

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY PARENT COUNCIL RESOURCE

This resource was originally developed in Glasgow with the Glasgow Parent Council Forum. The National Parent Forum of Scotland then added rural and island parent and carer perspectives to the resource.

Almost 1 in 4 children across Scotland are officially recognised as living in poverty

Insufficient household income can mean that some children and young people don't have the resources needed for school and can't easily afford to take part in school activities which cost money. This can put them at risk of missing out

on opportunities at school and feeling different, excluded and unhappy.

Parent Councils have a key role to play as the voice for parents within the school - highlighting to the school where costs are affecting parents and working with the school to make changes to minimise the impact of cost on children's experience of school.

This resource is designed to help Parent Councils:

- identify where costs are affecting low income families in their school
- provide simple actions that Parent Councils could take to help poverty-proof the school.

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



SCHOOL UNIFORM

Schools across Scotland set their own uniform policy, Parent Councils can have a big influence in this and can be involved in developing a policy that best suits the needs of the families in the school.

Clothing grant and buying uniforms

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. From 2018/19, all eligible families across Scotland will have access to the same minimum level of financial support through the new £100 national minimum school clothing grant. In some local authorities, grant awards may exceed the £100 minimum. Details are available on local authority websites.

- Could a parent buy their child's school uniform, for the full school year, with the clothing grant?
- How does the school promote the clothing grant to parents?
- Is there a stigma attached to applying for the grant?
- Can the school help parents to complete clothing grant forms (or sign post parents to support services)?
- Does the school/ Parent Council offer any support with buying a uniform?

Reviewing the uniform

- What uniform do pupils need to have in your school?
- Where can parents buy the uniform?
- Do children need to wear any branded items (e.g. Polo-neck with school logo)?
- What do children need to have for PE?
- Is there an indoor and outdoor kit required?
- Has the school uniform changed in the past year?
- If there was a change, did all children have to purchase a new uniform?

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



School attitudes to uniform

- What happens if children don't have the correct uniform?
- Are children punished if they don't have the correct uniform, shoes, PE kit etc?
- Can children take part if they don't have the correct clothing?

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- 'We helped set up a shop, run by children, to sell reused school uniform etc.'
- 'We sourced a new supplier of school uniforms - local supermarket.'
- 'School uniform is shirt and tie. No embroidered items. Stopped gym kit uniform. Any shorts and top accepted.'
- 'Our Eco group now recycle school ties and pass them for free to our first year pupils.'
- 'We have a 'help yourself' box of uniform in the school reception.'
- 'As a Parent Council we started a uniform shop which enabled us to sell uniform to parents at cost price. We also run a uniform savings scheme from Jan-May to help parents save for the cost of new uniform.'
- 'People in our small community don't like everyone knowing their business so our school displays prominent signs telling parents who to contact in the Local Authority to claim.'
- 'We have altered our policy so that all items can be bought in online supermarkets and supplied cheaply by post.'

I have a couple of big jumpers and I'm not getting a big winter jacket till my birthday which is a few weeks away and I'll go into class and the teachers are like "take it off" and I'm like "I'm freezing, I don't have a big jacket to wear!"

GIRLS, S5

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



TRAVELLING TO SCHOOL

Transport costs are significant for low income families and can affect children and young people's attendance and participation at school. In each local authority, there is no financial support for public transport provided for children and young people living less than a certain distance from their catchment school (generally 2-3 miles). In more rural areas, own transport is a necessity rather than a luxury and families can struggle to meet the fuel and running costs of everyday journeys to school.

Reviewing travel

- How do pupils get to school?
- If the school operates a free bus pass service, who benefits?
- Does the school offer transport for pupils to attend extracurricular activities? (after-school clubs, supported study)
- Is there a charge for families to use this service?

Travel and accessing after-school activities

- Do children who use school buses access after-school activities?
- Do children who use school buses access supported study?
- Are there activities/ supported study available during lunch break?

