

South Lanarkshire Council: Education Resources

## Biggar Primary School & ELC



## Cost of School Day Policy

Related content links to UNCRC Articles 16, 17, 28, 36

Related content links to Sustainable Development Goals



The purpose of a school policy is to ensure that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the aims and how these aims are delivered in practice. This policy concerns the Cost of the School Day and includes the context, how we consult with our school stakeholders and how we will support families throughout the school year.

### **Rationale**

The impact that poverty makes on a child/young person's education is well documented. Living in poverty is hard and can affect all aspects of a child or young person's wellbeing, achievement, and attainment.

Families can move in and out of poverty-there are short term, recurrent and persistent states of poverty depending on individual and family circumstances. Many of the ways to tackle poverty are societal, not just related to school, but 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.

At Biggar PS and ELC we recognise the need to reduce the Cost of the School Day for all our pupils and particularly if pupils are experiencing poverty. At the time of writing Biggar P.S has 14% of pupils receiving FSM and all the pupils living in SIMD areas 3-8 deciles.

**“At the heart of Cost of the School Day is the involvement of children, parents, and staff in identifying which ‘school things’ result in additional financial burden for families and risk children and young people experiencing stigma or feeling excluded. All children and young people can play a part in helping to make their school more inclusive and the best solutions will come from them as experts in their own school experience. Some solutions will come directly from children and families who have first-hand experience of living in poverty, so be encouraged to work with the expertise that comes with experience.” (CPAG 2021)**

**In every school in Scotland, more and more parents, carers and families are struggling on low incomes meaning that many of our children are locked out of opportunities to participate, learn and thrive. Given the seismic changes brought about by Covid-19, this situation is even more critical than before. We can, and must, support all of our children to take full and equal advantage of opportunities in school and consider how to reduce the extra costs for parents and carers. (CPAG 2021)**

## **Aims**

In Biggar Primary and ELC we aim to ensure that all of our children/pupils have the same opportunities and expectations in life. Money should play no part in how any of our children/young people achieve and experience their education. We aim to pay close attention to the Cost of the School Day. We will be clear with our parents and carers about any possible financial cost which may come up in the course of the school year and ensure that anyone who cannot afford a particular cost e.g for a residential trip, will have our full support in ensuring their child can still take part, regardless of cost. No child/young person will miss out on any aspect of their school life because of a lack of money.

## **Our school role**

Our school values underpin all the policies that we have. The values of Respect, Fairness, Kindness and Honesty are particularly pertinent to the COSD policy.

**Respect;** We will respect all of our families and ensure confidentiality where required. We will not make judgements based on financial knowledge.

**Fairness-** We will ensure all families are given equal opportunities to participate in all activities associated with school.

**Honesty-** We will promote a culture of honesty to build trust with our families so that they can ask for support, knowing that it will be confidential and without judgement.

**Kindness-** We will demonstrate a caring ethos to all stakeholders, making everyone feel valued and that they belong to our school community.

## **Awareness and Empathy**

At Biggar Primary and ELC we ensure all our staff are Poverty Aware. All staff will take part in training on this subject either in person through the CQIS and/or online through the [NHS Child Poverty Learning Hub](#) . All staff will receive an annual update on Cost of the School Day each August.

Biggar Primary and ELC keeps track of all money requested and ensures that no parent or child is made to feel embarrassment or shame if they cannot afford to contribute to any event. This will never exclude them from participating.

At the start of each year our school will issue a Cost of the Nursery/School Year plan to our parents so that they can see immediately when there will be events which may have a cost. This will allow families to budget if they are able, or to contact the nursery/school if they require assistance.

Families will never need to prove their financial circumstances before help is given. Our staff always keep at the front of their minds that we are here to help the children in our care.

### **Support for Families**

Biggar Primary and ELC website has details of agencies who may be able to help families struggling with finances e.g [Money Matters](#). We also signpost using the resource [Money Is Not The Only Problem](#).

Any parent who needs support in paying for anything in nursery/school can contact Miss Julie, Team Leader in the nursery or Mrs Graham, Cost of the School Day Lead in school who will deal with them with complete confidentiality and compassion.

While our school is not responsible for all aspects of a families life, we will try to help out when we can. If anyone is struggling we would always encourage them to speak to us so that we can try and point them in the right direction for the most appropriate help. If your family is under stress this may be affecting how your child is managing at school so it is important that we can work together.

### **Communication with Families**

We try very hard to be non-stigmatising in all our communications and do not presume that we know all the families who may be in need of help. We would encourage anyone to contact us in person, through email or telephone if they need help or advice on any matter. We try and ensure that all messages are appropriate whether on our website, Parent Pay or email. If anyone finds any of our messaging offensive, they should contact us immediately. We would never deliberately upset any member of our school community.

