ensuring student who arrive at school hungry can start the day with a healthy breakfast. Schools serve 33 students (average across all schools) every day they conduct their breakfast club. Schools with the highest level of disadvantage, as identified by their Student Family Occupation Education (SFOE) index, have responded to the needs of their students, with over 50% of these schools conducting their program every school day.

In addition to meeting the nutritional needs of students, the findings show that breakfast clubs have a positive impact on student's capacity to learn, as teachers note improvements in children's concentration, engagement in class, social skills and behaviour. Teachers report that the combined impact, along with improved attendance, punctuality and behaviour, has resulted in better attitudes towards schools for students and readiness to learn at the start of the day. As a result, teachers report improved academic outcomes for students who attend breakfast clubs.

Breakfast clubs enable schools to build relationships with students and families, building stronger connections with their learning, the school community and local community. Schools link the breakfast club with their welfare and wellbeing practices, creating safe and welcoming environments where students can start the day with a healthy breakfast, feeling cared for and nurtured before they start the school day. Schools have embraced the breakfast-for-all, inclusive nature of breakfast clubs and are committed to breaking down the shame and stigma that children and families experience through disadvantage.

The added value of breakfast programs beyond nutrition is difficult to quantify but the evidence from this evaluation research, the commitment of participating schools to the program, and the strong links with welfare and wellbeing practices demonstrate the impact of the SBCP for students and families. The findings show that the SBCP responds to the complex needs, beyond immediate nutrition, of students and families living with hunger and poverty.

## 7.4 The research questions

**How does the School Breakfast Clubs Program address the needs of students who attend school without eating breakfast and provide them with the opportunity to participate and engage with all aspects of school?**

### Key findings

- a) Breakfast clubs have been established in 500 Victorian government primary schools. There are 225 breakfast clubs operating in metropolitan schools and 275 in non-metropolitan schools.
- b) The guaranteed delivery of food from Foodbank Victoria enables schools to deliver over 50,000 breakfasts, every school week.
- c) The School Breakfast Clubs Program enables 30% of all Victorian government primary school students to access a breakfast club.
- d) The frequency of breakfast clubs is consistent across metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools.

- e) SBCP schools serve 33 students on average, every day their breakfast club is conducted. The overall attendance represented 21% of the total enrolments in participating schools.
- f) The findings showed that non-metropolitan schools provide breakfast for more of their students than metropolitan schools. This reflects recent research that shows poverty is higher in non-metropolitan areas.<sup>50</sup>
- g) The breakfast-for-all approach is helping to break down the shame and stigma that children and families experience through hunger and poverty.

### Areas for improvement

- a) The findings indicate that the infrequency of some breakfast clubs impacts on schools' ability to meet the needs of some students. Almost 40% of schools conduct their program one to two days a week. Staffing continues to be the key barrier to the frequency of programs. Other barriers include the dual use of space, challenges with managing volunteers, a tension around the role of teachers in running breakfast clubs and, in some instances, the prioritising of other school programs or activities. While 60% of these schools provide food for students on an as needs basis on non-breakfast club days, targeted support from Foodbank Victoria Coordinators for these schools may help to address barriers to the frequency of their breakfast program.
- b) The findings showed that schools running their programs less than five days a week offer their programs more frequently on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays. The operation of breakfast club on Mondays and Fridays takes on a particular significance for students who are experiencing significant hunger or poverty. The findings indicate that schools could be advised to consider the days they operate to ensure that students do not miss out on this important meal for extended periods such as over the weekend.
- c) The program model is flexible, with schools deciding how many days they operate their program. As mentioned above, the findings indicate that some schools could offer their programs more frequently. To ensure the program addresses the needs of students it is suggested that the Department of Education and Training consider widen the scope of Foodbank Victoria, enabling them to provide additional support to address barriers for schools to increase the frequency of programs.

### How does the School Breakfast Clubs Program improve student learning and connectedness to school?

#### Key findings

- a) The nutritional benefits of eating a healthy breakfast for children are widely acknowledged.<sup>1,2</sup>
- b) Teachers observe that breakfast clubs have a positive impact on student concentration and engagement in class, with 95% of teachers reporting an improvement in the concentration levels for students who attend breakfast clubs.
- c) Approximately 85% of teachers note an improvement in social skills and student behaviour that has resulted in better attitudes towards school.
- d) The benefits of being in class on time, everyday are widely acknowledged and 85% of teachers report improved attendance and punctuality for students who attend their breakfast program.
- e) The combined effect of improved concentration, social skills, engagement and behaviour has had a positive impact on the academic outcomes of students, reported by 85% of teachers.
- f) Students are aware of the benefits of breakfast clubs and understand that starting the day with breakfast, the most important meal of the day, enables them to be ready to learn.
- g) The SBCP enables schools to create caring, nurturing environments that strengthen relationships and built connections with children and their families.