Transport is a huge issue for us in our community. Even if an extra activity is free, the cost of fuel is enough to mean my child can't go as there is no available bus.

PARENT

See even if you don't live far away from the school, enough to get a free bus pass . . . you wouldn't walk because, let's say the weather's really bad- it's raining a lot and all that. You're going to get to school, your uniform's all wet and it's no

GIRLS, S5

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- 'Our parent council is running a survey of children dependent on school transport to find out if they would like to access clubs/ supported study etc. If there is sufficient interest we hope to fund taxis to help children get safely home.'
- 'Our Parent Council has set up a scheme where each parent who drives to school tries to fill every seat in their car with other pupils to save journeys for the other parents.'
- 'Our schools have worked with the local authority to provide a voucher scheme that can be used on public transport when attending after school activities.'

We don't qualify for bus travel as we live within 3 miles of the school but there is no pavement or lighting for some of the journey so I have to drive my child.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



FUNDRAISING & FUN EVENTS

Special days, events and activities are a fun part of school life and often raise valuable funds to subsidise trips and provide additional resources. However, fun events can create difficulties for some children due to lack of immediate funds, hidden costs and feeling embarrassed and marginalised if they are unable to take part. In some communities, particularly rural ones, families travel long distances to work and making extra trips to school has a large impact on their finances. Parent Councils can play an important role in ensuring that these events do not put additional pressure on families with low incomes.

Auditing school events

- How often does the school have events that cost money?
- Are there times when several events with cost implications come together (e.g. Christmas fair, panto, Christmas disco)?
- How much notice does the school give for events with cost implications?
- Is there a drop in attendance on days with fundraising events (e.g. non-uniform day)?
- Can children who are not able to pay take part in events (e.g. activities at the summer fair)?
- Could the school run events without charging?
- Is there a set charge for events?
- Do events like non-uniform day and World Book Day put additional pressures on parents from low income families?
- Are there cheaper alternatives that the Parent Councils could source (e.g. PC member to take school photos)?
- Does the Parent Council/ school raise money for a hardship fund for families that are struggling?
- Could events where parents are expected to attend be timed to coincide with drop off or pick up to save extra journeys?
- What happens if a child doesn't bring a donation or wear a costume?

You can choose not to pay, it's an option. But as a parent it's not really, when everyone is getting their Christmas cards and your child's left out.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



Alternatives to fundraising events

- Could the Parent Council apply for grants for funding instead of asking families?
- Could the Parent Council approach local businesses for support?
- Has the school/ Parent Council tried fundraising in the community (packing bags in supermarkets, singing carols in shopping centre)?

What are you fundraising for?

- Are there any items the Parent Council could purchase for families to help reduce the costs (e.g. providing school ties for all P1s)?
- Do you need to fundraise? Could you borrow the items from other sources?
- Are you fundraising for community resources that low-income families use (e.g. food banks)? How do parents who use these services feel about being asked to give money towards this?

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- 'We limit fundraising events and spread them throughout the year.'
- 'We removed a book fair from parents evening and introduced a book swap event instead.'
- 'We try to keep costs low by fundraising to subsidise costs.'
- Building relationships with local businesses over time: 'We approach local businesses for help and donations' (see appendix 1).
- 'Our school has our one to one meetings with parents at school pick up time to save parents making an extra journey to school.'
- 'Our school has a poster up in reception of what money they'll be asking for and when, so parents can plan out their budget.'

I have a huge round trip from school to work so if I go back to the school for an event my transport costs are huge.

PARENT

You also need to buy a lot of stuff because you cannae really go in the same clothes that you wore to the last non-uniform because people notice that... Sometimes it gets to be like a catwalk or something.

GIRL, S3

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



SCHOOL TRIPS

School trips can be difficult for families on low incomes to afford. Missing trips means that children miss fun, new experiences and personal development and feel left out. Parent Councils can and do help subsidise school trips or provide funds for children who would otherwise not have been able to go, but families can be embarrassed about asking for financial help.

