THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Voice network pupil meetings September 2026

“Our teachers are supportive and we do cool, fun lessons that help us learn”

“Our school gives us choices. We meet in assembly and decide how to spend the PB money” (young people who attended the meeting)

160 Voice pupils across primary and secondary school met online in September to take part in an information session delivered by the Scottish Parliament Education Team **.** Voice members learned about how their parliament is set up, the various ways young people can have their views and voices heard at the parliament including petitions, campaigns, speaking at committees and lawful protesting. This was helpful for all involved for thinking and planning how the Voice network can next engage with decision makers about cost and equity at school

Schools who couldn’t make the session but are interested in learning more about the Scottish Parliament can find resources and online opportunities here Education | Scottish Parliament Website

Voice members shared why they think it is great to grow up in Scotland

To help us all warmup and think about what our parliament is doing well to help young people in Scotland before the learning session Voice pupils explored what is good about growing up in Scotland. Here are some of the things they valued the most:

"Scotland is a really beautiful place to grow up in."

"We love that we can come to school for free."

"Free bus travel for all U25s."

"Free school lunches P1-5."

“Children’s rights are now law”

“Free breakfast clubs in primary schools”

What’s happening in schools to tackle costs

We explored what our schools are already doing to tackle the Cost of the School Day. Many pupils shared how much their schools are doing to help families and make everyone feel welcome:

"Free breakfast club, clothes bank, pop-up shops, dignity boxes, free or reduced costs trips, free after school clubs."

"Devices available at every stage of the school for pupil use, clothes rail, free school lunches P1-5, free school clubs, breakfast club, Free snacks, playgrounds that are equipped for the needs of different year groups."

"We have free school clubs."

"Wear and share clothing shelf now including camp clothing. Blether cafe. Breakfast club."

"We have a Christmas jumper swap and two free clothes banks for people who don't have them."

"We've got a free clothes bank inside our school and outside our school, so that makes our school great, and makes everyone feel the same and welcome."

"One thing that makes our school great is the after-school clubs that are all free to attend."

"We're a great school because you help all families without any questions."

"We have an Equity and Inclusion pupil group that makes sure we are checking the Cost of The School Day."

"We use public transport for all school trips and other opportunities."

"We go on good school trips."

Voice network priorities for this year

We gathered key priorities for pupils this year, to help the network plan our next steps.

Primary: Pupils are still frustrated that Free School Meal expansion is still not universal, with some P6 and P7 still not receiving a free school meal. Cost of hiring buses and transport for school trips was mentioned as expensive and made school trips more difficult for families to afford. Finally, although lots of free clubs and activities are run during and after school, pupils wanted more support and help from local sports clubs, partnerships and their community so children could have more experiences.

Secondary: Eating at school remains a top priority for secondary aged pupils, with calls for expansion of free school meal provision or a review of canteen food prices and what can be purchased with the FSM allowance. People shared the view that it is not always enough. The cost of trips and experiences also remains a concern for secondary pupils.

Next session

Clober Primary school offered to share their news and work in a future session. Kirsy will be in touch to help them prepare.

Thank you

A huge thank you to all the Voice pupils and leaders who joined the online learning session, pupils listened and engaged really well with the parliament learning session, asked great questions and shared brilliant examples.