



One Can Trust

School Meals Project

Annual Report 2024–2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Impact at a glance.....	3
Introduction (including Background & Context).....	4
Programme Delivery & Scale 2024-25.....	5
Outcomes.....	6
Attendance.....	6
Punctuality.....	7
Whole-School Other Outcomes.....	7
Teacher Impact Assessments 2024–2025.....	9
Control Group Outcomes.....	10
Behaviour, Confidence, and Performance.....	11
Overall Impact.....	11
Social Inclusion & Behaviour.....	12
Parental Feedback.....	13
Financial savings and impact to families:.....	14
Parental Contact:.....	15
Reasons for Funding Support.....	15
Clothes Bank Impact.....	16
Additional Support and Core Services.....	17
Cost of Delivery 2024–2025.....	18
Influencing Policy Change.....	19
Remaining Gaps.....	19
Future Plans and Ongoing Commitment.....	20
Advocacy and Policy Engagement.....	20
Summary of Impact.....	21

Executive Summary

One Can Trust's **School Meals Programme** tackles hidden hunger for children not eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) but living in financial hardship. The programme funds breakfast and hot lunches, while connecting families to wider support such as food parcels, clothes banks, and community cafés.

2024–25 Delivery

- **163 children supported** across **7 schools** (up from 68 in Year 1).
- **20,885 meals funded** (13,632 lunches, 7,253 breakfasts), more than triple the pilot year total.
- Two further schools will join in 2025–26, keeping the programme on track to reach nine schools ahead of national FSM expansion in 2026.

Key Outcomes

- **Attendance:** improved from **95.6% → 96.3%**, with strongest gains at Hamilton and Ash Hill.
- **Punctuality:** major Year 1 improvements sustained, with schools recording fewer lates.
- **Concentration & Attention:** significant increases (Concentration **+1.3**, Attention **+1.1**). Nearly 70% of children improved focus.
- **Control group** showed no improvement, confirming impact is programme-specific
- **Parents:** food-related anxiety dropped by **54%**, families saved **£30 per week (£1,500 annually)**, and 72% reported children were happier and more socially engaged.

Wider Impact

- Whole-school improvements in attendance and punctuality, including persistent absence at Beechview dropping from **77.9% → 27.4%**.
- Teachers reported pupils were more confident, settled, and engaged in lessons.

Financials

- **Total cost 2024–25: £106,156** (approx. **£5.08 per meal including overheads**).

Policy Influence

Programme data has been shared nationally, contributing to the government's decision to expand FSM eligibility from September 2026.

Impact at a glance

Measure	Year 1 (2023–24)	Year 2 (2024–25)	Trend
Children supported	68	163	▲ +140%
Meals funded	6,558	20,885	▲ +218%
Avg. attendance	Not reported	95.6% → 96.3%	▲ Improved
Concentration	3.0 → 4.1	2.9 → 4.2	▲ Significant
Attention	3.1 → 4.0	3.0 → 4.1	▲ Significant
Parental anxiety	4.1 → 2.1	4.3 → 2.0	▼ Quantified reduction

Parent: “This programme has made a huge difference to our family. My children are thriving in class because they’re not hungry.”

Teacher: “The atmosphere in our classrooms has transformed – children are learning, smiling, and thriving.”

Introduction (including Background & Context)

One Can Trust (OCT) is a charity operating in High Wycombe and surrounding areas in Buckinghamshire. OCT provides a range of support for families experiencing financial insecurity, including a food bank, children and adult's clothes banks, community support projects, and school-focused food programmes.

In 2023, OCT identified a concerning gap: children were attending school without breakfast or skipping lunch because their families were struggling financially but were ineligible for government-funded Free School Meals (FSM). In response, OCT, with secured funding, commenced a targeted project, working directly with schools to identify children experiencing hunger and provide funding for breakfast club places and/or hot school lunches.

During the pilot year (November 2023 to July 2024), five schools were onboarded. Teachers and safeguarding leads identified 68 children in need, to whom 6,558 meals were provided (4,660 lunches and 1,898 breakfasts). 91% of families supported had parents working either part-time or full-time, highlighting the 'working poverty' gap this programme addresses.

Alongside meal provision, families referred into the project were contacted by OCT Community Support team members to offer wider help — including referrals to our food bank, children's clothes bank, community cafés, and cookery classes.

Before and post the programme, teachers were asked to rate children's attention, concentration, and behaviour to track the impact of the school meals. Outcomes showed clear improvements in all areas, particularly in children's readiness to learn and their social development. Parents also reported reduced anxiety about providing healthy food, which had further positive implications for family wellbeing.

In Year 2 of the programme rollout (2024–25), building on the pilot year's success, the programme has expanded to 7 schools supporting 163 children and catered for 20,885 meals. Focus was expanded to deepen partnerships with schools, gathering more robust data on the impact of meal provision, and preparing for further expansion before the government's planned FSM policy changes in September 2026.

In 2024–25, the School Meals Programme ran in six schools for the full academic year: Beechview, Hamilton, Marsh Infant, Ash Hill, Castlefield, and Cressex. Wycombe High School joined in late June 2025, taking the total to seven schools engaged. As Wycombe High joined at the end of the year, sufficient data was not available for inclusion in this report's analysis.

The original rollout plan anticipated six schools being active in Year 2, with expansion to nine schools in Year 3. OCT therefore remains on track with its delivery targets.

Two additional schools, Kingswood and Booker Hill, had signed paperwork to join in 2024–25 but were unable to commence delivery due to internal constraints, including safeguarding processes and limited administrative capacity. These schools remain engaged with OCT and are expected to onboard in the 2025–26 academic year, bringing the programme to its planned total of nine schools.

The programme continues to play a vital role in bridging the gap for children in hardship who remain ineligible for FSM, ensuring no child goes hungry during the school day.

