

South Park Primary School

Cost of the School Day Policy

August 2024



Cost of the School Day Background Information and Context

Cost of the School Day (CoSD) is a Scottish initiative, which aims to raise awareness within learning communities of the financial implications and burdens education can create. At South Park Primary School, we realise insufficient household and/or disposable income can mean that young people simply do not have the resources needed for school and often cannot easily afford to take part in the wide range of our school activities. Consequently, some pupils are at risk of missing out and therefore may feel different, excluded and unhappy. Currently almost 1 in 4 children in Scotland live in relative poverty and 65% of children affected have at least one working parent

(<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/child-poverty/facts>).

Relative poverty is defined as:

“the condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed in order to maintain the average standard of living in the society in which they live”.

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-relative-poverty-definition-causes-examples.html>)

We know that people can move in and out of poverty throughout their lifespan. There are transient, recurrent and persistent states of poverty depending on individual and family circumstances. In some more affluent areas, poverty can be hidden. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) recently commissioned and produced some support materials to assist schools and parent councils alleviate school related financial pressures on families. Research shows us that poverty is a complex issue and one that must be tackled as a society. Whilst schools alone cannot eradicate the issue, South Park Primary School recognises that schools have a responsibility to help learners overcome any barrier to learning, including poverty. We will continue to work together with our wider community to alleviate some of the poverty related issues faced by our pupils and parents/carers. This will enable us to provide support to allow all South Park Primary School pupils to thrive.

Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)

The Scottish Government launched the Pupil Equity Fund in March 2017. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have equitable access to education. As a school, we receive money from the Scottish Government for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals. This money is then used to target specific pupils in order to ensure they receive appropriate and relevant support in the three main curricular areas of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing (HWB). At South Park Primary School, this targeted support has been extended to include a number of other children we feel would benefit and not just those in receipt of free school meals.

Overall, our aims are to:

1. Reduce the financial burden on families associated with school.
2. Raise awareness amongst pupils, parents/carers, staff and other agencies of the supports we offer to our families, whilst also operating with discretion and respecting confidentiality when assistance is requested.
3. Improve partnership working amongst stakeholders to ensure equitable access to education for our pupils. This policy is designed to outline action points for reducing costs and highlight the supports we offer in school. If the school is not aware of issues, then the

pupil experience may be affected. As a school, we would like the opportunity to support where we can.

South Park Primary School encourages all of our pupils and parents/carers who find themselves in a situation, at any point in their child's school career where they cannot financially support their child for whatever reason, to contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team. We hope this will lead to the school being able to offer the appropriate support/resource provision to allow pupils to receive as full and as rounded, a school experience as possible.

As far as possible, as a school we endeavour to match these key recommendations from the Poverty Action Groups (<https://cpag.org.uk/>)

- School staff and pupils should hold no assumptions about financial situations.
- Ensuring as far as possible an 'affordable school year'- spreading out events to avoid hotspots leading to increasing financial pressures.
- Running fund-raising activities that do not always ask families to contribute.
- Lending resources without trouble.
- Offering / providing support to access IT.
- Having consistent expectations and practice between staff members on uniform, resources etc.
- Rewards and merits unaffected by issues relating to finances at home.
- Anti-bullying alert to income-based bullying or stigma.
- Greater poverty awareness amongst our own school community.
- Making sure families/students are aware of their financial entitlements (e.g. clothing grants, free meals, EMA).
- Staff discretion and empathy in relation to equity issues.
- Covering costs/subsidising and supporting discounts where possible.
- Systems in place where pupils/parents/carers do not feel embarrassed asking for help.

At South Park Primary, we recognise the need to reduce the 'Cost of the School Day' for all pupils and particularly for pupils who are experiencing poverty. We consider this under the following 9 key categories, Uniform, Travel, Learning, Friendship, School trips, Eating, Fun, Clubs and Home learning.

Uniform

Our current uniform is red jumper/cardigan, black trousers or skirt and a white polo shirt. We do not insist on badged sweatshirts/polo shirts. Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. Information about entitlement to clothing

grants and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council website: www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/. Alternatively contact the senior leadership team in the school.