### **Parent/carer role**

We ask that parents/carers support the Cost of the School Day Policy by;

- asking for support, if required, for anything linked to the policy.
- making use of the pre loved reuse and recycle clothing system either by donating or collecting items from within school or designated areas in the community.
- contributing honestly and fully to any consultations in relation to COSD.
- contributing and participating in the annual Participatory Budgeting exercise.

## **The Cost of the School Day**

### **Uniform**

We believe that uniform promotes a sense of belonging in our nursery and school and are aware of associated costs for parents/carers so have streamlined uniform options.

**Nursery-** Our nursery uniform consists of a unisex sky blue sweatshirt and navy polo shirt with any choice of suitable clothing for the lower body. The sky blue sweatshirt with Biggar Primary Nursery badge can be purchased from AJ's in Lanark or Brown and Out in Peebles. The nursery uniform was suggested by the parent forum and is parental choice. There is no expectation that all children should have one.

**School-** Our school uniform consists of a unisex royal blue sweatshirt and white polo shirt with grey trousers, shorts or skirt. The royal blue sweatshirt with Biggar Primary badge can be purchased from AJ's in Lanark or Brown and Out in Peebles although a plain royal blue sweatshirt can also be worn.

For **PE** we ask that children have shorts, a T-shirt and gym shoes but note that football strips/colours are not acceptable in any South Lanarkshire school. Indoor shoes can be used as shoes for PE.

We have good quality pre loved uniform items available within school and at designated areas in the community and would encourage all families to make use of these as much as possible.

The last few days of every school session is non uniform and a pre loved station is arranged in the school playground/hall.

Parents in receipt of certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. Information is available on the school and SLC website to inform parents about entitlement to clothing grants and how to apply.

We have carried out an audit and at present our school uniform can be purchased using the clothing grant.

We also promote pop up pre loved stations for Hallowe'en and Christmas clothing.

### **Travelling to school**

Some of our children are brought to school by bus and as a result of this we try to ensure that some extra-curricular clubs take place at lunchtime.

### **Breakfast Club**

Our Breakfast Club takes place in the school dinner hall and is open from 8.15am until 9am and is free for all. Attendees can have toast/Weetabix and a drink.

### **Friendships and attitudes to poverty**

Our 'Better Relationships, Better Behaviour Policy' and our Anti Bullying policy were written in consultation with all stakeholders so that we have a shared understanding of the school values, responsibilities and expectations.

We openly talk about poverty and the impact it can have on families through our health and well being curriculum, assemblies ( Challenge Poverty week) etc..

We are aware of the fact that poverty can form a basis of bullying and our staff are vigilant to this and treat all bullying in the same manner as outlined in our Anti Bullying Policy.

### **Snack**

Nursery children are provided with free milk and a snack. Any child in school who doesn't have a snack or who has forgotten to bring a snack with them can help themselves to a piece of fruit from our Snack Shack.

### **School trips**

We only arrange educational excursions that we feel will be of benefit to our pupils and are acutely aware of the pressures that our rural locality has on costs.

For whole school trips we will detail the costs and may ask for a donation to help e.g to the Pantomime but this will be done through Parent Pay and no child will miss out because a donation has not been given. For families who need support we would encourage them to speak to the school and we will find another way for the child to go on the trip.

Swimming lessons in P5 are paid by the school but travel incurs costs. We ensure that advance time is provided to allow for a staged payment plan through Parent Pay. For families who need support we would encourage them to speak to the school and we will find another way for the child to go swimming.

For the Primary 7 Residential trip a staged payment plan is put in place on Parent Pay at the start of P6 to ensure that parents/carers can 'pay up' small amounts of money each month.

No child will miss out on the Residential Experience because of money.

When planning a trip we will consider best value and aim to reduce costs by subsidising with school funds, using Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), applying for grants, fundraising activities or Parent Council support.

An outcome of the Parent Council COSD survey indicated that some families would be happy to subsidise payments for other families who were in need support. The opportunity to do this is detailed at the point of the trip on Parent Pay.

We are aware that there can be 'hidden costs' to trips and will work to minimise these.

Trips during the school day will normally involve children wearing their school uniform and there should not be a visit to any shop.

Any child in receipt of Free Meal Entitlement will not pay for any educational excursions.

We will offer reduced rates for families with more than one child attending the same trip.

### **School Lunches**

We all work better when we aren't hungry and our body is fuelled.

All pupils in from nursery to Primary 5 have access to a free school meal every day, including a packed lunch in the event of an educational excursion.

South Lanarkshire Council have an automated system for families, P6 & P7 pupils, to get free school meals meaning that it is only children and young people who live in another Authority who would need to actually apply for this.

We are aware, however, that there are still families struggling who may not qualify for free school meals and we encourage families to speak to us if they are struggling to provide a lunch. We will never see a child go hungry.

As with all South Lanarkshire primary schools, our Cook in Charge shares any food that has not been used. Any left over fruit will be used either at lunchtime or collected by the school to use for snacks.