Programme Delivery & Scale 2024-25

Children Supported:

- Current children enrolled: **163 (up from 68 prior year)**
- Supported across: **7 schools (up from 5 prior year)**

Meals Provided:

- Total breakfasts funded: **7,253 (up from 1,898 prior year)**
- Total lunches funded: **13,632 (up from 4,660 prior year)**
- Total meals funded: **20,885 (up from 6,558 prior year)**

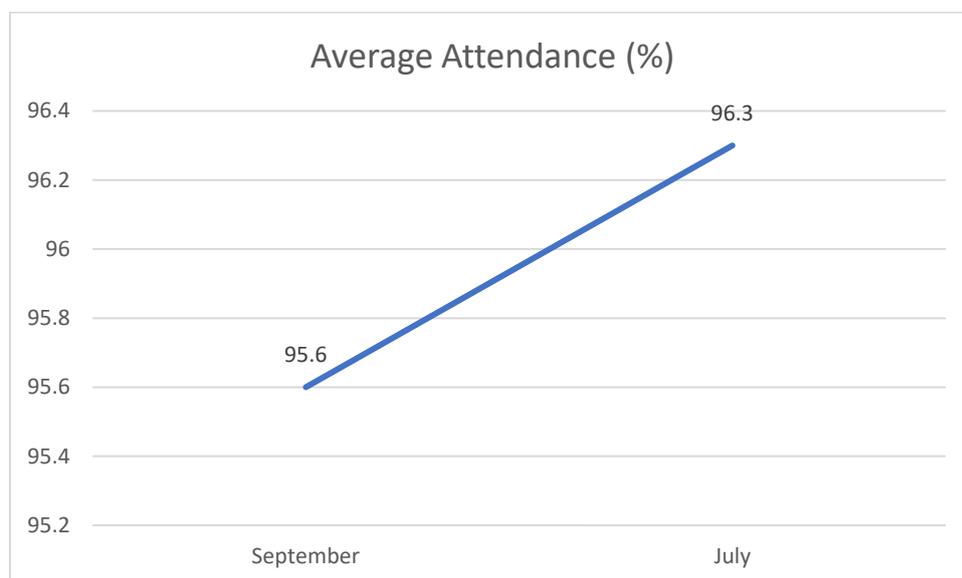


Parent testimonial: *“Knowing my children have a guaranteed meal at school means they’re eating better, and I can plan our household budget more easily.”*

Outcomes

Attendance

In 2024–25, average attendance among pupils participating in the programme rose from 95.6% in September to 96.3% in July, an increase of almost one percentage point. The proportion of children achieving high attendance (97–100%) was maintained across the year, showing consistent engagement.

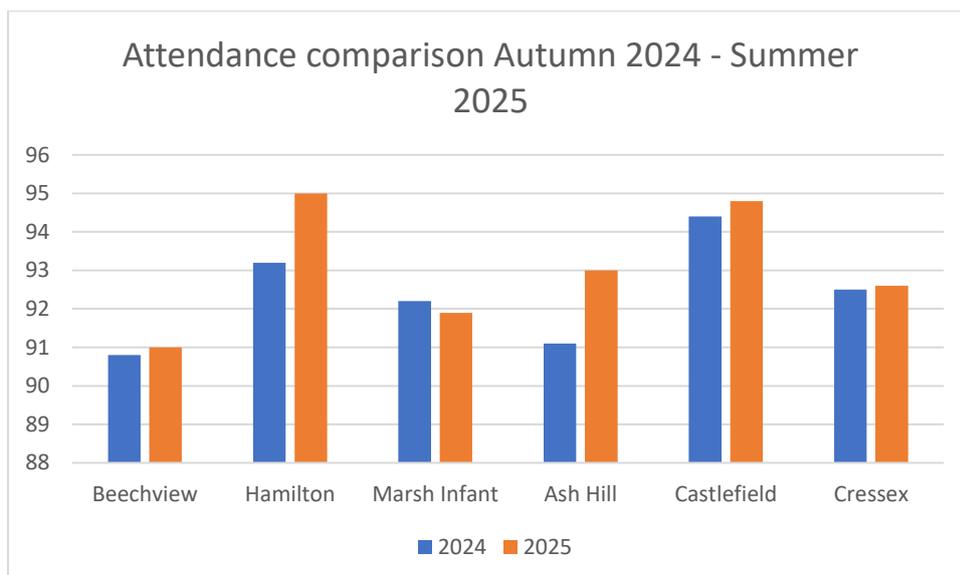


Average attendance rose from 95.6% to 96.3% across the year. Even small percentage gains represent meaningful improvements in learning time, reflecting the programme’s role in helping children to be present and ready to learn.

Attendance by individual schools largely show small but positive shifts across most schools. Hamilton and Ash Hill achieved the strongest improvements, from 93.2% to 95% and 91% to 93% respectively, with average attendance rising by almost 2 percentage points in each case.

Beechview and Castlefield also saw modest gains. Even small improvements in attendance translate to meaningful increases in learning time, reflecting the wider benefits of the School Meals Programme on school engagement.

Cressex remained stable and Marsh showed only a very slight dip, 92.2% to 91.4%. Marsh is the only infant school and the only school with just breakfast club.



Punctuality

Teacher feedback indicated a positive shift in punctuality. By the end of the year, many more children were described as “on time,” “good,” or with “no lates”, reflecting more settled morning routines and readiness to learn.

Teachers also noted that the availability of breakfast provided a strong incentive for families to arrive on time, which schools recognised as a valuable social outcome.