Cost of school trips

- How much do trips cost?
- Could the majority of families in your school pay for this easily?
- Is there any support for families with more than one child in the school?
- How many children go on school trips? Are children from low-income families missing out?
- Is there any support available for low income families to ensure that their children can take part? How are these publicised?
- Are there grants available which could help cover the cost of the school trip?

Costs around the school trip

- Do children need to take additional spending money?
- Do children need additional equipment for the trip (e.g. passport, sleeping bags etc)
- Could the school source this equipment from elsewhere (e.g. borrow from local secondary school)?
- Do children wear uniform on the trip? Does non-uniform create additional pressure on the children?

Planning school trips

- How much notice does the school give parents regarding school trip costs?
- When do payments need to be made? Does this reflect when parents are paid?
- Does the school let parents know about "hidden costs" (e.g. items needed) up front?

Do you need a school trip?

- Would an alternative to a trip be more inclusive? (e.g. school fun day)
- Does the trip clearly fit in with the curriculum?
- Are there cheaper alternatives (e.g. theatre in Edinburgh rather than London)?

How can you help with costs for school trips?

- How much does your school need to keep in a hardship fund to help low income families access trips?
- Does the way the Parent Council fundraises place additional pressures on low income families?
- Can the school and Parent Council find alternative fundraising methods (e.g. bag packing in supermarket)?

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- 'There has been fundraising activities for those who wanted help financing a trip.'
- 'We fundraise to have money to provide coach hire to get the kids to and from their summer day trip. We understand that some parents will find it costly to pay for a trip, particularly if they have more than one child at the school.'
- 'Provide a subsidised trip through grant application.'
- 'Parent Council supplies the school with an "Achievement Fund" (topped up as required) to ensure that no pupils miss out on activities due to lack of funds.'
- 'The head teacher asks the local priest to assist with payment of residential trips.'

I think you get quite annoyed when people like see, if you don't go and then people who did go come back, and that's all they talk about for a week and you didn't go so you don't know what they're talking about.

BOY, S6

My children are in a small school and it is really noticeable if they don't go on trips and are basically the only ones left in school.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



EATING AT SCHOOL

Lack of food and poor nutrition are realities for some children and young people in Scotland. Food costs can be significant and receiving free school meals can lessen the financial burden on low income families. However not every family entitled to free meals applies for them and not every child receiving free meals takes them. Parent Councils can help the school to promote free school meals, engaging with parents so that all families entitled to them are able to claim.

Promoting free school meals (FSM)

- How does the school provide information about free school meals (FSM)?
- When does this information go out to parents?
- Is the information clear and easy to read?
- Does the school offer help to complete the FSM claim form?
- Does the school sign-post parents to money advice services which can help with benefits and accessing FSM?

Eating in school

- Does your school have a breakfast club?
- Do children who access FSM use this?
- Do most children have a school meal? If not, what do they do for lunch?
- Could the school do more to promote children eating in school?
- Is there a stigma around getting FSM? What has the school done to address this?

Like I can get a free meal and don't mind but if my friends all go out for lunch, and I'm sitting by myself getting a free meal I wouldn't like that.

BOY, S3

There's no longer a free carton of juice...it's just tap water...or you have to pay for milk.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- Improving promotion of Free School Meals and informing all parents about it at parents' evening.
- Promote that Pupil Equity Funding is connected to FSM so it means more money for the school.
- 'In our smaller communities we direct parents to the Local Authority to apply for free school meals.'
- 'Cashless lunches to reduce stigma have worked in our community.'
- 'School dinner staff are asked to treat FSM sensitively.'
- Consult on menus to show good value for money.

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



SCHOOL CLUBS

Schools offer a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, most of which are free or at low cost. These clubs are a valuable resource for children, making new interests and experiences accessible to them. However, small costs can still stand in the way of participation.

