

The National Children's Breakfast Charter

British Berry
Growers



Who are we?



is the industry body for the British berry industry, which is worth £1.87 billion in annual retail sales.⁽¹⁾ Its members supply over 95 percent of British berries - strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries - in UK supermarkets.

British Berry Growers directs world-leading berry research, represents the interests of berry growers to Government and funds Love Fresh Berries, a year-round consumer campaign that celebrates the taste, health and value of British berries.

**REPRESENTS 95%
OF BRITISH BERRY
SUPPLIERS**



**WORTH
£1.87bn
IN ANNUAL RETAIL
SALES ⁽¹⁾**



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Introduction



As chair of British Berry Growers, I'm proud to represent an industry that plays a meaningful role in supporting the health and wellbeing of families across the UK.

Berries aren't just delicious, they're a natural source of the nutrients that children need to thrive.

But while we've long known the importance of fruit in a balanced diet, this report shines a light on something even more urgent: the state of breakfast in the UK and the many children who are starting their day without the nourishment they need.

We commissioned research to better understand what's really happening in homes up and down the country, and the findings are concerning. Too many children are skipping breakfast entirely, while others are starting their day with foods that may be convenient but fall short nutritionally. And for families facing time or financial pressures, making healthy choices isn't always easy.

This is not about pointing fingers. It's about recognising the realities parents face and offering practical, positive solutions. Breakfast is one of the best opportunities we have to support children's growth, focus, and wellbeing. That's why we believe it's time to have an open, national conversation about how we can make that first meal of the day work better for every family.

This report, developed in partnership with nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert, brings together the latest data and expert insight to explore what breakfast really looks like, and what it could look like, with the right support.

At British Berry Growers, we're committed to being part of the solution. But we know real change requires all of us - government, schools, industry, and families - working together. Our hope is that this report sparks dialogue, drives action, and helps every child start their day with the energy and nourishment they deserve.



Nicholas Marston
Chairman of British Berry Growers

The problem with children's breakfasts

Award-winning nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert BSc MSc warns that children's breakfast habits in the UK are falling short, both in consistency and in quality.

She describes this as part of a **broader pattern** of undernourishment, dietary imbalance, and habitual reliance on low-quality, convenience-driven choices.

Rhiannon pins it down to a normalisation of inadequate breakfasts. Either they are rushed, nutritionally poor, or skipped altogether. These inadequate breakfasts are served up owing to a range of **contributing factors**, including time pressure at home, socioeconomic inequality, parental uncertainty around nutrition, and the powerful influence of food marketing, particularly for ultra-processed products.

Rhiannon says:

"A growing body of research continues to reinforce the importance of breakfast, not just for energy provision, but for its role in supporting physical and cognitive performance, as well as long-term health outcomes⁽²⁻⁴⁾.

Rhiannon says: "Breakfast is widely acknowledged as a critical part of a healthy diet, yet it STILL remains one of the most frequently overlooked meals, particularly among children and adolescents. In the UK, busy lifestyles, irregular routines and shifting food norms have contributed to the growing neglect of breakfast."

A well-balanced breakfast has been shown to contribute significantly to daily nutrient intake in younger populations⁽⁹⁾. Regular consumption is associated with improved academic performance, better concentration and behaviour in school, and lower levels of fatigue across the day^(3,9,20,24).

Importantly, children who eat breakfast regularly are more likely to maintain a healthier body composition, with studies highlighting a protective relationship between breakfast consumption and the risk of overweight and obesity⁽²³⁾.

Skipping breakfast has also been linked with a possible increased risk of chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in later life^(4,15,16,22). Additionally, those who habitually skip breakfast often fall short on essential vitamins and minerals that are essential for the growth and development of children and adolescents^(3,11). These shortfalls, if sustained, may compromise both immediate wellbeing and long-term health.