- h) The inclusive nature of breakfast clubs enables all students to feel welcome and not experience the shame of admitting their hunger.
- i) Breakfast clubs connect students with their peers, the school community, teachers, parents, and community volunteers. 95% of teachers note an improvement in relationships between students and school staff.
- j) Schools have made strong links between breakfast clubs and welfare and wellbeing practices with many education support and wellbeing staff running, or working on, breakfast programs.
- k) Schools report that breakfast clubs enable staff to check in with students, particularly those who require additional support, in this informal environment on a regular basis.
- l) The SBCP creates learning environments that enable students and the whole school community to feel connected, safe and respected, which is a key focus of the Department of Education and Training Victoria's Strategic Plan 2018-2022.
- m) Breakfast clubs enable schools to connect with families, inviting them to participate as volunteers or stay and eat breakfast with their children.

### Areas for improvement

- a) Share a summary of findings of the overall benefits of the SBCP, as reported here, to all schools. Sharing the impact of the program on student concentration, engagement in class, attendance, relationships and student wellbeing may assist schools offering their program less frequently to recognise the broader impact and prioritise the breakfast club in their school.
- b) Develop a one page flyer that outlines the successful operational models adopted by schools, as outlined on page 22, that can be included in the Foodbank Victoria induction kit. Greater insight into the impact of the SBCP, alongside successful operational models, may encourage other schools to consider alternative approaches to improve the operation and increase the frequency of their breakfast club.
- c) Affirm the breakfast-for-all approach in schools, providing evidence from this report that the inclusive nature of the SBCP is a strength of the program that can be further promoted. Encourage schools to actively promote the inclusive nature of breakfast clubs as breaking down the shame and stigma children and families living with disadvantage takes time and is a barrier for some children's attendances.
- d) Prioritise the creation of dedicated breakfast club spaces through grant applications to create caring, nurturing environments for schools to deliver the SBCP.

### How effective is the School Breakfast Clubs Program and how can it be improved and evaluated in the future?

#### Key Findings

- a) A key strength of the School Breakfast Clubs Program is the operational flexibility that allows schools to adapt the program for the specific needs of their own students and school community.
- b) Staffing remains a barrier for 72% of schools. Despite this, the increased frequency of programs in 2018, 61% operating more than three days a week, indicates that schools have become more efficient at running their programs with experience.
- c) Volunteers play an important role in running breakfast clubs, however the findings show that school staff are largely responsible for delivering the program.
- d) There is evidence that around 25% of schools are paying staff to conduct the daily operation of breakfast clubs. There is some evidence that this approach increases the frequency of breakfast clubs.
- e) Education support and wellbeing staff have made the greatest commitment to the daily running of breakfast clubs. Classroom teachers are supportive of breakfast clubs and often took on the role of coordinator but in many schools they are not involved in the daily serving of breakfast.



- f) Over 50% of schools have engaged their senior students in the running of breakfast clubs, giving them the responsibility of Breakfast Club Leaders or Captains.
- g) Foodbank Victoria assists schools to deal with the challenges of students arriving at school too late to participate in breakfast clubs with grab-an-go menu options in 2017. Foodbank Victoria responded to requests for variety and additions to the menu they provided. Schools make their own decision around whether to provide additional food items and engage with local businesses.

### Areas for improvement

- a) While many schools have connected with their school community and local community, approximately 30% of schools indicate that they would not welcome volunteers into their program. While many schools have resolved this issue there may be opportunities for Foodbank Victoria Coordinators to connect trustworthy or experienced volunteers with some schools.
- b) Engaging with school communities and local communities has benefits for students that extend beyond the program as children develop relationships with volunteers that can transfer into life outside of school. Promoting the benefits of volunteers to schools through the Foodbank Victoria SBCP newsletter may address some of these concerns.
- c) Foodbank Victoria provides schools with templates to maintain formal attendance records for breakfast clubs. The findings indicate that only 35% of schools keep attendance records. The benefits of keeping accurate records include the capacity for schools to assess the success of their own program, to monitor levels of attendance and respond to an increase or decrease in attendance. At a whole program level, attendance records would assist with analysing the success of the program.
- d) There is evidence of some tension around the role of teachers and schools in running a breakfast club and the demands of teaching workloads. The findings indicate that principals have been proactive in dealing with teachers and staff concerns. Acknowledgement of these concerns in Foodbank Victoria's induction with schools may help to alleviate these for new schools.
- e) Targeted evaluation of the cost to schools of running their breakfast club to investigate the capacity for schools to incorporate salary costs for the SBCP into their budget would enable as assessment of the sustainability of this approach across the program.
- f) Ongoing evaluation of the frequency and attendance at breakfast clubs is also recommended to ensure that the program continues to address the hunger needs of students.

