

Black Mount Primary School Cost of the School Day Policy



Background

'Poverty' is when your resources are not enough to meet your basic needs.

More than 1 in 4 (26%) of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty. The majority of children in poverty, 68%, have parents who are in work but still don't make enough to get by. Poverty damages children's health and wellbeing, their learning, attainment and future outcomes.



Recent Scottish Government policy and investment has focused on closing the attainment gap between children from high and low income households in order to reduce current inequalities in educational outcomes. Integral to this agenda must be an understanding of how education and school structures, policies and practices affect children and young people from low-income households and where difficulties and financial barriers to participation exist throughout the school day. Understanding more about this from children's perspectives can support schools to poverty-proof their policies and practices so that conditions are right for all children and young people to learn and to achieve.

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

The Child Poverty Action Group recently commissioned and produced a further range of support materials to assist schools and school parent councils with ideas to alleviate some of these concerns.

<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/about>



As far as possible as a school, we endeavour to match key recommendations that the Poverty Action Group research has noted as being important markers of supporting children from a low-income background- including:

- Giving our pupils the benefit of the doubt- our school staff and pupils should hold no assumptions about financial situations.
- Ensuring as far as possible an 'affordable school year'- spacing in-school and out of school events out to try to avoid hotspots leading to increasing financial pressures.
- Running fund-raising 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.
- Greater poverty awareness among our own school community.
- Making sure families/students are aware of their financial entitlements- clothing grants, free meals, EMA . . .
- Staff discretion and empathy in relation to equity issues.
- Ensuring wherever possible that 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.

Our Vision

At Black Mount Primary School, we aim to employ a range of simple and practical measures which can help to minimise costs, reduce stigma and ensure that our pupils have equal access to opportunities within school and its wider community.

Our Commitment

Learning

Children at Black Mount Primary School do not need to pay for any core learning activity. Pens and pencils are provided and pupils do not need to bring their own equipment although we are aware that many children like to do this. We also allow learners to borrow equipment if they need it for homework (e.g. a calculator or craft equipment).

When pupils start at Black Mount Primary School, they are provided with a bookbag and PE bag that lasts for the duration of their time at the school.

Uniform

Our current uniform is a royal blue sweatshirt/jumper/cardigan, grey polo shirt, black or grey trousers/skirt. Families can purchase branded uniform items from ALJ Workwear in Lanark. We do not insist on badged sweatshirts/polo shirts and encourage parents to look at more affordable options in supermarkets and other clothing retailers. We have a uniform bank of 'previously owned' items which can be accessed at any time.

The uniform bank is also discretely displayed at events in the school and this allows families to pick up items free of charge.

We recommend that all items of school clothes are labelled with the child's name so that lost garments can be returned to the child as we often have a number of items in school that are not claimed by the children.



Our bank also includes items of clothing such as costumes/party clothes which often have limited wear and can be accessed in the same way as uniform items.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. Information about entitlement to clothing grants and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council website: www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Eating at School

Lunches

Each year we have minimal numbers of pupils who are entitled to Free School Meals as a result of low income. We are aware that there may be a stigma associated with a free lunch and we try to reduce this by never discussing who has a free school meal. By using ParentPay for parents to pay for lunches removes any stigma previously associated with children not paying for their lunch with cash. Free School Meal entitlement is now allocated automatically if a family has qualifying benefits.

Lack of food and poor nutrition are realities for some children in Scotland. Food costs can be significant and receiving Free School Meals can lessen the financial burden on low-income families. However, not every family entitled to free meals applies for them, and not every child receiving free meals takes them. We would encourage any parent presently on low income to investigate the conditions under which free school meals can be provided. Information about entitlement to free school meals and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council website:

https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education_benefits/159/school_clothing_grants_and_free_school_meals

School lunches are free for all pupils in Primary 1 - 5.

Pupil Snacks

At Black Mount Primary we provide pupils with a snack at breaktime. This reduces the need for parents to provide their child with a snack each day.

Travel



The majority of our children travel to school by bus or are transported by parents. Transport is provided for the majority by the Local Authority. We are aware that this could mean many children are not able to attend after-school clubs, and we therefore ensure that we have clubs at lunchtime as well as after-school. If a pupils' attendance at an afterschool club is hindered due to financial constraints, parents are encouraged to contact the school whereby we will work together to find a satisfactory solution to enable all pupils to attend.

School Clubs and Fun Events



At Black Mount Primary we offer a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. These clubs are a valuable resource for children, making new interests and experiences accessible to them and we do not charge for these.

Special days, events and activities are a fun part of school life and often raise valuable funds to subsidise trips. provide additional resources or include a donation to charity. However, such events can create difficulties for some children due to lack of immediate funds, the hidden costs and/or feeling embarrassed and marginalised if they are unable to take part. Participation in these events is always voluntary and pupils will never be questioned or made to feel awkward about their decision to participate or not.

Whilst it is a kind and very generous gesture, we do not encourage children to bring a cake to school to celebrate their birthday and we respectfully request that parents no longer send presents to school for staff.

School Trips

The school, at all times, encourages staff to arrange events outside of school that we feel will enrich a pupil's school and life experience. However we are aware that school trips can be difficult for families on low incomes to afford. Missing trips means that children miss fun, new experiences and personal development opportunities and can feel left out. Families can feel embarrassed about asking for financial help.

We try to meet the cost of trips through grants, the support of our Parent Council and the use of our Pupil Equity Funding. However, if we need to ask for a donation towards the cost of an activity or trip, our targeted equity pupils will have these costs fully met by the school. We also aim to give

families as much notice as possible if there is a cost involved. Outings, such as our Residential experience can be paid in instalments over a longer period of time.

If there is an out of school activity being run and a pupil is reluctant to participate because of family financial constraints, parents are encouraged to contact the school, in confidence, to seek support and help us identify ways in which we can help.

Help is at Hand



South Lanarkshire's Community Wellbeing Helpline

They can provide free and confidential advice on a range of matters such as:

- Identifying benefits which you may be entitled to, including Free School Meals, Clothing Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and other welfare benefits
- Assisting in crisis situations such as having no money for food, gas or electricity
- Arranging referrals to other services including Money Matters Advice Services for benefit and debt advice and assistance.

The benefits system can be so complex with many people unaware of the benefits that may be available to them. We know of similar support provided in other schools with many families now better off due to the additional benefits being received as a result of making contact. In some cases, families gained thousands of pounds in backdated benefits.

Please call the Helpline team on 0303 123 1009 if you want to know more about the services offered.

Scottish Child Payments



Scottish Child Payment helps towards the costs of supporting your family. It's a weekly payment of £25 that you can get for every child you look after who's under 16 years of age. You'll get the payment every 4 weeks if your application is successful.

More information can be found by clicking the link below.

<https://www.mygov.scot/browse/benefits>

Period Poverty

Statistically 1 in 7 girls have to borrow sanitary wear because of affordability issues, 12% have to improvise sanitary wear and 1 in 5 choose cheaper, less suitable products because of cost. At Black Mount Primary School a range of suitable, high quality sanitary products are available for any pupil requiring access to these.

All pupils know that appropriate sanitary wear is available free of charge to collect in the toilets to reduce embarrassment/ stigma.

Sanitary products are also made available over school holidays.



The Law ensuring free of charge period products in certain settings has come into force. Community halls, leisure centres, libraries, foodbanks and certain NHS premises are just some of the locations where products are obtainable free of charge.

Locations across the area can be found by downloading the Pickupmyperiod App (free on Apple and Google)