Rhiannon Lambert is one Britain's most renowned nutritionists with a first-class BSc in Nutrition and Health and an MSc in Obesity Risks and Prevention. She is also a Master Practitioner in Psychological Interventions for Eating Disorders.

Rhiannon has also written five books, including *The Science of Nutrition* (2021) and *The Science of Plant-Based Nutrition* (2024), both of which were Sunday Times bestsellers. Most recently, she released *The Unprocessed Plate*, where she answers the biggest questions surrounding ultra-processed foods (UPFs), explaining the nuances and contradictions while sharing 60 minimally processed, family-friendly recipes.

Rhiannon is the founder of Rhitrition, her evidence-based private clinic on Harley Street, and the creator of Rhitrition+, a supplement brand grounded in scientific research. Recently, Rhiannon and Ella Mills, launched the popular podcast *The Wellness Scoop*, which reached number one in the charts.

Why are children skipping breakfast?

By Rhiannon Lambert

On average, children skip or refuse to eat breakfast nearly seven times a month⁽⁵⁾:



65%

Not hungry



31%

Didn't like what was offered



28%

Slept in too late

This new research comes from British Berry Growers, the industry body representing 95 percent of British berries sold in the UK.

This is contributing to the so-called **“beige breakfast” phenomenon**: meals that are visually and nutritionally bland, often high in refined carbohydrates and added sugars.

Rhiannon's claims are backed up by findings from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) which show that many children either skip breakfast altogether or consume breakfasts that are high in sugar, low in fibre, and lacking in vital nutrients⁽¹⁷⁾.



Rhiannon says these findings highlight the need for better education around breakfast routines and the importance of engaging children with a greater variety of nutritious and appealing options.

“Beige breakfast” further explained...

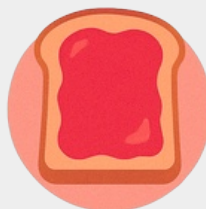
While these foods can provide rapid, short-term energy, their lack of protein and dietary fibre means they are digested quickly, leading to an increased likelihood of hunger and reduced concentration within just a few hours^(10,17). Their absence of essential nutrients limits their ability to support sustained growth and cognitive function, which can also impact long-term health⁽²⁾.

According to British Berry Growers' findings⁽⁵⁾. Parents say typical breakfast choices among their children are dominated by:



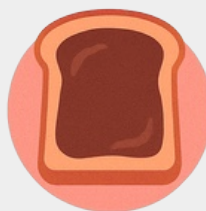
59%

Sweetened cereals



50%

Jam on toast



50%

Chocolate spread on toast

Why are children skipping breakfast?

By Rhiannon Lambert

Nutritional and educational implications

Most people are aware of the nutritional consequences of a poor breakfast. With diets low in fibre and micronutrients (including iron, calcium, and vitamin D) being common among children⁽¹⁷⁾. A breakfast lacking in these key nutrients will worsen these deficits.

British Berry Growers' research found that children typically fall short of the target five-a-day fruit and vegetable recommendation on four or more days each week⁽⁵⁾, highlighting breakfast as a crucial opportunity to help close this nutritional gap.

Socioeconomic disparities and childhood obesity

According to the latest data from the National Child Measurement Programme⁽¹³⁾, 9.6% of reception-age children in England were obese in 2023/24, rising to 22.1% among Year 6 pupils.

Children living in the most deprived areas were twice as likely to be obese as those in the least deprived areas, with rates of severe obesity up to four times higher⁽¹³⁾.

This reinforces the urgency of policy action to improve access to nutritious breakfast options and provide clearer guidance for families, especially those most at risk.

Key impacts

Beyond nutrition, the behavioural and educational impact on children is also evident⁽⁵⁾.

Parents express concern that skipping breakfast may leave children:



58%
Tired



72%
Hungry before lunch



53%
Less able to concentrate in class



The current nutritional landscape

By Rhiannon Lambert

Parental pressures and the time-poor household

With modern family life typically being fast-paced and unpredictable, it is understandable that many parents can struggle to establish consistent, nutritious breakfast habits.