## 7.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations for the School Breakfast Clubs Program emerged directly from the evaluation research findings:

**Recommendation 1:** That the Department of Education and Training and Foodbank Victoria investigate the possibility of providing additional practical assistance to schools to reduce the time required to prepare food for breakfast clubs. The aim is to reduce the time commitment for schools and make breakfast clubs more efficient. For example, the provision of larger (4 slice) or commercial sized toasters to schools could be explored.

**Recommendation 2:** That the DET and Foodbank Victoria investigate ways to support schools to increase the frequency of breakfast clubs and provide breakfast to students every day where possible. For example, the DET could increase the scope of Foodbank Victoria to provide more support, or facilitate funding, for schools who are finding it difficult to offer their breakfast club more frequently.

**Recommendation 3** That schools be encouraged to consider the days of the week they offer breakfast clubs when not operating every school day. The aim is to recognise the challenges for children going without food for extended days when breakfast clubs do not run every school day. For example, the

Foodbank Victoria toolkit and induction program could be amended to include information to encourage schools to consider the impact of long periods between breakfast club for students living with hunger and poverty.

**Recommendation 4:** That schools be encouraged to keep accurate records of attendance numbers. The aim is to support schools to monitor their own breakfast club and implement a quality improvement program to ensure the program continues to meet the needs of their school community. The records would also assist with future evaluation of the overall program.

**Recommendation 5:** That the breakfast-for-all approach of the SBCP be maintained and schools encouraged to promote the inclusive nature of their breakfast club. The aim is to ensure that all children are able to share the benefits and experience of a healthy, communal breakfast.

# 8 Appendix

## 8.1 Teacher survey

A key aim of the research and evaluation was to investigate the impact of SBCPs for students in the classroom. With inconclusive evidence around the benefits of providing breakfast at schools<sup>36</sup>, teachers were invited to provide their professional judgement on any noticeable changes they observed for the cohort of students who attend breakfast club from their class. The survey was designed to investigate whether the SBCP had impacted on a range of factors, including educational, wellbeing, nutritional, social and environmental and discipline.

Teachers in all 500 schools were invited to participate in an annual teacher survey, conducted online and taking around 10 minutes to complete. In 2016, 93 responses were received from teachers in nine of the 48 schools invited to participate. In 2017, 376 responses were received from staff in 26% of schools and in 2018, 735 responses were received from staff in 47% of schools. The responses were received from classroom and specialist teachers, wellbeing and welfare staff, education support staff and school leadership; these are reported on in this report.

### 8.1.1 Survey instructions

The teacher survey asked teachers for their professional judgment about the impact of SBCP for students in their class. The teacher survey was based on the understanding that teachers are best placed to notice changes in their students.

Drawing on their professional judgement, the survey invited teachers to give their professional opinion on the impact of SBCP on five key factors; Educational, Wellbeing, Nutrition, Discipline and Social and Environmental Factors.

The teacher survey gave teachers six options for each question and they could respond to multiple options in different combinations: got better for most **or** got better for some, **and** no change for most **or** no change for some, **and** got worse for most **or** got worse for some.

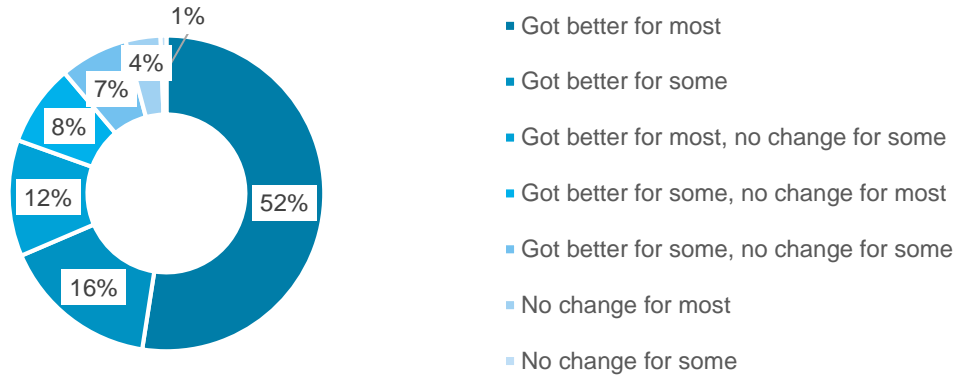
This enabled teachers to report the impact of SBCP more accurately as it removed the possibility of teachers reporting no change if the School Breakfast Clubs Program had impacted on all students except one, or a few, in their class. In this example the teacher could respond got better for **most** and no change for **some**.