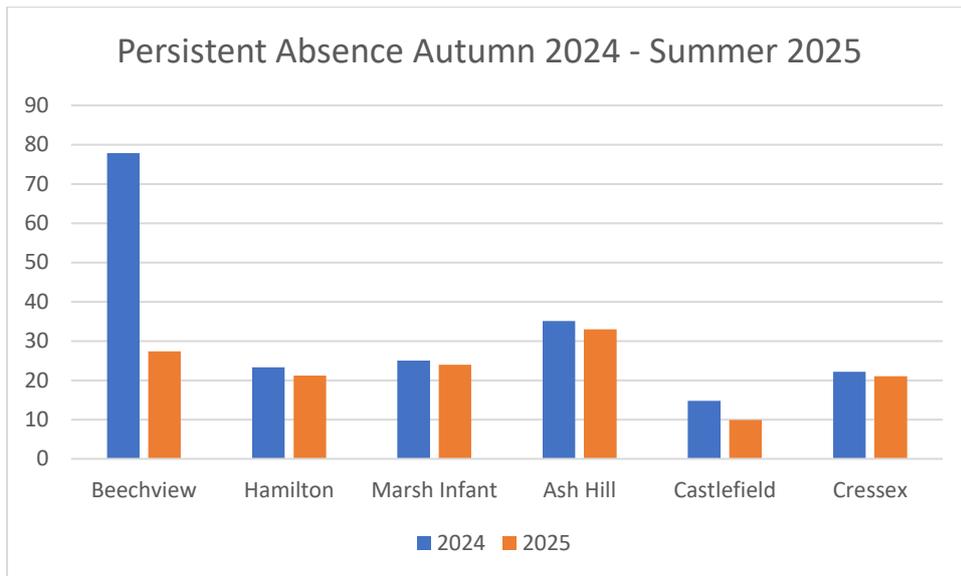
Punctuality improved across all schools, with significant reductions in recorded lates — e.g. 202 fewer at Beechview and 68 fewer at Castlefield.

Whole-School Other Outcomes

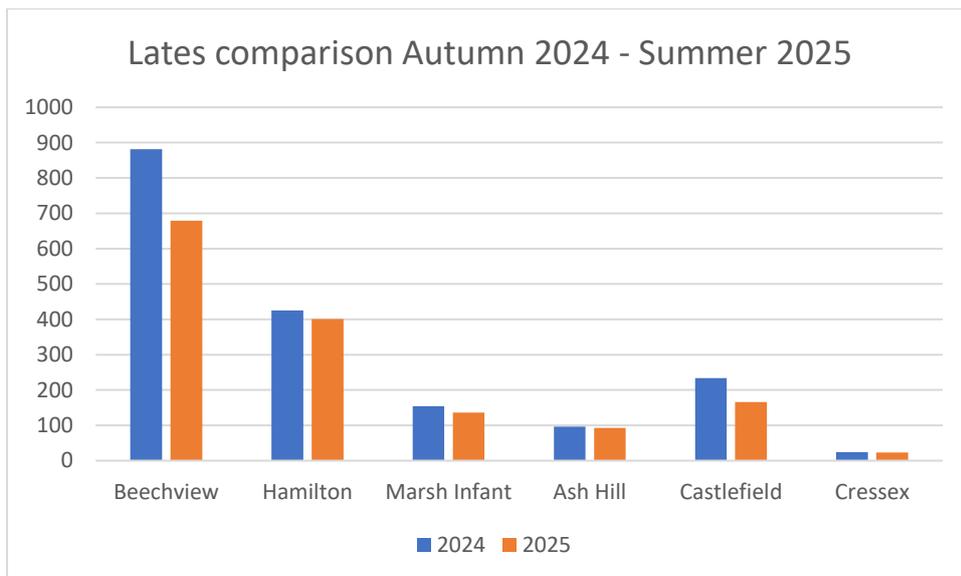
Across the schools involved, whole-school data shows clear and consistent improvements in pupil engagement since the introduction of the School Meals Programme.

- **Attendance** rose in four schools (Hamilton, Ash Hill, Castlefield, Beechview), was stable in Cressex, and showed only a minor dip in Marsh.
- **Persistent absence** improved in every school, with Beechview achieving a remarkable reduction from 77.9% to 27.4%. Castlefield also reduced absence from 14.8% to 9.9%, while other schools showed steady gains.

These improvements demonstrate that the programme’s impact extends beyond participating pupils, contributing to stronger attendance and engagement at whole-school level.



This chart shows consistent reductions in persistent absence across all partner schools, with particularly dramatic improvements at Beechview and significant gains at Castlefield. Such reductions highlight the wider benefits of the School Meals Programme at whole-school level, beyond the individual children directly supported.

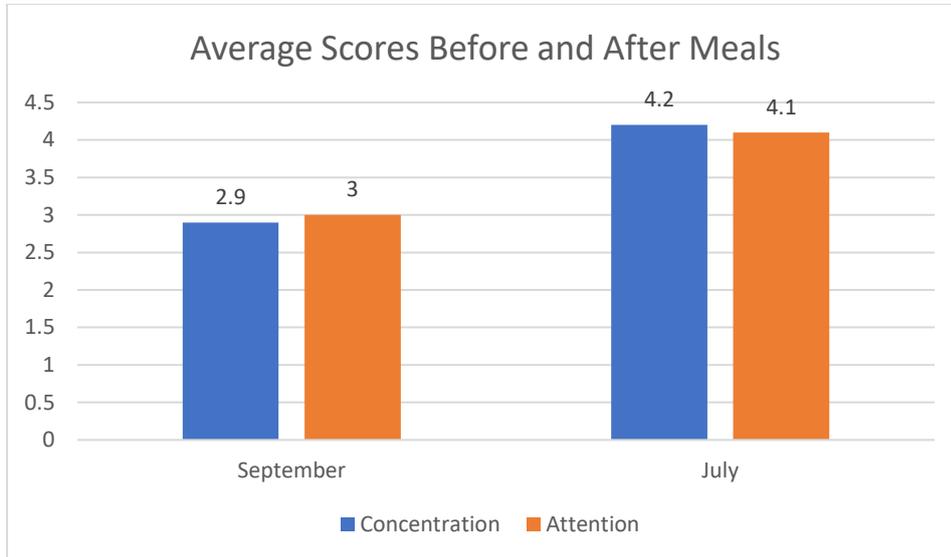


The lates graph highlights a reduction in late arrivals across nearly all schools. Beechview recorded over 200 fewer lates compared with the previous year, while Castlefield reduced lates by 68. Hamilton, Marsh, and Ash Hill also reported incremental improvements. At Cressex, lates are measured as a percentage of total marks, which fell slightly from 3.1% to 3.0%. Together, these reductions suggest more consistent morning routines and improved punctuality, reinforcing the role of school meals in supporting readiness to learn.

