

Cost of the School Day Policy

Carmichael Primary School, South Lanarkshire Council

Families continue to be under increasing financial pressure, with rising living costs including the basic essentials of food, fuel and household goods. A recent report into the impact of rural poverty highlighted the fact that the additional cost of living for rural communities is a distinctive feature of rural poverty and is not reflected in general policy or in anti-poverty policy. It also noted that rural poverty is deeply rooted but hard to see due to a number of factors. It concluded that the two most significant drivers of additional costs were transport and energy, along with a higher cost of food in rural communities and the difficulties associated with finding affordable childcare (Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament, 2024).

The potential impact of poverty on all of our children is stark. Dickie (2023) highlights *'it's children that pay the highest possible price for poverty – they pay with their health, their wellbeing and their life chances'*.

At Carmichael Primary School we recognise the need to reduce the Cost of the School Day for all our pupils and particularly for our pupils who are already experiencing poverty. This will be an ongoing process involving all stakeholders to ensure we continue to meet the everchanging political and social landscape.

At Carmichael Primary School the lead for the 'Cost of the School Day' is Miss Lisa Glashan (Head Teacher).

Below we examine the School Day through the following headings; Uniform, Travel, Learning, Friendships, School trips, Eating, Fun and School Clubs.

Uniform

Our current uniform is black/grey trousers/skirts/tartan pinafores, red sweatshirts and white shirts or white polo shirts. Families can purchase uniforms from ALJ Workwear in Lanark or most supermarkets because we do not insist on badged sweatshirts/polo shirts. We have preloved uniform which is managed by parents and senior pupils. This resource is well used, and we have worked hard to promote use of our preloved items from a sustainability point of view, reducing the amount of good quality clothes being sent to landfill. This approach reduces the stigma attached to preloved clothes, reduces costs for parents, and allows us to play our small part in combating climate change. Halloween costumes, Christmas jumpers, wellies and indoor shoes also feature on our preloved stall.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with uniform costs at, information is available in the following link.

https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/primary_school_information/159/school_clothing_grants_and_free_school_meals

Travel

The majority of our children travel to school by bus or by car. Transport is provided for the majority by the Local Authority, those who are placing requests are transported by their parents. We are aware that this could mean children are not able to attend after school clubs, we therefore ensure that we have a range of lunch time activities organised and delivered by senior pupils as well as after school clubs to alleviate the pressure of children being collected from school at 4pm. Although there is no public transport available in Carmichael, parents will be given information about applying for

the Under 22 free bus pass. This is particularly important for our young people transitioning to secondary school. Information is available in the following link.

<https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/nec/>

Learning

Children do not need to pay for any core learning activities. Pens and pencils are provided, and young people do not need to bring their own equipment although we are aware that many children like to do this. Young people can borrow equipment if they need it for homework (e.g. a calculator or craft equipment). Due to the location of the school access to the internet can be limited, in these cases any computer-based tasks will also be given as paper copies.

Friendships

As an inclusive, nurturing, school we encourage all schools to look after one another. We have P6 buddies, P7 House Captains, and all senior pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for morning break or lunchtime activity clubs. As a small rural school, we also do a lot of 'whole school' activities to ensure pupils know one another well and have friendship groups beyond their stage. We ensure that any pupil experiencing poverty-related bullying has a way of reporting this in confidence. We teach young people about poverty-related issues through our curriculum within such areas as Financial Education, Health and Wellbeing, and Global Citizenship work.

School Trips

Currently our trips are planned each year in relation to learning opportunities and relevant points of interest. School trips are free to pupils wherever possible when the school has the funds to support this. The maximum cost of trips for pupils is £8 for the end of term outing, other outings throughout the session cost considerably less or are free of charge. A school trip option will be set up on Parent Pay at the start of the school year to allow parents to budget for school trips. We try to reduce the cost by subsidising the transport costs, we are very fortunate to have an active parent council and wider school community who support us by sourcing funding for many school activities. As a school we are proactive in looking for grant and funding opportunities, such as Tesco and Loaningdale Trust. We also have access to the Universal Connections Bus when it is available. Our parent council accessed funding to allow us to have a discretionary fund to support families to ensure all children are able to access all school activities should they wish.

Residential experiences can be paid in instalments, we would aim to give at least 18 months notice of residential trips, payments should not be required to be greater than £20 per month.

We believe it is important that our pupils have access to Learning Community events such as Cross Country, Rugby, and swimming, all costs for these events are met by the school. We try to facilitate transition visits for P7 pupils but this is often across two Secondary schools. Where we can, we try to share transport costs with neighbouring schools or encourage parents to work together to facilitate visits.

Eating at school

The use of Parent Pay for payment of school meals has removed the previous stigma associated with children knowing who receives a free school meal. New parents are given information about applying for free school meals and this information is regularly shared with everyone along with the council application link through our weekly newsletters.

All pupils can access our free breakfast club which runs from 8.15 – 8.45 each day. Pupils who arrive on school transport will always be able to get breakfast even if the bus arrives after 8.45 as that is outwith their control. We will ensure that all pupils know that the breakfast club is free for everyone, some children from families where money is a source of stress can be reluctant to attend because they assume a cost is involved. School can also refer families to the local foodbank when necessary.

Fun Events

We recognise that events planned for enjoyment can actually put added pressure on to families. Our attendance figures do not suggest pupil absence during fun events however we will remain vigilant and monitor any poverty-related patterns that require action. We ensure all children who want to, experience all activities and encourage those experiencing financial difficulties to speak confidentially to the school so that we can support them and their children discretely.

School Clubs

We provide a range of clubs across the year delivered by school staff and visiting coaches or teachers. There is no charge for any clubs, pupils may require their P.E kit, which they would have anyway or old/outdoor clothes for art or outdoor activities. All other equipment will be provided by the school. As mentioned, we also deliver a range of lunchtime clubs which are run by our senior pupils for pupils who may not be able to stay on after school for clubs although we are not aware of anyone who has not attended clubs for this reason.

Period Poverty

- Sanitary products will be readily available for all girls in need of these. These products will be stored in the staff toilet in the school and all girls in P6/7 will be made aware of how they can access these without having to ask anyone for the products.

We are very clear that the Cost of the School Day is an area that requires constant vigilance and will not be 'fixed' by any one action. We are committed to ensuring the following points are actioned on at least an annual basis.

- Planning events for the year to provide advance notice for parents.
- Clearly communicating that non-branded uniform is welcomed at Carmichael Primary.
- Promoting our pre-loved uniform, footwear, Halloween Costumes and Christmas jumpers.
- Gathering the views of parents on the cost of the school day at least every two years.
- Continue to monitor engagement with after-school activities and provide lunchtime activities for all.
- Gather the views of parents with regards to what/when we ask for money to gain an understanding of the views of the parent forum which, in turn will inform our future practice.
- Ensure the Cost of the School Day is discussed within parent council sessions.
- Ensure Cost of the School Day measures are discussed with pupils, reducing potential stress about costs of activities.
- Offering regular lunch time clubs to all pupils to alleviate issues with transport at the end of an after school club.
- Raise awareness of local charity organisations e.g. Clydesdale Foodbank, Baby Bank who may be able to help.
- This Policy on the Cost of the School Day will be updated in 2026.