Teachers were able to report if the SBCP had a negative impact on students. With the exception of punctuality, less than 2% of teachers reported that the program had a negative impact on students. Around 5% of teachers reported that student punctuality got worse for students who attend. This can be attributed to students staying at their breakfast club later rather than arriving at school late.

## 8.2 Impact graphs from teacher survey

### 8.2.1 Educational factors

Figure 38. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student concentration (n=671)

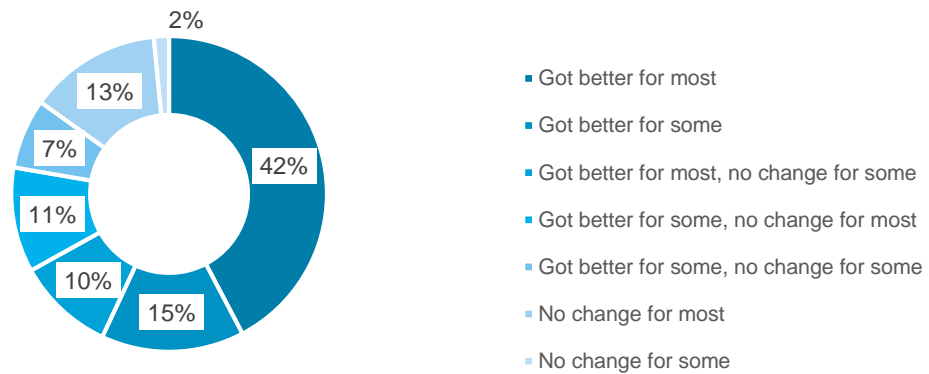



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*Students concentrate on their reading in the first session without thinking about the fact that they are hungry. They ask for a piece of fruit if Breakfast is not on but the cereal and toast is much more sustaining (Teacher survey).*

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Figure 39. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student punctuality (n=646)

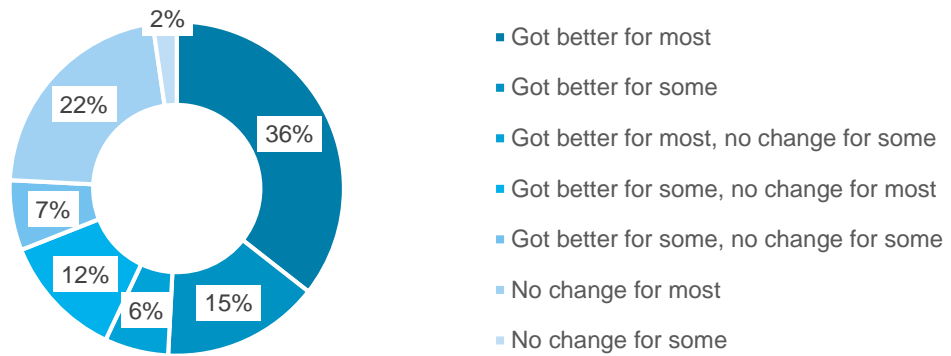



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*Students attend on time for breakfast and they have had food before starting school and concentrate more (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 40. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student attendance (n=641)**

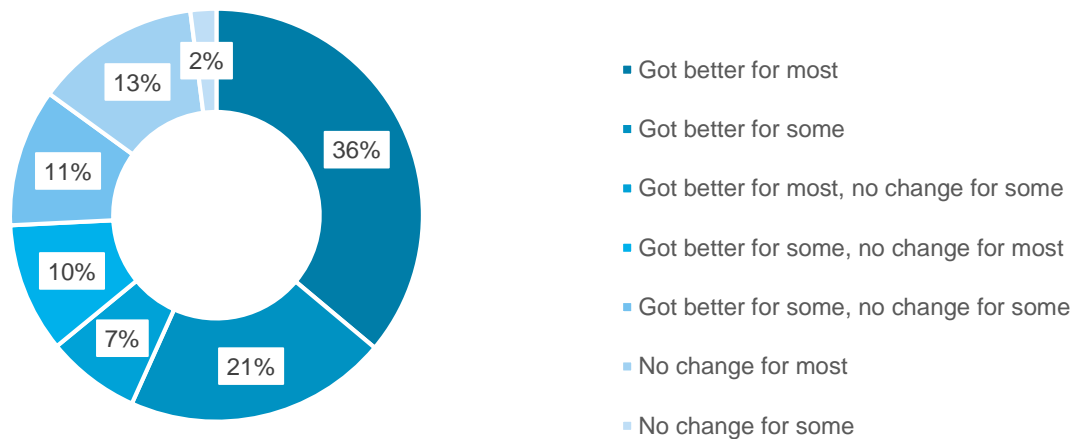



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*Students attending Breakfast Club had increased attendance and in turn were able to develop better morning routines and start the day ready to learn (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 41. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student academic outcomes (n=640)**