Data shows that younger parents, in particular, report an average of over eight rushed starts per month⁽⁵⁾, but the challenge is widespread across households.

Rhiannon explains how in these moments of pressure, many families understandably opt for the most convenient and affordable options, typically ultra-processed items such as sugary cereals, toaster pastries, or white bread with spreads. These choices may be quick and familiar, but they are often high in sugar, low in fibre, and lacking in essential nutrients.

Over half of parents surveyed report finding it difficult to get their children to eat healthily in the morning, and 56% say they feel guilty about the nutritional quality of their children's breakfasts⁽⁵⁾.



Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) now make up around

60%
of the average UK child's diet⁽¹⁷⁾



The role of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and marketing

Breakfast convenience products are often ultra-processed, meaning they are industrially manufactured, shelf-stable, and high in additives such as emulsifiers, preservatives, and artificial sweeteners. These UPFs are not only over-consumed but aggressively marketed, particularly to children, through bright packaging, cartoon characters, and promotional deals⁽²¹⁾. Alarming, ultra-processed foods (UPFs) now make up around 60% of the average UK child's diet⁽¹⁷⁾.

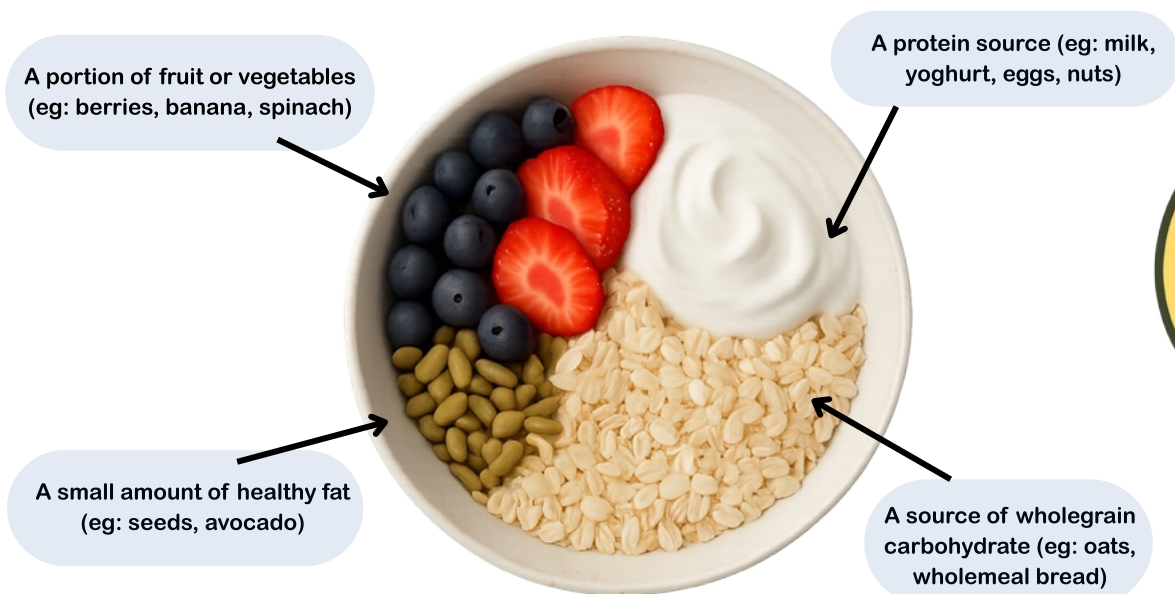
While the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition⁽²¹⁾ has raised concerns about the health implications of UPF-rich diets, parents often lack the tools or guidance needed to identify and limit these foods, particularly under time pressure or budget constraints.

There is a clear need for greater public education on what constitutes an ultra-processed food, how these products impact children's health, and how to make practical swaps. Stronger government-led initiatives are needed to reduce the availability and marketing of UPFs, especially those targeted at children, and to support families in accessing minimally processed, nutrient-dense alternatives.