School clubs and hidden costs

- Do children need any equipment to take part in clubs (e.g. football boots)?
- Can children who use the school bus take part in after-school clubs?
- Do children need to pay costs for club trips (e.g. attend competitions, away games)?
- Do clubs provide refreshments or do children need to bring their own?

Supporting school clubs

- How are they promoted in the school - does everyone know how to access them?
- Can other community groups or local businesses support with equipment and funding?

The outfits or uniforms they need are outrageous prices sometimes.

PARENT

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- Apply for funding or fundraise to cover transport costs
- Try to obtain funding for school equipment and some after school clubs, etc.
- 'Clubs accessed funding to buy football kit so that all children could take part and there was no expectation that children would have their own equipment.'

The cost of extra transport is too much for us so my girl has had to give up gymnastics.

PARENT

There's some contest with the dancing and that's the reason I can't go because it cost too much to go to the contest.

BOY, P6

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



HOME LEARNING

Although most home learning tasks have little or no costs, there are exceptions that can create difficulties for children from low income households e.g. craft projects and homework that requires computers, online access, software and printers. Parent Councils can let the school know if these costs are affecting families or if some tasks are not accessible for families.

What is expected of home learning?

- What equipment do children need for homework?
- Does the school expect children to have access to ICT? (computers, printing etc)?
- Do teachers ask children to email homework/ save it on pen drive etc?
- Does the school set craft projects for homework? Does this impact on low income families and families where parents are working long hours?
- How often does the school set craft homework? Can this be spaced out in the school term so families with more than one child do not have several craft projects at once?
- What is the policy for incomplete homework?

Supporting homework

- Can children access equipment needed for homework through school? e.g. ICT is made available, children are able to use art equipment in classroom during lunchtimes or after school.
- Can parents come into school with their child after school hours, to work on homework with them?
- Does the school provide support with homework (homework clubs etc)?
- Can all children access homework clubs? (e.g. children who use the school bus)
- If the school uses Glow, does it promote the availability of free Office 365 programs?

There's just an assumption that children have everything. You might have a computer but not a printer...or a printer but not broadband.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- 'Schools are looking at running homework clubs within the local area, in partnership with housing associations. This means that children can get support with their learning, access to the right equipment and don't need to walk home from school late in the evening.'
- 'Our school knows that many of our households don't have broadband so they don't set online homework.'
- 'Our school always provides a paper back up to homework. Online submission is optional.'

My teacher said the other day, if youse don't finish this you'll have to do it for homework but I don't have the Office stuff that you need to use like spreadsheets and that because I've no paid for it and you need to pay for it, it's extra and I was like I don't have it, say if I don't finish this how will I do it and she was like "I don't know, you'll find a way somehow".

BOY, S4

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



ATTITUDES TO POVERTY

Many teachers, children and parents are aware of poverty and try to be sensitive to the challenges that low income families face. However, in the media and wider society people are increasingly likely to think that poverty is the fault of the individual. In some more affluent areas poverty can be hidden. Parent Councils can help teachers develop a better understanding of poverty and its impact on families, helping to build awareness on the unaffordability of school for many parents. It is important that parents feel that they can speak to Parent Councils about issues around cost without being worried that they will be judged.

Understanding the experiences of low income families

- Do members of your Parent Council help the school understand the experiences of low income families (e.g. the pressure families are under to get their children the "right" trainers)?
- How much do you know about parents' experiences and opinions on these issues?
- Can your Parent Council do more to engage with low income families (consultations around changes to school uniform, build links with local community groups)?
- Does your Parent Council provide support so parents from low incomes can take part in meetings (e.g. provide child care/ travel costs)?
- Could your Parent Council do more to understand the experiences of low income families (e.g. invite Poverty Truth Commissioners to come and speak to the Parent Council)?

