



The Cost of a School Day

As Headteacher, it pains me on a daily basis to be aware that insufficient household income can mean that some children 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 which cost money. I am therefore fully aware that, on occasion, this can put some of our pupils at risk of missing out on opportunities at school and/or feeling different, excluded and unhappy.

Currently 1 in 4 children in Scotland live in poverty. We all know that poverty is by its nature often dynamic and people move in and out of poverty-there are short term, recurrent and persistent states of poverty depending on individual and family circumstances.

Findings of a recent 'Growing Up in Scotland' survey have revealed that over the last 7 years only 45% of children in Scotland **HAVE NOT** experienced at least one year of growing up in poverty.

The Child Poverty Action Group recently commissioned and produced some support materials to assist schools and school Parent Councils with ideas to alleviate some of these concerns. While it is clear that issues surrounding the ways to tackle poverty are societal, not just related to school, it is clear we have our own part to play in working to alleviate some of the issues faced by pupils and parents who are confronted with the often daily dilemmas of providing support for their child's school experience.

What the reading of the research has reinforced is that as a school we need to raise awareness of the supports we offer to parents and pupils, while at the same time observing the required confidentiality required when any parent or pupil requests assistance.

The school is already in receipt of monies under the Scottish Government's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) where financial resources are allocated to the school based on the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals. Through this we identified a structured approach to establish and address the poverty related attainment gap, develop and promote Health & Wellbeing, develop play in P1, establish a Family Learning programme and promote pupil engagement.

In addition, we have now established a dedicated 'Equity Fund' through our School Fund and Parent Council to support pupils and families to ensure equity in as many aspects of school life as we can. We are also thankful to the St Vincent De Paul, St. Bride's Parish and Parent Council who regularly contribute generously to the school on an ongoing annual basis to assist in our efforts to subsidise and support pupils travel/ transport/ trip funding/ educational support where required.

What I now need to promote is the encouragement of any pupils and/ or parents who may be finding certain aspects of supporting their child's school life a struggle to let us know about the issues at hand and, with confidentiality guaranteed, to allow us the opportunity to support where we can to ensure that as far as possible all our pupils have access to the same experiences as and when they are offered, whether this is in school/ class or beyond.

I would encourage all 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, or a member of staff they feel comfortable talking with, and have a supportive conversation. This will hopefully lead to the school being able to offer the appropriate support/resource provision to allow their child to receive as full and as rounded a school experience as possible.

*St. Bride's Primary School Community a joyful place where;
We can Dream, We do Believe and We will Achieve great things!*

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St Bride's Primary strives to meet the key recommendations that the Poverty Action Group research have noted as being important markers of supporting children from a low-income background include:

- Giving pupils the benefit of the doubt- school staff and pupils hold no assumptions about financial situations.
- Ensuring as far as possible an 'affordable school year'- spacing events out to try to avoid hotspots leading to increasing financial pressures.
- Fundraising activities which do not always ask families to contribute
- Lending resources without trouble
- Modifying expectations and tasks: 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 among children
- Making sure families get financial entitlements- clothing grants, free meals, EMA .
- Staff discretion and empathy
- Ensuring costs for trips are affordable
- Covering costs/ subsidising and supporting discounts where possible
- Systems in place where pupils/ parents/ carers do not feel embarrassed asking for help/ subsidy

In general, school costs can be broken down into several key categories:

- Clothing grant and buying uniforms
- Travelling to school
- Fundraising events
- School trips
- School clubs
- Home learning

These categories and what we do to support children and families are detailed overleaf. However our 'attitude to poverty' is a common thread in each of the categories. 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.

As a school we pride ourselves on the inclusive ethos and positive engagement that exists between staff and pupils and between pupils at all levels of school life. It is with a strong degree of pride that- although like all schools we deal on a regular basis with friendship fall outs and picking up the pieces over social media conversations outside of school that have led to arguments etc. - we very rarely have to deal with any individual issues where a pupil is bullied or discriminated on the basis of conversations about money and wealth. With Inclusion and Nurture key aspects of our school vision and ethos - 'Dream, Believe, Achieve,' we have a strong sense of the importance of fairness and social justice. It is also pleasant and re-assuring to note that recent surveys with new and current pupils, visitors to the school and key partners to the school have all emphasised how welcoming St Bride's Primary School is.

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School Trips

The school only arranges events outside of school that we feel will enrich a pupil's school and life experience. 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 and families can be embarrassed about asking for financial help.

We aim to reduce costs of 'Local trips' by subsidising with school funds, fundraising activities or Parent Council support. For longer trips we give maximum advance notice and put a staged payment plan in place. Families who need support are encouraged to speak to the school. **No child** will ever not be given the opportunity due to financial restraints.

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.

We offer:

- Family Homework Club every Monday
- Tailored individual support if required

I would encourage parents/ carers to speak to the school if they have any specific concerns to allow us to identify areas to support pupil engagement.

Fundraising Events

Special days, events and activities are a fun part of school life and often raise valuable funds. However, such 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.

All our fund-raising activities take place during the school day. We plan in advance to ensure they are spread evenly. Non-uniform days are spread throughout the year, help to raise funds for charity and cost £1 donation.

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.

Any activities out-with the school day are heavily reliant on parent transport and this is not always easy. If pupils want to participate in a school activity and feel that financial circumstances would not allow for this to happen I would encourage parents/ carers to speak to the school to identify areas to support pupil engagement.

Clothing grant and buying uniforms

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. SLC grant is currently £130. Information is available on the school and SLC website to inform parents regarding information about entitlement to clothing grants and how to apply. Other support is available through our Parent Council and SVDP . Families who need support are encouraged to speak to the school.

School Clubs

We offer a range of morning, 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.

If a pupil feels that there is a reason that they cannot participate because of the lack of a resource/ equipment this should not prove a barrier to involvement and the pupil or parent should approach a member of staff and allow us to identify a solution.

Eating at School

Lack of food/poor nutrition are realities for some children. Food costs can be significant and receiving Free School Meals can help. However not every family entitled to free meals applies for them and not every child receiving free meals takes them. Information is available on the school and SLC websites informing parents about entitlement to Free School Meals and how to apply.

We also offer:

- Free Breakfast Club
- Snacks given on need basis
- Foodbank and SVDP referral