A better breakfast

By Rhiannon Lambert

Primary age: Children aged 5-11 require a balanced breakfast that supports their growth, energy levels, and cognitive function. An ideal breakfast might look like:



RHIANNON'S TOP TIP

A simple way to understand portion sizes for younger children is to use their hand size as a guide. For example, a serving of cereal should be about three medium handfuls, and a portion of whole-grain toast could be roughly the size of the child's palm⁽²⁷⁾.

An ideal breakfast for 5-11-year-olds balances blood sugar levels, keeps children full until lunch and provides vital nutrients for growth and brain function. Portion sizes should be adjusted to reflect the increased needs of the age group, as younger children require less food overall than older children or adults⁽²⁷⁾.

As children transition into adolescence, their nutritional needs increase due to higher energy expenditure and growth demands. Their breakfast should include nutrient-dense foods, with larger servings of protein, carbohydrates, and healthy fats to support their higher energy requirements.

For this adolescent age group, breakfast should additionally include:

- Healthy fats from nuts, seeds, or avocado to support brain function and hormone regulation,
- Fortified dairy alternatives or dairy products to support strong and dense⁽²⁹⁾ bone health, establishing a strong skeletal structure that will support us throughout our lives.



Why berries should have a place at the breakfast table

Berries are a particularly nutrient-dense option for children's breakfasts, offering a combination of vitamin C, fibre, polyphenols, and antioxidants. These bioactive compounds contribute to immune function, brain health, gut microbiota diversity, and overall cellular protection. Their natural sweetness also provides a palatable alternative to added sugars, making them ideal for promoting healthier breakfast patterns without compromising on taste. Their bright colours and soft textures are also especially appealing to younger children and fussy eaters, helping to support fruit variety in the early years.

Can breakfast be healthy and sustainable?

A nutritious breakfast doesn't mean it can't be sustainable! Eating with the seasons reduces reliance on air-freighted produce, lowers environmental impact, and can help families stretch food budgets further. UK-grown berries, such as strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries, are an environmentally responsible option when consumed in season and can be preserved in your freezer to support year-round use. Supporting local growers also benefits the environment and economy, while allowing children to learn about food provenance - another important educational tool in promoting lifelong healthy eating behaviours.

Working towards a solution By Rhiannon Lambert

How can we make breakfast appealing?

While the nutritional quality of breakfast is undeniably important, the long-term success of any breakfast routine also depends on its appeal, accessibility, and consistency. Establishing a consistent breakfast habit provides children with a reliable source of energy and nutrients to support concentration, growth, and immune function throughout the day. Routine helps to regulate appetite, reduce morning stress, and promote the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns.

A visually appealing breakfast is also important. Smoothie bowls topped with sliced fruit and seeds, overnight oats layered with berries and yogurt, or wholegrain pancakes served with homemade berry compote are not only nutritionally balanced but also all visually exciting. These types of meals may help children feel more enthusiastic about breakfast, increase their willingness to try new foods, and find greater enjoyment in the overall experience of eating.



How we talk about food to children

Importantly, positive food messaging must underpin breakfast routines to allow for the development of a healthy relationship with food from an early age. It is crucial to avoid restrictive language or labels that could lead to food guilt or anxiety. Instead, framing food as fuel for play, learning, and growth helps children develop a constructive mindset toward eating.

By focusing on the functional benefits of food, such as how certain foods support energy, focus, and strength, children can begin to understand the importance of eating without associating it with restrictions or negative feelings. This approach is especially important at breakfast, as it sets the tone for the day and encourages children to see their morning meal as a nourishing start that powers them for their daily activities.