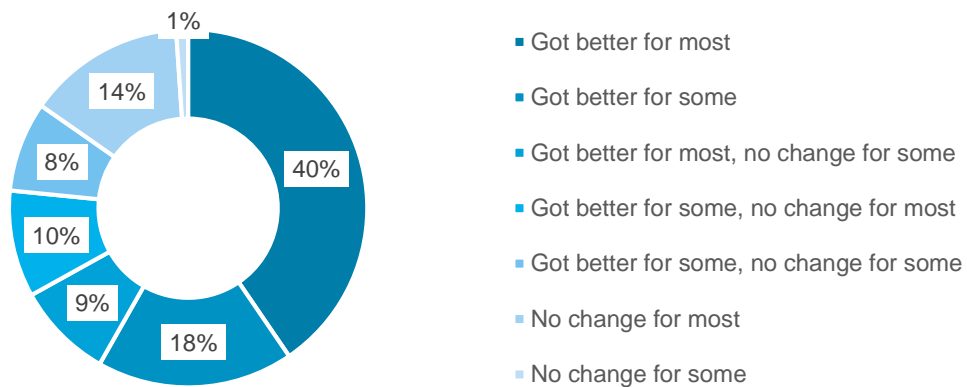



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*Those students who attend Breakfast Club, who previously did not have breakfast, have shown better concentration and good academic outcomes (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 42. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student behaviour (n=661)**

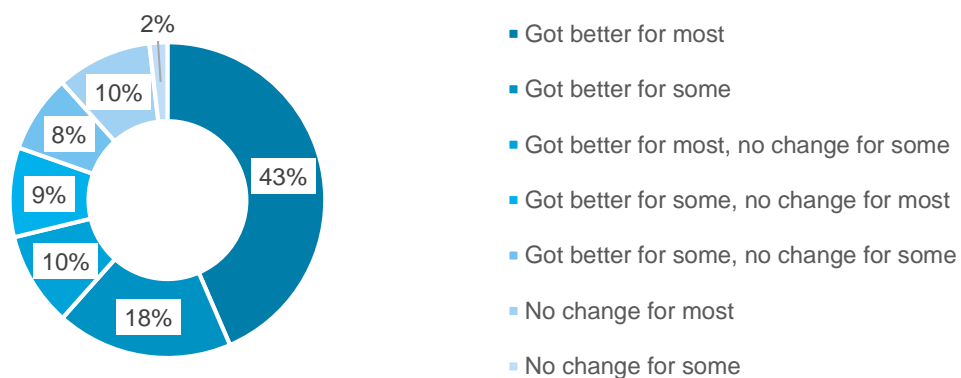



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*We do not do suspension at our school. But more satisfied and relaxed students meant less difficult behaviour (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 43. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student social skills (n=661)**

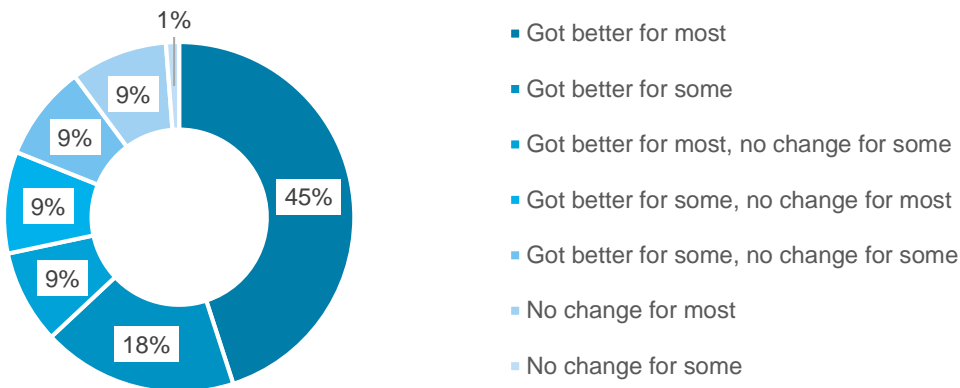



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*Great for teaching independence skills, and social skills of sitting at a table together to eat breakfast (Teacher survey).*