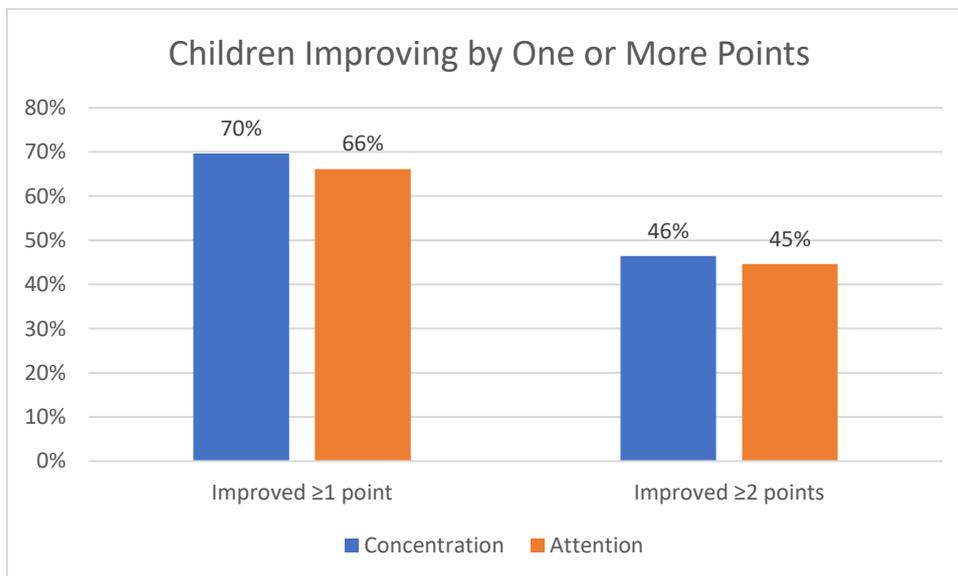
Teacher Impact Assessments 2024–2025

As in the first year of the programme, teachers assessed each participating pupil on concentration, attention, behaviour, and academic performance before the provision of meals and again in July 2025, after at least one term of support

Concentration and attention were scored on a scale of 1–5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest). This year’s results show strong and consistent improvements.



Average concentration scores increased from 2.9 to 4.2 and attention scores from 3.0 to 4.1 between September and July, showing clear gains in pupils’ focus and readiness to learn.



Almost 70% of children improved their concentration by at least one point, and two-thirds improved their attention. Nearly half of pupils made gains of two or more points, highlighting the depth of progress achieved.

Control Group Outcomes

To understand whether the improvements observed were due to the School Meals Programme itself or general classroom factors, we compared outcomes for participating pupils with a control group of children not receiving funded meals.

The control group consisted of pupils from the same schools and often the same classes as participating children, ensuring that both groups experienced the same teaching environment. These children were not in receipt of School Meals Programme funding. Some were already having meals funded through Pupil Premium or provided by their families, while others occasionally attended breakfast or lunch without consistent provision.

This makes the control group an important point of comparison: while both groups were in the same school context, only the SMP participants benefited from daily, reliable meal provision funded through the programme.

The results show a clear contrast. While participating pupils made clear gains in both concentration and attention, the control group showed almost no change across the year.

Group	Concentration (Sept - July)	Attention (Sept - July)
Programme Pupils	2.9 - 4.2 (+1.3)	3.0 - 4.1 (+1.1)
Control group Pupils	3.2 - 3.2 (0.0)	3.0 - 3.0 (0.0)

Teachers' comments reinforce this pattern. Among control pupils, teachers generally described little change:

- *"Still struggles to maintain attention across lessons."*
- *"Often appears tired and progress remains slow."*

By contrast, programme pupils were described as making clear and noticeable improvements:

- *"Alert and more engaged with tasks."*
- *"More confident and self-assured, now contributing to class discussions."*
- *"Well engaged during morning sessions in particular."*

This evidence demonstrates that the gains made by programme pupils cannot be explained by normal school progress alone. Control group pupils, who experienced the same teaching and curriculum but without funded meals, showed no measurable improvements. In contrast, pupils receiving meals improved by more than one full point in concentration and attention on average.

These findings strengthen the conclusion that the School Meals Programme directly supports improvements in children's readiness to learn, confidence, and overall wellbeing.

An interesting observation is that children on the programmes concentration and attention did start at similar or marginally lower levels to the control group. The improvements however with the additional to meals sees them at higher levels.

Behaviour, Confidence, and Performance

Teachers reported a clear shift in pupils' readiness to learn following meal provision. Before meals, many children were described as tired, withdrawn, or easily distracted, often needing extra adult encouragement. After meals, teachers consistently observed pupils who were more confident, happier, and better able to focus. Children joined in class discussions, built stronger peer relationships, and showed greater persistence with challenging tasks.

A common theme across schools was that pupils were more settled and engaged in lessons, with teachers describing noticeable improvements in both behaviour for learning and overall classroom atmosphere. Several highlighted the wider benefits of eating together, such as improved social skills and wellbeing.

Performance levels improved in parallel. Before meals, many were below expected levels, especially in writing tasks where pupils struggled to get ideas onto paper. After meals, teachers reported better behaviour for learning, improved focus in literacy and numeracy, and greater persistence with challenging tasks. Several highlighted pupils who had previously been quiet and disengaged but were now contributing to discussions and achieving stronger academic outcomes.

Overall Impact

This year's data confirms the powerful outcomes observed in the pilot year, now sustained at a larger scale. Providing reliable access to breakfast and lunch not only fills a hunger gap but directly supports improved concentration, social engagement, and readiness to learn — as reflected in both quantitative data and teacher feedback.

Child's Year Group	Pre-meals	Post-meals
Reception	"Really tries but often seems tired."	"More engagement in lessons and more alert".
Year 1	"Regularly distracted and struggles to settle quickly at the start of the day."	"Now calmer in the mornings, engages with learning straight away, and needs fewer reminders to stay on task."
Year 2	"Often seems tired in the mornings, struggles to focus."	"Alert, happier and more focused."
Year 3	"Attendance fluctuates and lateness affects concentration."	"Attendance has improved; concentration has gotten better."
Year 5	"Quiet and withdrawn, often needed prompts to stay on task."	"More confident in group discussions."
Year 4	"Progress slow and limited due to pace and lack of focus."	"Progress much better, happier to talk more confidently in front of the class".

