National School Breakfast Programme

Family Action and Magic Breakfast (FAMB) were awarded the £24million Department for Education contract to deliver the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP). The NSBP will support 1,775 schools to start, or improve existing, breakfast provision. The aim is to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils, across both primary and secondary schools, have access to a free and nutritious breakfast.

EEF are funding (1) the evaluation of the programme scale-up and (2) a small-scale innovation pilot testing the ways to increase parent/carer engagement with breakfast provision as a route to improving attendance.

Why are we funding it?

A previous EEF effectiveness trial showed that offering pupils in primary schools a free and nutritious meal before school can boost their reading, writing, and maths results by an average of two months’ additional progress. Interestingly, it appears that it was not whether more pupils ate breakfast at all that made the difference, but whether more went to the school breakfast club. It may be that school breakfasts are more nutritious than what pupils would otherwise have, or that attending the club effectively prepares pupils for learning. Breakfast club schools also saw an improvement in pupil behaviour.

How are we evaluating it?

The delivery of breakfast provision to the 1,775 schools will be evaluated through a mixed-methods implementation and process evaluation. This evaluation will provide an ongoing evaluation of the fidelity to the original design, supporting FAMB to ensure that fidelity remains high throughout; an understanding of barriers to and facilitators of successful delivery; and an evaluation of the cost of the programme, including understanding potential future models for meeting this cost.

The scale-up evaluation will focus on the following research areas: operation of scale-up mechanism and strategy, implementation of breakfast provision in practice, costs and outcomes of the programme and future sustainability of breakfast provision beyond the delivery of the contract with DfE.

The innovation pilot is looking at how to improve parent and carer engagement, and therefore pupil attendance, with breakfast provision in primary schools. The project will be delivered in three phases:

- A phase to generate ideas for most appropriate solutions to test, which will involve FAMB and schools;
- A development and testing phase that aims for an individual or cluster randomised controlled trial(s), complemented by a qualitative evaluation to look at the impacts of selected innovation ideas in selected schools;
- and a final phase to assess learning and make recommendations about which innovations should be incorporated into the main programme or tested at larger scale.

When will the evaluation report be due?

The report for the scale-up evaluation will be published in Spring 2020 and the report for the innovation project will be published in Autumn 2019.