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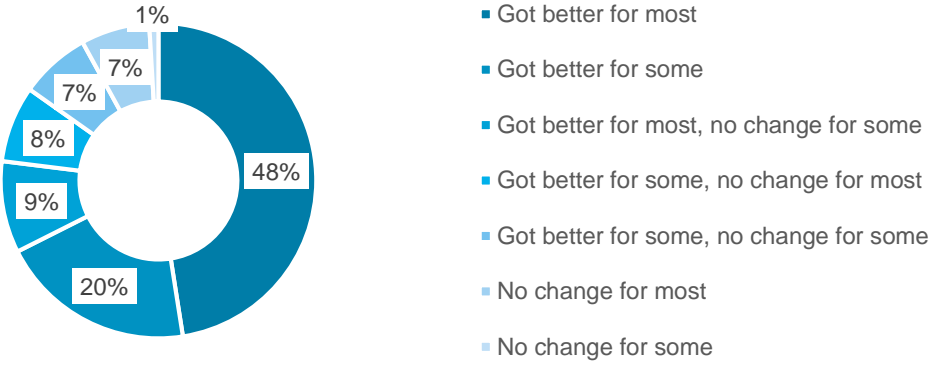
**Figure 44. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student engagement with class activities (n=660)**



*Those students that attend the program have exhibited increased levels of engagement and participation in the above areas (Teacher survey).*

**8.2.2 Wellbeing Factors**

**Factor 45. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on the mental health of students (n=632)**



*I believe this has had a positive impact on students' mental health and physical health as they are giving their bodies and mind the fuel needed to complete everyday activities (Teacher survey)*

**Figure 46. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on the physical health of students (n=651)**

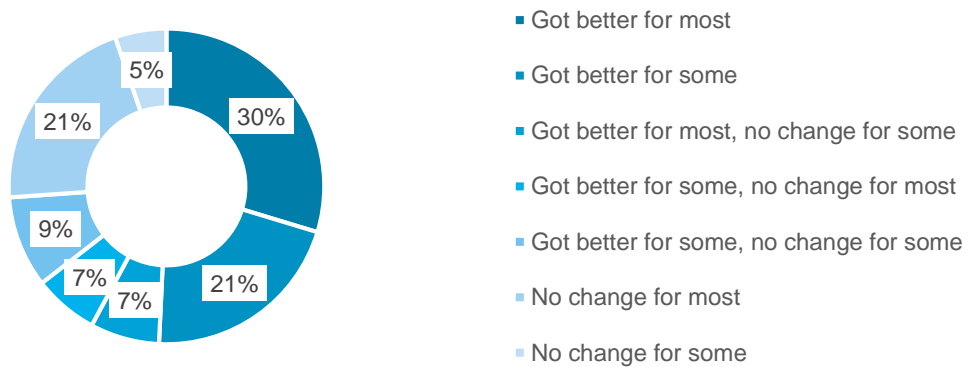



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*The Breakfast Club has improved the physical health of my students on the days that we run Breakfast Club, as students can eat a healthy meal (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 47. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on harmful lifestyle behaviours (n=432)**




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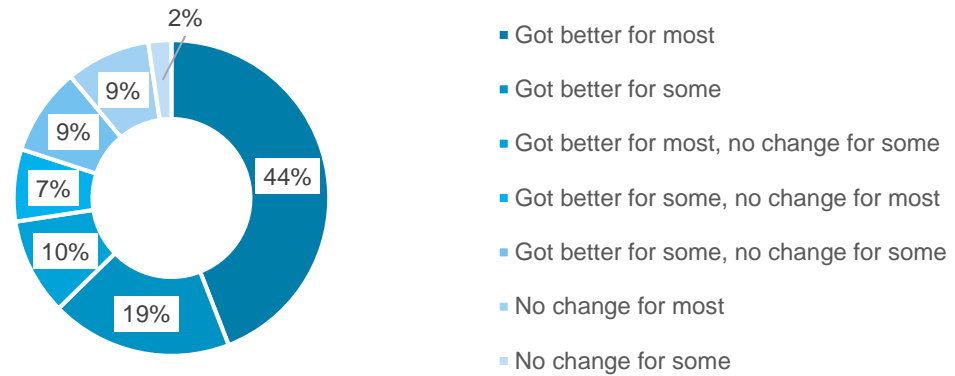
*Only good, positive behaviours have surfaced, and getting to know other students from different year levels has been a bonus (Teacher survey).*