The need for change and our ask

By Rhiannon Lambert

While school breakfast clubs offer a valuable safety net for young people, access remains inconsistent. This is especially the case in more deprived areas. According to the British Berry Growers' survey, almost all (96%) of parents believe the government should do more to ensure children are offered more fruit at breakfast in school, and 41% support the provision of universal healthy breakfast clubs. There is also public backing for government-led incentives such as discounts on fresh produce and improved availability of healthy breakfast options.

Despite existing Department for Education school food standards⁽⁶⁾, there remains no statutory obligation for schools to provide breakfast, nor national funding to guarantee coverage for all children. This leaves many pupils without access to a secure and nourishing start to their day, particularly in more deprived areas.

These are the top 3 things parents would like to see their child eat more of at a school breakfast club⁽⁵⁾



Strawberries 71%



Bananas 67%



Yoghurt 64%



Even when free breakfasts are provided, quality is inconsistent.

Only **66%** of parents believe their child's school breakfast is nutritionally balanced⁽¹³⁾

Steps to achieve better breakfasts

A nutritious breakfast sets the tone for the day, yet too many children in the UK are missing out. Improving breakfast habits isn't solely a matter of individual choice; it requires coordinated action across government, education, industry, and the home environment. Here's how we can raise the breakfast bar, together.

What can the government and schools do to raise the breakfast bar?

Government policy has a crucial role in shaping children's nutritional foundations. Stronger regulation of high fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) products, particularly ultra-processed breakfast items, is urgently needed. School food standards must be updated and consistently enforced to reflect modern nutrition science and the role of breakfast in long-term health.

A practical first step would be for the government to offer fresh fruit, such as British-grown berries, in school breakfast clubs and free school meal pilots. These nutrient-rich foods should not be an optional extra, but a consistent feature of every child's morning plate.

Schools can also be powerful vehicles for change. Offering appealing, balanced breakfast options and embedding food education into the curriculum can help normalise healthy habits from an early age. Every child should learn what a good breakfast looks like and why it matters.

The need for change and our ask

By Rhiannon Lambert

How can retailers and food companies make the healthier choice the easier choice?

Food environments shape food behaviours. Retailers must do more to make healthy breakfast options both visible and affordable. Placing fresh berries alongside cereals in supermarket aisles, offering bundle deals in their online stores, or creating child-friendly packaging can make healthier choices more attractive and accessible. However, having the choice in the first place is a privilege and affordability remains a barrier for many families. Retailers and food brands should prioritise the promotion and pricing of fresh produce, helping ensure nutritious foods aren't out of reach for lower-income households.

How can we help families make simple swaps that stick?

Supporting families with small, manageable changes can lead to lasting impact. A national "battle the beige bowl" campaign could help shift habits at home, encouraging parents to top porridge, cereal or toast with a handful of berries, or to swap sugary spreads for fruit-based alternatives. Pairing this with national healthy eating campaigns would reinforce consistent, realistic messages and empower parents with easy wins that don't require a complete unrealistic diet overhaul.



Professor Kevin Morgan, from Cardiff University, has spent 20 years studying the impact of good food, and assessing policies which seek to develop a fair, healthy and sustainable food system. He has also previously written a book about the subject, 'Serving the public: the good food revolution in schools, hospitals and prisons'.

How do we inspire our children to be curious (and proud) about what's on their plate?

Children are more likely to eat well when they're involved in food choices. Making breakfast fun, colourful and interactive, from building their own berry bowls to growing fruit at school, can help them spark curiosity and engagement. Positive messaging, hands-on food education, and reducing shame or pressure around "fussy eating" will help children build a lifelong, confident relationship with food, starting with what's in their bowl each morning.

Breakfast has the power to shape not just individual health, but the future of a generation. By bringing government policy, schools, industry, and families together, we can create a food environment where the healthier choice becomes the easiest, most accessible one. British berries have a powerful role to play in this shift, not as a luxury, but as a simple, everyday addition to better breakfasts. Small shifts in policy, education, and daily habits can collectively create a healthier, more consistent start to the day for every child, regardless of background or circumstance.