Year 6	“Appears tired and distracted, sometimes sad or reluctant to engage.”	“Happier, more settled, and showing greater confidence with peers and in learning.”
Year 8	“Confidence is low, doesn’t always join in group work.”	“Much improved engagement - contributing in class discussions and building better peer relationships.”

Teachers also gave wider qualitative assessments of behaviour and performance before and after meals. Thematic analysis showed similar patterns to the previous year but with greater consistency across schools. Before meals were provided, teachers commonly described children as tired, withdrawn, distracted, or reluctant to engage in class. Several children struggled to focus, lacked confidence, or needed continuous adult encouragement.

After meals were provided, teachers reported a clear shift in pupils’ readiness to learn. Children were described as more alert, engaged, and willing to participate. Many were noted as happier and more confident, interacting more positively with their peers. Teachers highlighted that sitting together for breakfast or lunch improved social skills, while eating before lessons directly reduced distraction and fatigue. In total, 11 children were specifically described as ‘more confident’ in July feedback, and 15 were noted as ‘happier’ or ‘more settled’ in class.

Social Inclusion & Behaviour

Teachers consistently emphasised the social benefits and improvements in behaviour resulting from the programme. Prior to receiving meals, many children were described as withdrawn, passive, or anxious in social settings. Some preferred to stay alone during free play or found it difficult to build friendships. A common theme was low energy and confidence, which made it harder for children to integrate socially with their peers.

After receiving regular meals, these barriers were visibly reduced. Parents and teachers reported that:

72% of parents said their child is happier and more socially engaged.

69% of teachers noted fewer hunger-related behavioural issues.

Children were observed participating more in group work, lunchtime play, and peer discussions.

Eating meals together before lessons created a sense of belonging and inclusion. Many children who had previously been quiet or isolated began interacting more with their peers. Teachers noted examples of children initiating friendships for the first time, playing cooperatively during breaks, and even joining after-school clubs that they had previously avoided.

One teacher commented:

“Hunger was a hidden barrier. Now, children are calmer, they have the energy to play, and they participate without frustration. They’ve built friendships over shared meals, which has been wonderful to see.”

Another teacher shared:

“This child used to sit silently in class and rarely interacted. Since starting the meal programme, she joins in group work, answers questions more readily, and has even taken on a helper role with younger children at lunch. It’s been a real transformation.”

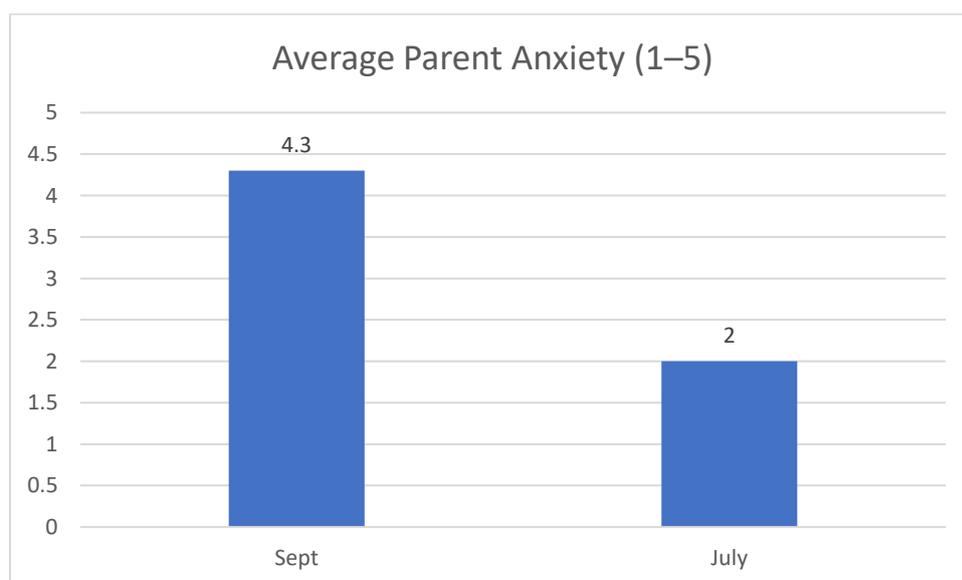
These social gains also translated into improved classroom behaviour and learning readiness. Teachers observed that well-fed children were less likely to become irritable or distracted and more able to stay focused during lessons. As one Year 4 teacher summarised:

“It’s not just about filling tummies – it’s about giving them the chance to be part of the school community. The difference in how they interact with others is remarkable.”

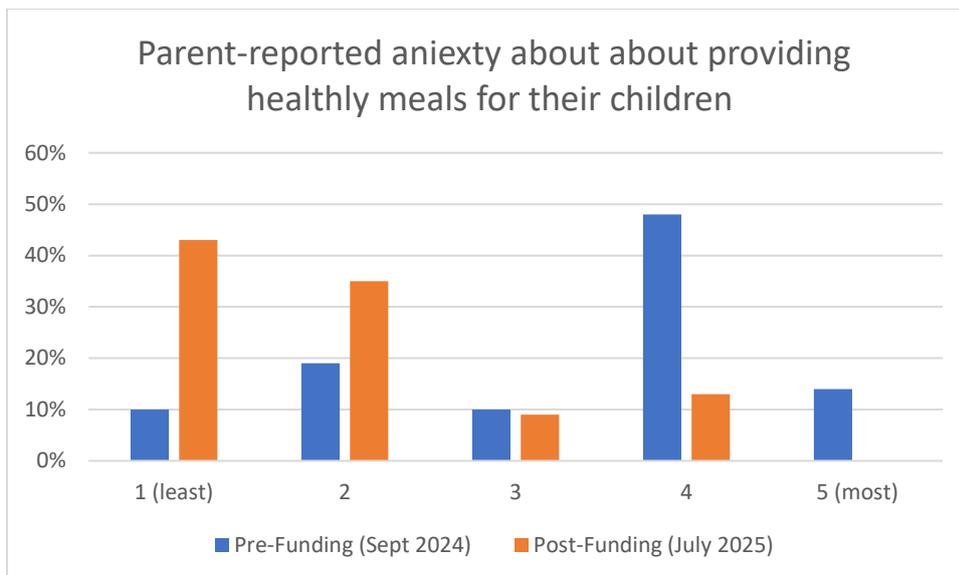
Parental Feedback

As part of the parent feedback survey, families were asked to rate their level of anxiety about providing healthy meals for their children, on a scale from 1 (least anxious) to 5 (most anxious).

