

Voice Leaders Meeting Notes

Date: 4 March 2026

- Welcome and introductions.
- Share updates from schools and local authorities.
- Discuss current Cost of the School Day work.
- Demonstrate Voice Network resources and tools.
- Identify priorities for future meetings.

Key Updates

Young People's Voice

- Positive feedback was shared about young people's involvement in national opportunities and the impact this has had on their confidence and engagement.
- Attendees encouraged to contact Kirsty to note any interest for their pupils to take part in future opportunities.

Budget and Policy Update

Sara Spencer provided a brief overview of recent budget announcements relevant to Cost of the School Day work. The main announcements included:

- **Increased Scottish Child Payment** for low-income families with babies under one year old, recognising that families with very young children are among those at greatest risk of poverty. Members noted that while this is positive, many other families experiencing poverty will not benefit from this specific increase.
- **Continuation of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding**, including Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding (CEF), at broadly current levels, alongside additional investment in Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision.
- **£15 million investment in breakfast provision**, with plans to expand towards a universal breakfast offer in all primary schools by August 2027.
- **School Clothing Grant** to increase in line with inflation.
- **Expansion of free school meal eligibility** to include children whose families receive Pension Credit, alongside the continuation of free school meal alternatives during school holidays.

- Continued funding for:
 - **Free bus travel for under-22s.**
 - **Removing curriculum-related charges** for learners.
- Additional investment in:
 - **Wraparound childcare and before-/after-school provision.**
 - **School and community sport**, particularly in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games.
 - A new **universal learn-to-swim offer**, intended to remove cost barriers that can prevent schools from providing swimming lessons.

Attendees welcomed the positive direction of the budget, particularly the continued investment in tackling the Cost of the School Day. However, they acknowledged that many announcements remain high-level, with practical implementation details still to be confirmed. There was interest in monitoring how initiatives—particularly the universal breakfast offer and learn-to-swim programme—will be delivered locally and how young people can help shape their implementation.

School Practice Sharing

Cost of S6

Members discussed investigating the financial pressures associated with S6, including:

- Prom costs.
- Leavers' hoodies.
- Trips and celebrations.
- Other hidden costs associated with the final year of school.

This was identified as an area where young people's views could help shape future work.

School Examples

Schools shared practical approaches that have helped reduce financial barriers, including:

- Improving access to clothing and uniform support.
- Encouraging families to engage with available supports.
- Using young people's feedback to improve initiatives.
- Recognising that how initiatives are delivered is often just as important as what is provided.

Voice Network Resources

Alison Brown demonstrated the Voice Network website and highlighted changes to the education section that allows users to access resources more efficiently:

- [Ideas Bank](#) – a growing collection of practical examples submitted by schools.
- [Practice videos](#) – available on YouTube and easy to embed into presentations or staff training.
- [Resources for discussing school costs with families](#), developed using feedback from approximately 1,800 parents.
- Guidance on:
 - Talking about costs.
 - Referring families for money advice.
 - Local authority support.
 - Young People’s Poverty and Education Manifesto.
- The “Working with Young People” section containing Voice Network news, resources and opportunities.

Members were encouraged to:

- Share examples of effective practice.
- Suggest improvements to existing resources.
- Get involved in refreshing and developing future materials.

Future Meeting Ideas

Potential topics for future sessions include:

- The cost of S6.
- The cost of P7 transition.
- Education Scotland’s new [Youth Voice Toolkit](#) and how it can support peer research around poverty.
- Additional topics suggested by network members after the meeting.

Opportunities Shared

- Members were signposted to the [Good School Food Awards](#) as a potential opportunity for schools undertaking work around food provision and Cost of the School Day.