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### 8.2.3 Nutrition Factors

Figure 48. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student awareness of healthy eating (n=635)




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*Focus on healthy eating, reinforces learning space programs (Teacher survey).*

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Figure 49. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student food selection and food preparation skills (n=598)

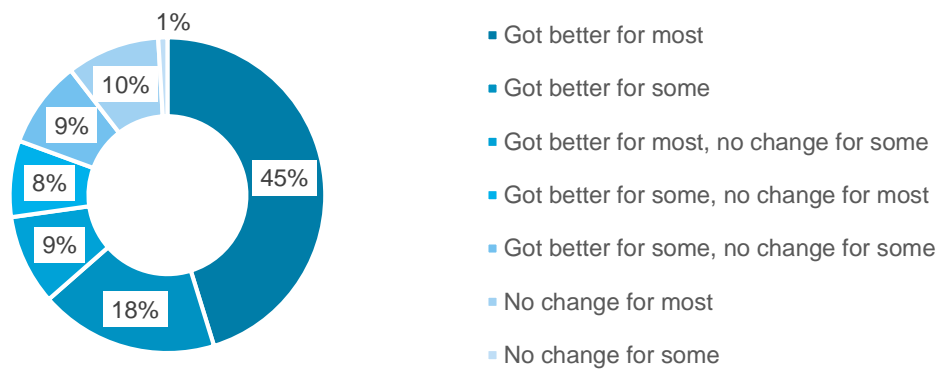



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*Choosing and eating breakfast at school gives students and teachers the opportunity to talk about the importance of healthy eating in a practical way (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 50. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student eating behaviours generally (n=639)**




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*Student conversation around breakfast often includes topics about which foods contain sugar or have more carbs (Teacher survey).*

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### 8.2.4 Social and Environmental Factors

**Figure 51. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on social relations between students and school staff (n=630)**

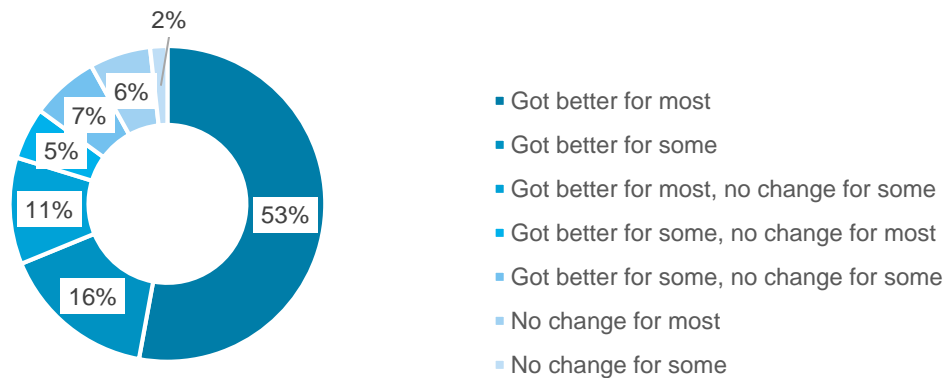



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*Students love the social, safe environment. They love arriving to school early to have breakfast with friends and teachers. They learn social manners at the table and try new foods because peers are eating it (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 52. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on the health promoting environment of the school (n=622)**

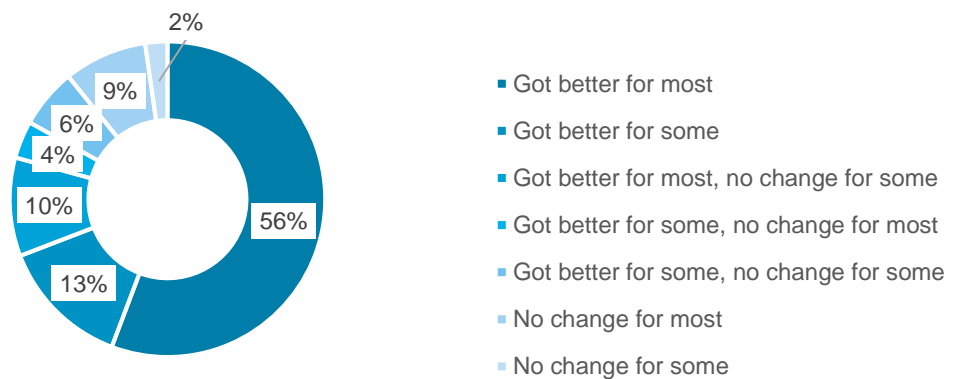



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*We have student volunteers running our program. They are part of a team who is responsible for the promotion of healthy eating at our school. We also take the opportunity to discuss eating patterns and choices whilst we are feeding the kids (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 53. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on social relations between students and community members (n=574)**