Average anxiety scores dropped sharply over the year — from **4.3 in September 2024** to **2.0 in July 2025** — representing a **54% reduction**. This demonstrates a clear decrease in parental stress and worry around food provision.



Looking more closely at the distribution of responses provides further insight. Before the programme, almost two-thirds of parents (62%) reported high anxiety (scores of 4–5), and fewer than one in three (29%) reported low anxiety (scores of 1–2). After the programme, this pattern reversed: just 13% remained in the high-anxiety group, while 78% of parents reported low anxiety.



Together, these findings show that the programme not only addressed children’s nutrition but also provided critical reassurance for families. Reducing the daily worry about whether children will have enough to eat has lifted a significant emotional and financial burden, helping households to feel more secure and resilient. Parents shared how impactful the programme has been for their households:

“This programme has made a huge difference to our family. I no longer panic about whether there’s enough money for school meals, and my children are thriving in class because they’re not hungry.”

“The help with school lunches has taken away a constant worry. My child is happier, more confident, and I can see the change in how much they look forward to school now.”

“Being able to access funded meals has eased our stress so much. It’s not just about food — it’s about knowing our child is included and has the same chance as others.”

“The financial support is life-changing. It means we can cover bills and keep the house warm, while knowing our daughter is well-fed and ready to learn every day.”

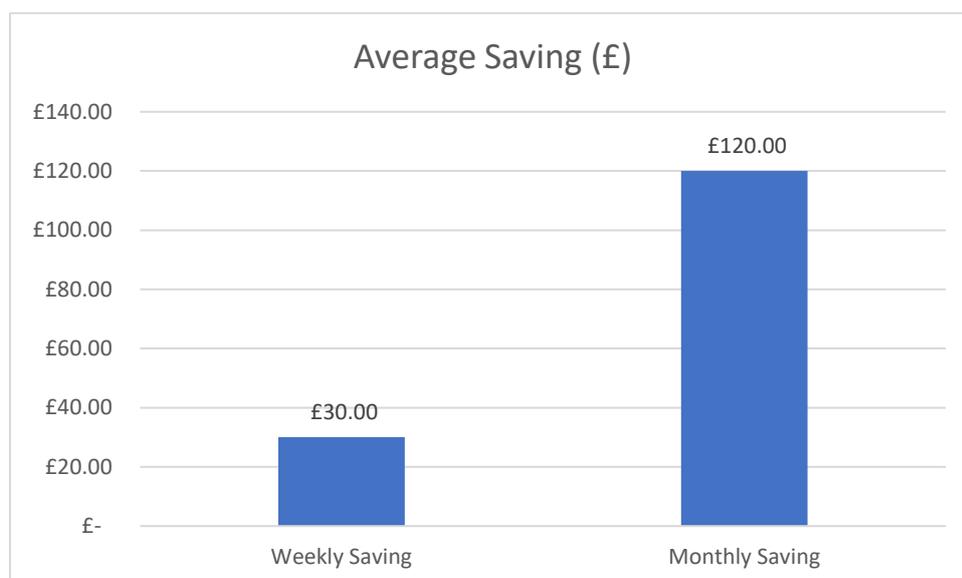
Year 2 results were in line with the first-year pilot.

Financial savings and impact to families:

Parents reported significant reductions in stress and worry about food provision. Average parental anxiety dropped from 4.3 out of 5 to 2.0, with many describing the programme as easing daily pressures and improving family wellbeing. Parents particularly valued the consistency and reliability of healthy, filling meals, ensuring children were well-fed for school without stretching already limited budgets.

Alongside this emotional relief, the programme delivered meaningful financial benefits. Families reported average household savings of around £30 per week, equivalent to £120 per month or more than £1,500 annually. Savings varied depending on whether one or more children were supported, with larger households benefitting most. Parents explained that this financial relief enabled them to cover essentials such as rent, utilities, and clothing — making a direct difference to the whole family, not just the child receiving meals.

These findings show that the programme not only supports children’s learning and wellbeing, but also strengthens the resilience of families by reducing both emotional and financial strain.



Parental Contact:

Out of the 163 children supported this year, there were 93 individual families involved. The One Can Trust Community Support team were able to speak directly with 58 of these families (around 62%), providing a deeper understanding of their situations, offering tailored advice, and signposting to additional services where appropriate.

Calls were made from June onwards, giving families the maximum time to experience the programme before feedback was sought. This timing also meant that parent insights could be gathered in parallel with teacher questionnaires, creating a richer and more consistent picture of impact.

