

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY



WHY ADDRESS THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY?

School costs can:

- place barriers in the way of children's participation and learning
- create opportunities for income related exclusion and stigma amongst children and young people
- place pressure on low family budgets and further reduce stretched family incomes.

Poverty can have a ferocious and long-lasting effect on children's health, wellbeing and educational attainment. Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing are essential for successful learning. However, food insecurity, housing problems and financial stress and worry all contribute to poorer health outcomes⁵ and children from low income households are more likely to report feeling useless and hopeless about their futures.⁶

There remains a significant and persistent gap in attainment between children from lower and higher income families.⁷ Attainment at school is strongly linked to future employment prospects and education can offer a route out of poverty for many young people - however, coming from a low-income household can affect how children are able to access that education.

Financial barriers across the school day

Trips, uniform, resources for learning in class and at home, clubs and activities, food, fun events, transport, subject charges... school costs which are difficult or impossible to meet can mean that children and young people miss out on the full range of opportunities available to them. Shame and stigma surrounding poverty can mean that they feel excluded or embarrassed when unable to afford what is needed. Missing out on opportunities and feeling different makes it more difficult for children to learn, to achieve and to be happy at school.

“Well I think if all of your friends or people you know go to the after-school clubs, school trips, that kind of isolates you from them. You're singled out, you're not with them, just a spare person.”

(Learner, S5)

More detail of the barriers to participation experienced by children and young people throughout the school day is included in the full **Cost of the School Day report**.⁸

5 Child Poverty Action Group and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. (2017). Poverty and children's health: views from the frontline. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf%20RCPCH.pdf>

6 Children's Society. (2016). Poor Mental Health: The links between child poverty and mental health problems. <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/poor-mental-health-the-links-between-child-poverty-and-mental>

7 Sosu, E. and Ellis, S. (2014). Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education>

8 Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland. (2015). Cost of the School Day. [http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-Of-School-Day-Report\(Oct15\)_0.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-Of-School-Day-Report(Oct15)_0.pdf)

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Addressing the Cost of the School Day can remove barriers to participation and allow equal access to education for all

Schools across Scotland are taking action to remove cost barriers for children and young people. Simple changes to policy and practice can lead to equal access to everything the school day has to offer.

In Lockerbie Academy in Dumfries and Galloway, removing charges for Home Economics, Technical, Art and PE means that all young people have equal access to the curriculum:

“Pupils do not avoid subjects as a result of curriculum costs. They are able to participate in all subjects without fear of extra costs.”

Notre Dame High School in Glasgow provides bus passes and lunch money at its Easter revision programme which has led to increased attendance by young people previously unlikely to attend

Breakfast club at Cradlehall Primary School in Highland means that children arrive in class full up, ready to learn and “less stressed”

‘Donation’ only trips at St Serf’s Primary in North Lanarkshire mean that

“children turn up on the trip rather than being kept off due to parental embarrassment at inability to pay for a trip.”

Burntisland Primary School in Fife has a preloved clothing bank which

“reduces any potential bullying... we have encouraged a ‘no shame’ approach.”

Freely available uniform and gym kit at Bo’Ness Public Primary School in Falkirk has led to

“improved self-esteem and engagement in learning. One pupil is now taking a full part in PE due to having an appropriate and fitting gym kit.”

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Addressing the Cost of the School Day can support children and young people's wellbeing

When school costs are addressed and barriers to participation are removed, children and young people, regardless of their income and ability to pay, are able to:

- **achieve** their full potential at school without financial barriers standing in their way
- feel **respected** and **safe** at school
- feel **included** in all aspects of school life
- be **healthy, active** and **nurtured** through participation in educational experiences
- learn **responsibility** through educational experiences

Discreet provision of uniform at Drumlanrig St Cuthbert's Primary School in the Scottish Borders has made the children who need it

“happier and more settled [with] confidence and self-esteem improved.”

St Edward's Primary in North Lanarkshire makes sure that all fun events are free so that nobody is left out, creating

“an inclusive ethos where pupils feel valued.”

Burntisland Primary School in Fife has a pre-loved clothing bank which

“reduces any potential bullying... we have encouraged a 'no shame' approach.”

Addressing the Cost of the School Day can support parents and carers on low incomes and help to improve children's attainment

Significant or unexpected costs can place pressure on already low family incomes and add to family stress and anxiety. Understanding and addressing these costs can help to support families on low incomes.

“Parents don't have to feel guilty about not having money for school trips and activities - the costs are either removed via school attempts to tackle costs associated with the school day or costs are covered using our cost of the school day funding.”

(RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL)

Crucially, minimising costs and helping to maximise family incomes can have a direct effect on children and young people's attainment at school.

Research from the London School of Economics tells us that money, in and of itself, has a causal effect on children's outcomes.⁹ Therefore, increased family income leads to improvements in children's outcomes, particularly cognitive development and school achievement.

⁹ Stewart, K. and Cooper, K. (2017). Does money affect children's outcomes? An update. Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion. <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cp/casepaper203.pdf>

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A short film, suitable for sharing with colleagues, featuring Dr Kitty Stewart outlining the ways in which money affects children's outcomes can be found at: http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/money_matters/report.asp

Uptake of school based financial entitlements such as free school meals and clothing grants can save eligible families hundreds of pounds a year. Support to claim other benefits can have an even greater impact on family incomes.

St Joseph's Primary School in the Scottish Borders has increased free meal uptake through a free meals banner at the school gate, information in P1 transition packs and the school handbook and individual contact if eligible families are not accessing school lunches.

Arbroath Academy provides a demonstration at parents' evening of how to register for free school meals

Cardinal Newman High School in North Lanarkshire sends regular text messages and letters to all parents/carers reminding them of free meals and clothing grants and highlighting drop in sessions where support is available to complete the necessary forms

At Forthview Primary School in Edinburgh, the school carries out home visits to help families complete free meal and clothing grant forms

Miller Primary School in Glasgow ran an 8 day 'cost of the school holidays' summer play scheme where partner agencies provided welfare advice to parents.