The Cardiff University academic said: "We want the best school food on offer in the UK to give our children the healthiest start to life. Every child should be offered a nutritious meal - it is no good universalising poor quality food."

"If the government could mandate a minimum nutritional standard for school meals, including breakfast, this would be a positive step forward for society."

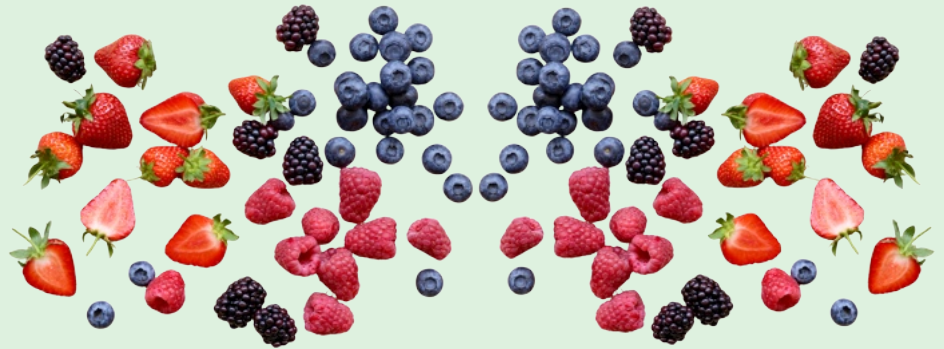
"Giving school children nutritious meals isn't just good for them as individuals - it has tangible benefits for wider society, leading to better life outcomes and less of a health burden on the state further down the line."

"Initiatives like the National Children's Breakfast Charter are key in driving momentum around school food provision. But while persuading political elites to take food system reform seriously is vital, it is only the beginning of a process that needs to involve everyone in the food chain, from farm to fork, if the UK is to create a more sustainable food system."

The need for change and our ask

By Rhiannon Lambert

School breakfasts can boost children's nutrition, providing essential nutrients they might otherwise miss, especially for those from lower-income backgrounds. This can help support their healthy growth and development⁽³⁰⁾.



Eating breakfast is linked to improved concentration and alertness in the morning. By providing energy, school breakfasts help children to focus better in class and be more receptive to learning⁽³⁰⁾.

Breakfast can also have a positive effect on academic performance, with evidence indicating better results in subjects like maths and english. This is particularly notable for consistent breakfast eaters on school days^(31,32).



Providing breakfast at school contributes to a better classroom environment by reducing hunger-related behavioural issues. Evidence also suggests that eating breakfast can improve children's mood and overall wellbeing⁽³¹⁾.

School breakfast initiatives, especially when offered to all children for free, can help to reduce inequalities by ensuring that more vulnerable pupils have access to a nutritious meal, leading to fairer health and educational outcomes⁽³⁰⁾.

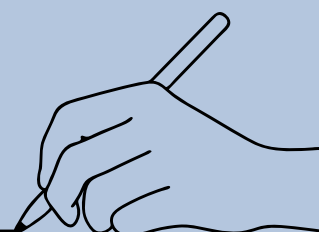


Ben Dunn, Head of Impact & Insights at Magic Breakfast said: “A school breakfast is a positive in so many ways. Primarily it ensures that no pupil starts school too hungry to learn, but also, so much more. Classmates can enjoy time together to socialise and form friendships, families are better supported around the morning rush, whilst teachers and schools frequently report that pupils who have eaten are better prepared to start the school day.”

How you can help

The Breakfast Charter cannot succeed without public support. We are asking parents, grandparents, teachers and carers across the UK to take **two** simple steps:

Contact your **MP**



Tell them that supporting children's breakfast nutrition must be a national priority. You can submit your letter using our template at www.lovefreshberries.co.uk/healthier-school-breakfasts/

Visit the **Love Fresh Berries website**

Learn more about how berries can help build a better breakfast at lovefreshberries.co.uk.



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