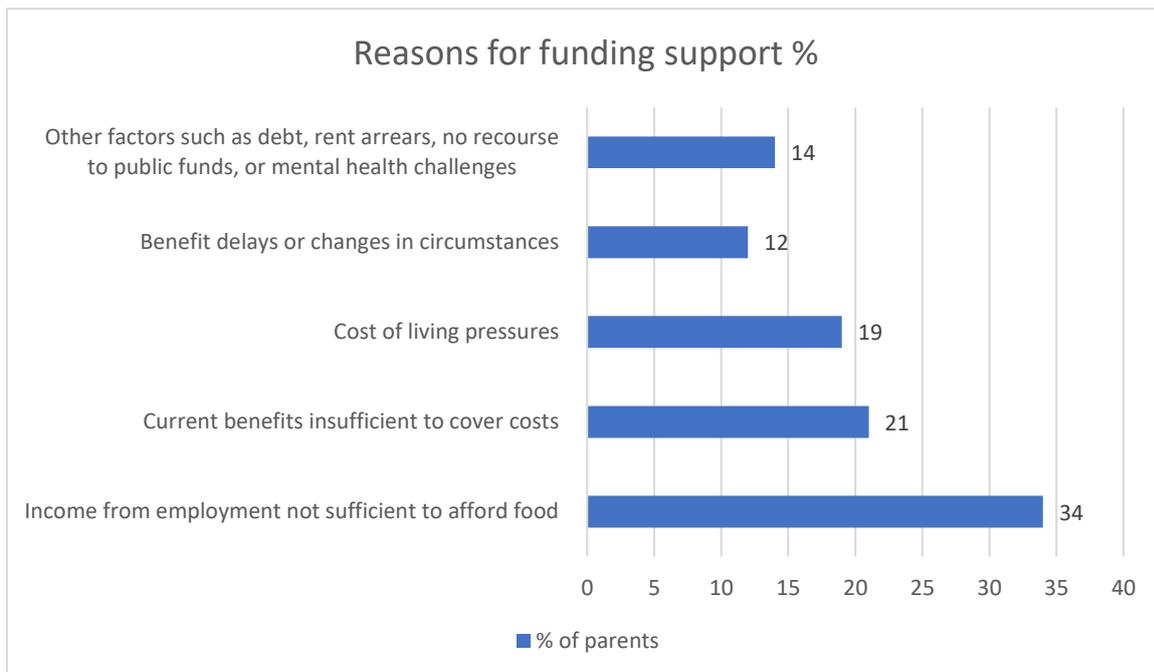
Within this two-month window, it was not possible to reach every family. Some did not answer, some faced language barriers, and others preferred not to engage in detailed questioning. Volunteer time constraints also limited the number of follow-up attempts. In practice, the team used tools such as Google Translate to bridge language barriers when possible, and going forward will work with schools to ensure accurate contact details are captured on referral forms. OCT will also explore further translation options to make it easier for more families to share their experiences.

All families continued to benefit fully from the programme regardless of whether they were spoken to directly. Those who were reached shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, with many describing the support as easing both financial and emotional pressures on the household.

Reasons for Funding Support

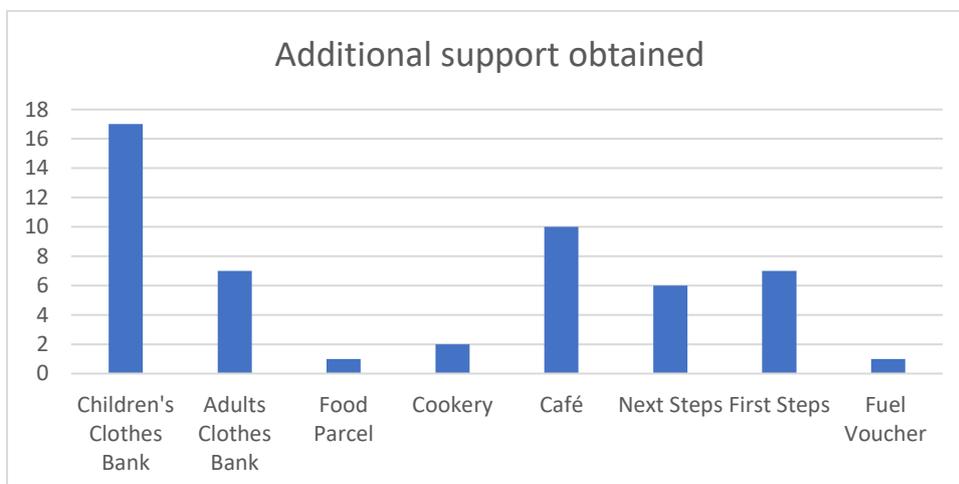
Families supported by the programme were asked about the main reasons they needed help. As the chart below shows, the single biggest factor was income from employment not being sufficient to afford food (34%). Alongside this, families cited insufficient benefits (21%), cost-of-living pressures (19%), and benefit delays or changes in circumstances (12%), with a further 14% affected by issues such as debt, rent arrears, no recourse to public funds, or mental health challenges.

These findings underline that the programme is not only reaching families in acute crisis, but also supporting many working households whose income falls short of covering essential costs.



Some families disclosed broader challenges, including debt with energy providers or council tax arrears. For these households, the programme acted as a vital safety net—removing the worry of school meal costs and enabling them to stabilise other areas of family life.

In addition to the meal funding, many families accessed wider One Can Trust services:



As the data shows, the most popular additional service that was accessed was the Children's Clothes Bank.

Clothes Bank Impact

Alongside meal provision, families also benefited from access to the OCT Clothes Bank(s). This year, families attending the uniform-specific sessions were able not only to source school clothing for their children, but in many cases to pick up additional items for younger siblings as well. This helped reduce financial strain at the start of term and ensured that children were properly equipped for school, both practically and emotionally.

The Clothes Bank also provided a valuable point of connection. Families frequently spoke with OCT staff and volunteers during their visits, which created opportunities for informal conversations,

advice, and referral to other forms of support. This personal contact helped strengthen trust and highlighted needs beyond school uniform, enabling OCT to respond more holistically.

Parents described the uniform sessions as a “lifeline” — helping children to feel included and confident at school, while easing household budgets at a time of high pressure.

Additional Support and Core Services

While some families accessed wider community support, the data shows relatively low uptake of full food parcels compared to other services such as the Children’s Clothes Bank or Café. The assumption is that this reflects the specific profile of families supported through the School Meals Programme. Many are working households who can self-sustain to a degree, but who face particular pressure around the rising cost of school meals for their children. For these families, a full food parcel may not be necessary; instead, funded school meals provide the targeted support they need to bridge the gap and relieve pressure at a critical point.

At the same time, it remains vital that our core food bank operation continues to be available to all families who need it. By offering both our core and additional services side by side, OCT ensures that support is flexible, responsive, and matched to each household’s circumstances. This holistic model allows OCT to meet urgent food needs while also providing wider wraparound support that strengthens family resilience in the long term.