We have a recycling point within the school. This helps to create a more sustainable environment as well as allowing access to uniform for pupils should they require it. Any items of lost property not collected at the end of term is donated to our uniform recycling bank.

We are also able to provide our young people and their families with hygiene products and toiletries if required. Furthermore, as with all SLC establishments, free female sanitary products are available.

Travel

Most of our children travel to school by walking or by car. A few children attend after school clubs. We are aware that this may mean that these children are unable to attend after school curricular clubs.

As a school, we follow SLC's policy on the provision of free transport. Parents of pupils who are placing requests, and therefore live out with the school catchment area are required to meet travel costs for their child.

Learning

Children at South Park Primary do not need to pay for any core learning activity. Pens and pencils are provided, and young people do not need to bring their own equipment. We have a procedure for pupils to borrow equipment if they need it to complete tasks e.g. specific resource/craft equipment.

Pupils can also access ICT equipment such as computers and Chromebooks should they require these.

Friendships

We work hard to ensure that any pupil experiencing poverty-related issues has a way of reporting this in confidence to their class teacher or any member of the staff team. We intend to teach young people about poverty related issues as part of regular PSE through our Health and Wellbeing programmes, therefore reducing stigma. We gather the views of our young people and families on the Cost of the School Day and involve them in decision making around this.

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. We recognise that families can be embarrassed about asking for financial help. We try to reduce this burden by making payments voluntary.

Eating at school

Lack of food and nutrition are realities for some children in Scotland. Food costs can be significant and receiving Free School Meals (FSM) can lessen the financial burden on low-income families. However not every family entitled to FSM applies for them. And not every child receiving free meals takes them. We would encourage any parent presently on low income to investigate the conditions under which free school meals can be provided. Information about entitlement to free school meals and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council website: www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education . The information on how to check if you are entitled to Free School Meals is in both our handbook and on our school website.

We are aware that there may be a stigma associated with a free lunch and we reduce this by using Parent Pay.

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. We recognise that such events can create difficulties for some children due to lack of immediate funds. When young people cannot afford to take part in any activity, we try to ensure they can still experience it.

School Clubs

We offer a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs throughout the session. All school run clubs are free for pupils to attend. Any costs associated are absorbed by our school. Clubs which are run by outside agencies may incur a cost, but support will be available for families should they require this. These clubs are a valuable resource for children, making new interests and experiences accessible to them.

Home Learning

At South Park Primary School, most of our families have access to ICT resources however, we are aware that is not the case for all pupils. In conjunction with SLC we were able to provide families with ICT equipment and this supported learning during Covid and a period of school closure. We also lent several Chromebooks during lockdown and can do so again should this be required.

All pupils will be supplied with a jotter and resources as required, for their home learning. We will ensure all pupils, no matter their family circumstances, can complete all activities.

The Senior Leadership Team will work with pupils who don't complete homework to ensure this is not due to an equity issue.

Understanding Attitudes Towards Poverty

Annually we seek the views of parents and allocate funding from Pupil Equity Fund to work in partnership with parents to try to alleviate financial pressures and issues for pupils. The Parent Council are also consulted regarding Participatory Budgeting and suggestions considered.

All staff, parents and pupils have completed our participatory budgeting survey and from this we gather views and form next steps.

Parents and carers are signposted towards help and support through a variety of forums:

- Letters
- School website
- School Twitter page
- Parents Portal

All pupils and parents / carers are encouraged to speak to a trusted member of staff if they feel they are at a disadvantage from financial issues. Staff then work discretely to resolve issues and barriers to learning.

We are very clear that The Cost of the School Day is an area that requires constant vigilance and will not be 'fixed' by any one action.

Supports for Families

- Free school meals for all children in P1-5
- Free Breakfast club for children in P1-7
- South Lanarkshire's Community Wellbeing Helpline – 0303012301009
- Advice on money matter www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200134/benefits
- Access to sanitary products Free.Period@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
- Aberlour Trust – Urgent Assistance Fund for Families www.aberlour.org.uk/service-category/urgent-assistance-fund/
- Scottish Child Payment – If you'd like to know more about this benefit contact Social Security Scotland by phone on 0800 182 2222

Policy Review Date – August 2025