Talking about poverty

- Who can children and parents speak to about financial issues in the school? Can they speak to any member of staff?
- In general, how are parents told about financial supports available to them?
- Is there a stigma around asking for financial help? Can the Parent Council do anything to address this?
- Do children have the opportunity to talk about issues surrounding poverty and how it affects them in a safe place? Could the school do more to provide these opportunities?

Poverty is more hidden in our area...there should be some kind of way of letting people know that there are issues.

PARENT

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM AROUND SCOTLAND

- Poverty Truth Commission has created a series of short videos with children and parents talking about their experiences around school uniforms and school trips
<https://vimeo.com/user29313671>

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



APPENDIX 1

Template letter (with thanks to Merrylee Primary Parents Association)

[School address]
[Date]

Dear local business owner,

REQUEST FOR A RAFFLE PRIZE

I am writing to you on behalf of Merrylee Parents Association, the fundraising body at Merrylee Primary School. We are currently in the process of organising a Family Fun Night, which will take place on the evening of Friday 27th February in the Couper Institute. The night will consist of games with music entertainment for all families and friends of our school to join in. This is our 3rd year holding this event, with it being one of our main fundraising nights in the school calendar as previous years have been extremely successful and have sold out.

Our focus this year is to provide the school with a much-needed new piano. This will be of great benefit to the children during their music lessons, it will help them to learn new techniques and it will also enhance our school shows throughout the year.

We are looking for the support of local businesses within our community. During our fundraising evening we will be holding a raffle draw and ask if you would like to donate a suitable prize. In previous years our raffle draw has been a highlight, which really boost our funds on the evening. We would be able to show our appreciation by displaying promotional leaflets for your business on the night and also using our school community Facebook page to highlight your business and support.

Donations can be given into our school at the above address or by contacting our secretary XXXXX, on (phone number) or (email address).

Many thanks in advance for taking the time to consider our request and best wishes from Merrylee Primary.

On behalf of Merrylee PA

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



APPENDIX 2 Funding Sources

The **Asda foundation** funds significant local community projects and top-up funding grants. Apply by getting in touch with your local store.

Aviva Community Fund offers support and funding to causes that make a real difference where you live.

B&M are keen to engage with their local communities. Email giving@bmstores.co.uk for more information.

B&Q stores donate unsellable materials and products to their local community.

Creative Scotland

Supporting organisations and individuals to develop artistic skills, create a piece of work and encourage people to get involved in creative activities.

Crowdfunding

This website enables you to fund a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people. To see how Annette Street primary used this to raise money for outdoor learning equipment go to www.crowdfunder.co.uk/help-the-students-of-annette-primary-school

Esme Fairbairn Foundation

Support the social, emotional and learning needs of young people aged 0-25 at greater risk of being left behind educationally. The Foundation funds work that challenges the public policies and practices that reinforce educational inequality.

Historic Scotland offer free education visits to their sites around Scotland.

Both **Loch Lomond and Trossachs** and **Cairngorms National Parks** provide education travel grants for 75% of travel costs.

National Lottery Awards for all Scotland provides funding for a range of projects which involve bringing local people together, helping people learn, improving local spaces and getting people more active.

NFU Mutual are focusing on funding large projects that are particularly focused on the education of young people in rural areas.

All **Sainsbury's** stores have a local charity they support throughout the year. They also have a small budget for making donations of raffle prizes or vouchers and can sometimes help with events in store such as bag packing.

SSE set up local and regional funds for each new onshore wind farm they build.

Each **Tesco** UK store holds a community donation budget to help support with requests from their community for local fundraising events. If you would like to be considered for a donation please write to the Community Champion at your nearest store.

Warburton's bakery sites can provide support to local communities through the donation of products which can support local community activities.

Youth Bank

Youth Banks are run by and for young people, creating projects for the benefit of the local community.

The **Youthlink** funding directory has lots more ideas that could be helpful in your area.

Young Scot

Their newsletter gives regular updates of funding opportunities, free events and activities.