### **Fundraising/Fun Events**

Special days, events and activities are part of school life and at Biggar Primary and ELC we try to balance the need to raise valuable funds with the potential impact on families.

We plan an annual COSD calendar in consultation with the Parent Council to ensure that events and activities are evenly spread out and to track the costs that families are being asked for.

We also employ a range of strategies to support as follows

- For school discos or fun events where there may be a cost, this will be collected in a 'chuck it in the bucket' manner so that any child who may not have enough money is not shamed by having to say they can't pay.
- We will only have one non-uniform day in any school year as we recognise this can be difficult for some children or young people who may feel under pressure to wear 'trendy' clothes. Again, any money collected will not be done by targeting individuals.

- We do not fundraise by selling your child's work as we recognise the pressure this can place on parents.
- For sponsored events we do not ask for sponsored sheets to be returned to school and all children participate regardless of contributions
- At any school events eg Christmas Fayre we will ensure that there are some free activities
- Asking for preloved toys, baking instead of money.

The money raised from events for the school and Parent Council have contributed towards transport costs for trips, annual subscriptions to enhance teaching and learning, infant 'Santa gifts,' P7 Leavers gift, Clyde in the Classroom etc...

We will continue to try and access grants from charities and commercial organisations rather than asking parents for funds.

If any parent works for an organisation who offers grants we are grateful when they let us know and we welcome any parent who is willing to help complete bids.

### **School Clubs**

We recognise that extra curricular clubs are beneficial to children providing them with opportunities to develop a variety of skills and therefore we offer some extra curricular clubs, all of which are free.

Some clubs are offered at lunch time to take account of children who travel by bus and to mitigate additional costs to parents/carers for transport.

Participation in extra curricular clubs at school and out with is tracked to allow for targeted intervention for pupils not involved in any extra curricular clubs.

### **Learning at School and Home**

Children at Biggar PS and ELC should not need to pay for equipment for any core learning activity at school or at home.

While we recognise that some children are given pencil cases as gifts and enjoy bringing them to class, our children are not encouraged to bring their own stationery to school as everything is provided and all the children are therefore the same.

Homework will not be dependent on access to devices/ internet and alternatives will be provided.



## **Conclusion**

We believe all of our children should have the same experiences at school and are determined to make this a reality. Money will never be the reason a child does not achieve or experience all the benefits of their time at Biggar Primary and Nursery. Partnership between home and school and the relationships we build together are vital for everyone and we believe that when we have open and honest communication everyone succeeds.

**Unequal access to learning and opportunities at school means unequal outcomes for our children. It is crucial that every child is able to make the most of their school day. Let's make it happen. ( CPAG 2021)**

Session 19-20- Parent Council Survey

Session 21-22- Position statement

Session 22-23- Parent Council Survey ( Appendix 2) Key Findings

Session 24-25 – Policy

Session 26-27- Parent Council survey and policy review

Appendix 1- COSD Pledge created during Challenge Poverty Week, 24-25

C	Change is needed.
O	Otherwise we may be affected, our friends too.
S	School and Nursery is here.
D	Determined to help and make a difference.

## **Appendix 2- COSD Parent Council Survey results session 22-23 ( Key findings)**

Survey of parents and carers:

- The school has reduced financial pressures on families: only 4% of respondents now feel the school asks for too much money over a school year, compared with 19% in 2019.
- 16% say it is difficult for them to afford all the things their children need for school (compared with 19% in 2019).
- Biggar Primary has improved advance communications around school costs. 70% feel there is always lots of notice when the school asks for money, up from 55% in 2019.
- Parental awareness of how to apply for financial assistance for lunches or uniforms has increased markedly over the past four years. While 31% said they would not know how to apply for these in 2019, this figure stands at 6% in 2023.
- More parents would now feel comfortable telling school staff if they were struggling to pay for something at school (48%) than in 2019 (40%).

What the children say:

- More pupils say they worry about costs at school in 2023 (29%) than in 2019 (21%).
- More pupils in 2023 (57%) say it would be 'difficult' or 'really difficult' to talk to teachers or other school staff if they were worried about money or couldn't afford to pay for something than in 2019 (45%).
- All pupils agree they won't miss out on anything at school as a result of not having enough money in 2023. This is a marked increase from 2019, when 63% shared this view.

Staff insights:

- All staff agree they are 'aware that there is poverty' at Biggar Primary School and Nursery in 2023, up from 87% in 2019.
- 80% agree 'we have families who struggle to pay for what is needed at school/nursery', compared with 94% in 2019.
- 90% agree 'we do everything we can to tackle poverty' at Biggar Primary School and Nursery, an increase from 69% in 2019.
- 90% agree that 'all children, regardless of how much money they have, are able to access exactly the same opportunities' at the school and nursery, up from 81% in 2019.