

BRAIN FOOD:
Dawson School
pupils Harlem
Phillips (left)
and Dominic
Kautapa
Manuka tuck
into bagels
donated by
Abe's.
PICTURE / SARAH IVEY



Free bagels put a ring around school hunger

by Jordyn O'Shea

An Auckland business is doing its part to stop kids going hungry at school.

Abe's Bagels has been delivering free bagels to decile 1 schools since 2004.

Owner Megan Sargent said she started because she knew there was a need for food at schools in poorer areas.

She began giving bagels to children at the Southern Cross Campus school in Mangere after realising a large number of students came to class without eating breakfast.

"And it just grew from there," she said.

The company now feeds children in 27 schools around Auckland, including Otara's Dawson Primary.

Bagels are delivered to the school twice a week and are handed out in classrooms.

Teacher Jenny Wards said the children got excited on "bagel days" but were much calmer after they had eaten.

"There are some kids who don't have much food in their lunchbox so a bagel makes all the difference."

Six-year-old Eden Mclean said she loved getting a bagel.

"It's yummy and it helps us learn plusses and takeaways and times tables.

"It makes our brain work better and that's

cool 'cause you can go to college when you grow up," Eden said.

Dawson School started receiving bagels last year after being approached by Abe's.

Principal Angela Funaki wanted bagels only once or twice a week rather than providing breakfast every morning.

She said she would not give food to the same children every day because she did not want families to become dependent on school-provided meals.

"My view is it's a parental responsibility. Yes, we will help in times of difficulty because we don't want children to be hungry, but we will then source someone else to help the families out."

Mr Funaki agreed there was a fine line between helping too much and not helping enough. "The bagels are great though. The teachers have noticed a difference when the children have them."

Ms Sargent said she frequently got letters from school boards saying how much the bagels helped.

She is encouraging other businesses to do what they can to help children in New Zealand, rather than donating overseas.

"People just don't realise how bad it is here," she said. "Kids can't concentrate if they're hungry, and that's a tragedy."

The facts

17%

of children go to school without breakfast sometimes or always. That is 83,000 children.

22%

of households with children run out of food because of a lack of money sometimes or often.

10%

of households with children have used foodbanks or received food grants during the past year.

Source: Ministry of Health, 2003.

What you can do

- Sponsor a hungry child through KidsCan for 50c a day: kidscan.org.nz
- Donate to Salvation Army foodbanks: salvationarmy.org.nz
- Donate to Auckland City Mission: aucklandcitymission.org.nz
- Use your business or community group to feed local hungry children.