Cost of Delivery 2024–2025

Breakfast club places continued to cost between £2 and £5 per child per day, depending on the school, which were all fully funded. Hot lunches were also fully funded, at up to £2.78 per child per day for primary schools and £3.00 for secondary schools. For this second year of delivery (September 2024 – July 2025), total food costs were in total **£60,402** (with approximately £23,904 for breakfast club places and £36,498 for lunches, providing over 20,000 meals in total).

Additionally, as in the previous year, families participating in the programme had access to a supermarket voucher per child for school holidays, totalling **£6970** this year. Vouchers were provided in Easter and Summer Holidays. Schools were also supported with **£1,784** in administrative contributions to assist with data collection and coordination.

The total direct programme cost for the 2024–2025 academic year was therefore **£69,156**. With OCT staffing and overhead costs to manage the programme the overall cost of delivery was **£106,156**.

For the upcoming year (2025–2026), the existing participating schools will continue delivering meals from the start of September, with three additional schools planned for onboarding, meaning anticipated meal numbers and costs will increase accordingly.

2024 – 2025 Breakdown:

Item	Cost (£)
Breakfast club places	23,904
Hot lunches	36,498
Supermarket vouchers (holidays)	6,970
School admin support contributions	1,784
Sub total	69,156
OCT Staffing and overheads	37,000
Total Cost of Programme in 2024/25 academic year	106,156

Influencing Policy Change

One Can Trust has not only delivered immediate and financial support through the School Meals Programme but has also played an indirect role in shaping the national conversation on child food insecurity. From Autumn 2023 onwards, data collected from participating schools, families, and teachers was shared with Buckinghamshire Public Health, Feeding Britain, School Food Matters, the No Child Left Behind campaign, and the Say Yes campaign.

Termly data reports have been prepared and circulated to the above organisation. Key highlights shared have included:

- The number of children who were food-insecure but ineligible for FSM.
- The tangible impact on concentration, attendance, and social inclusion in schools.
- Families lived experiences and the gaps in current policy support.

This local evidence was integrated into larger advocacy efforts. Feeding Britain and other national networks drew on the real-life case studies and quantitative outcomes from OCT's programme to lobby MPs and government departments, making the case for expanded FSM eligibility.

In Summer 2025, following the government's announcement of a significant policy shift—expanding Free School Meal entitlement to all children from families receiving Universal Credit from September 2026—One Can Trust was invited to speak on a Feeding Britain podcast. In that discussion, OCT shared:

- The scale of hidden hunger revealed in our Levelling Upward schools.
- The improvement data on concentration, attendance, and wellbeing.
- Testimonials from parents and teachers showing the ripple effect of meal support on family life.

Teachers' voices from OCT's programme reinforced the message that hunger directly affects learning readiness and social inclusion, while parents' feedback highlighted the stress and anxiety caused by being just above FSM thresholds. These insights were critical in demonstrating why policy reform was necessary.

This announcement marked a historic milestone. While OCT does not claim sole responsibility, our programme's evidence has undeniably fed into a wider movement that directly influenced this change.

Remaining Gaps

Even with the 2026 national rollout of Free School Meals, some children and families will continue to need additional support:

- **Families just above the FSM threshold** – Parents who earn slightly too much to qualify but still cannot afford daily school meals in the current cost-of-living climate.
- **Children facing sudden hardship** – Redundancy, illness, bereavement, or family crisis can leave children without access to meals until support is arranged.
- **Wider wellbeing and nutrition needs** – Schools in disadvantaged areas benefit most from holistic programmes that go beyond FSM, addressing healthy eating, social connection, and readiness to learn.

OCT will with funding support continue in 2025 – 2026 to:

- Bridge the gap until the policy fully takes effect.
- Advocate for those still falling through the cracks post-2026.

Through the local delivery and the national advocacy network, One Can Trust has ensured that the voices of High Wycombe and South Bucks families and schools have contributed meaningfully to systemic change.

Future Plans and Ongoing Commitment

From September 2025, One Can Trust will enter the next strategic phase of the School Meals Programme. While the government's policy change will extend FSM eligibility to more children from September 2026, OCT foresees continued need.

OCT aspires to continue to provide vital funding for children who remain in hardship but fall outside FSM criteria, ensuring that no child is left hungry or excluded due to financial constraints as well as monitor the ease and actual implementation plans of the Governments policy changes. Funder support is pivotal to being able to continue to support children that will remain in need.

Advocacy and Policy Engagement

Building on OCT's proven impact and indirect role in influencing policy change, OCT will continue to share data and insights from the programme with councils, campaigns, and national networks such as Feeding Britain and School Food Matters. The aim is to advocate for:

- Long-term support for families with no recourse to public funds.
- Safety nets for children experiencing sudden financial hardship.
- Better integration of food education and cultural inclusivity in school meals.
- Strengthening Family Support

OCT will strengthen the connections between school meal provision and its wider family services. For example, families supported through meal funding will also be signposted to the Clothes Bank, toddler groups, and community cafés, ensuring that children and their households receive joined-up support across multiple needs. After the new FSM policy rollout, OCT will focus on filling the gaps it leaves behind, particularly for:

- Families excluded from benefits.
- Those in short-term crises.

This next phase ensures that the programme evolves with the changing landscape, remaining both responsive and impactful while staying true to its original mission: to ensure every child has access to nutritious meals, regardless of their circumstances.

Summary of Impact

Year 2 of the School Meals Programme has shown clearly that a simple intervention – providing breakfast and lunch – changes everything. Children arrive on time, concentrate better, and participate fully in school life. Families experience relief from the stress of feeding their children and gain financial breathing room. Schools themselves benefit from calmer classrooms, stronger attendance, and more settled pupils.

The results are undeniable:

- 163 children supported – more than double the pilot year.
- 20,885 meals delivered – providing nourishment, stability, and dignity.
- 54% drop in parental anxiety – easing pressure on families.
- Attendance and punctuality improvements – creating thousands of extra hours of learning.

Beyond these immediate impacts, the programme has also influenced national policy, contributing to the government’s decision to extend Free School Meals to all children in families receiving Universal Credit from September 2026. Until then, and for those who will remain excluded, this programme is their only safety net. This is not just about meals – it is about unlocking potential, strengthening families, and building fairer communities.