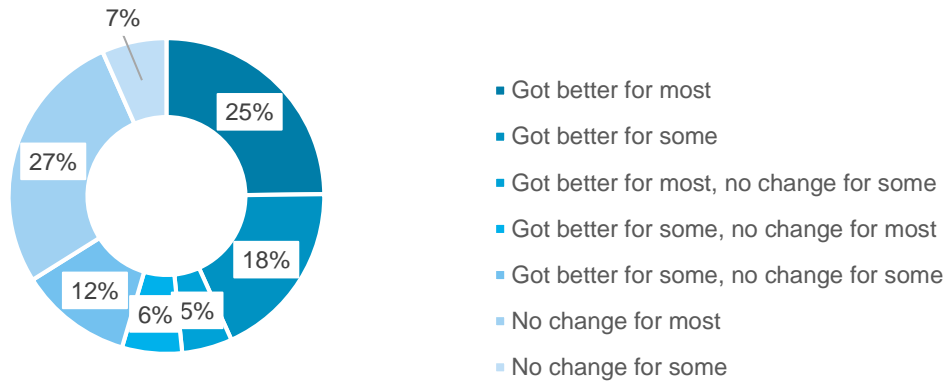

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*Students enjoy the chance to socialise with adults and their peers (Teacher survey).*

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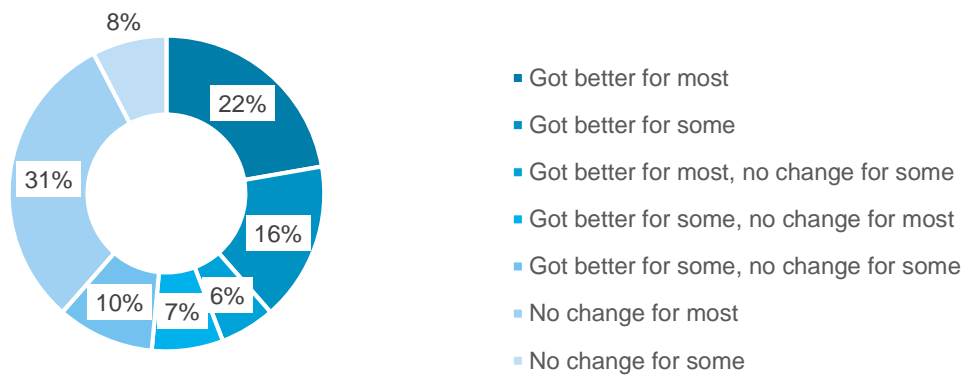
### 8.2.5 Discipline Factors

Figure 54. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Programs on student removal from class (n=407)



*Attitudes to school improved from all students. We are continually encouraging students to come for breakfast, especially for our students that disengage or have social and emotional issues (Teacher survey).*

Figure 55. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student detention (n=301)



*Some of the discipline problems were caused by students not having regular food intake and how this affected their behaviour (Teacher survey).*

**Figure 56. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student short suspension (n=245)**

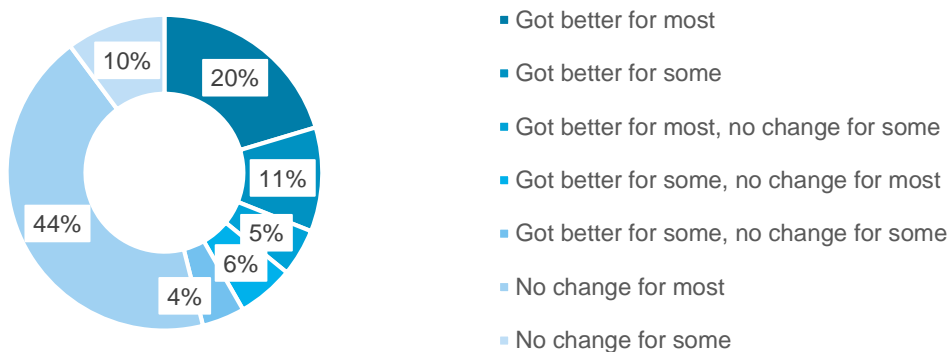



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*Through the program supporting positive relationships and connections at the commencement of the day, there was a positive impact on student behaviour (Teacher survey).*

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**Figure 57. Impact of the School Breakfast Clubs Program on student long suspension (n=205)**




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*One student in particular has had better behaviour on a Friday as he has food in his stomach (Teacher survey).*

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