

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: call for evidence

Additional submission from the Association of School and College Leaders on Clause 21: Free breakfast club provision

A. Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a trade union and professional association representing around 25,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business leaders and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider the proposals in the Bill from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL made a written submission to the Bill Committee on 27 January, setting out our views on all the clauses in part two of the Bill. In that submission, we said that the timing of the call for evidence meant that we had not yet been able to discuss the details of the proposals in full with ASCL Council, our policy-making body of elected members. We wanted to ensure our views could be heard as early as possible in the committee's deliberations, and so sent in our submission ahead of the next meeting of Council.
3. Council met on 6 and 7 February, and endorsed all the points we made in our submission. They also asked us to make some further points on Clause 21: Free breakfast club provision. This additional submission therefore does this.

B. ASCL position on breakfast club proposal

4. ASCL fully supports the government's desire to tackle child poverty, to break down barriers to opportunity in schools, and to support working parents by ensuring they have access to high-quality childcare. We also recognise the role that breakfast clubs in primary schools can play in supporting these ambitions.
5. However, we have significant concerns about the breakfast club proposal as set out in the Bill. These are as follows:
 - a. Making this a duty, rather than something which schools can choose to do, represents a worrying shift from schools being considered places of education, to places of childcare.
 - b. This will present significant logistical challenges for some schools, including around staffing and physical space. This includes the difficulty of predicting how many pupils will attend the breakfast club each day, if it is open to all children and provided free of charge, which in turn makes planning appropriate and safe staffing extremely difficult.

- c. If breakfast clubs are not adequately funded by the government, schools will have to subsidise this provision themselves, stretching already challenging budgets to breaking point. This also risks disrupting existing wraparound care.
 - d. The impact of this policy will fall disproportionately on school leaders in primary schools, as they will need to plan and oversee this provision and would likely need to be on-site for safeguarding reasons. Essentially this therefore amounts to a 30-minute statutory extension of the primary school day, with no consultation.
 - e. There is no evidence that this proposal will attract those children who would most benefit from it.
6. We suggest the government amends the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill to reduce the degree of detail in the clause relating to breakfast clubs. Instead, the Bill should state that primary schools should have a duty to *follow statutory guidance* on breakfast clubs. This would enable current and future governments to learn from how this policy can be effectively implemented on the ground, and adjust the detail in secondary legislation or statutory guidance accordingly.

C. Conclusion

7. I hope that this additional submission is of value to your call for evidence. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Julie McCulloch
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Association of School and College Leaders
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