

Cost of the School Day Policy

COULTER PRIMARY



A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE STRIVES TO BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE

The core values for our school community are:-

Responsibility, Courage, Equality, Respect and Honesty

'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.

We've all experienced the same Covid-19 storm but we aren't all in the same boat. Some families have less protection than others.

Job losses and drops in income have affected thousands of families who were already struggling. It is forecast that families with children will be worst affected in the long term.

It is expected that the impact of the pandemic on employment and the economy will increase the number of children living in poverty - previously financially secure families in your school may now be experiencing difficulties.

How Covid-19 is affecting families



What are the implications of this for children and families in your school?



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

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.

What the reading of the research continues to reinforce 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. Every communication to parents/ carers with regards to a trip/ excursion/ event/ payment of any kind will contain a standard paragraph inviting parents to contact Mrs Kennedy if cost is an issue preventing full participation.

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.

Womankind Clydesdale offer practical and financial support as required to families, especially in relation to school clothing and footwear (womankindcl@gmail.com).

This communication is designed to promote the supports we offer and encourage any Coulter pupils and/ or parents/carers who may be finding certain aspects of supporting their child's school life a struggle to let us know about the issues at hand. With confidentiality guaranteed, we would look at every stage or every circumstance, 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 available, whether this is in school/ class or beyond.

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.
 - Rewards and merits unaffected by issues relating to finances at home.
 - Anti-bullying alert to income-based bullying or stigma.
 - 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.

In consultation with our Parent Council- we will continue to use these key recommendations to look at ways in which we can further enhance our support to families who may be finding the various costs of a child's school experience a challenge- the Child Poverty Action Group's support materials provided us with a basis for that discussion. If interested the link <http://www.cpag.org.uk/costschool-day> will take you to the document itself. In general, school costs can be broken down into several key categories:

Uniform

Our current uniform is a burgundy sweatshirt/jumper/cardigan, white polo shirt, black or grey trousers/skirt. We recycle school uniform so please contact the school office to check what is available before you buy 😊

Families can purchase uniforms from <https://scotcrestschools.co.uk/Find-Your-School/South-Lanarkshire/coulter%20Primary%20School> also available from Scotcrest, Quarry Street, Hamilton or ALJ Industrial Supplies 18 Bloomgate Lanark ML11 9ET Telephone 01555 665715 Opening Times Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm Sat: 9am-4.30pm
<https://www.aljonline.co.uk/shop-by-school/coulter-primary-school>

We do not insist on badged sweatshirts/polo shirts.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. At the moment, the South Lanarkshire Grant is £130. Information about entitlement to clothing grants 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 or speak to Mrs Kennedy.

There may be situations where the expense of clothing exceeds the £130, especially with regard to footwear. If this is the case, we would encourage you to contact the school or to contact Womankind Clydesdale (womankindcl@gmail.com).

Travel

Transport costs are significant for low-income families and can affect attendance and participation at school. We are well aware that, in rural areas, own transport is a necessity rather than a luxury, and families can struggle to meet the fuel and running costs of journeys to school. Although our council has maintained the provision of free transport to and from school, we are aware that any other activities outwith the school day are heavily reliant on parent transport and that 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, we would encourage parents/carers to speak to Mrs Kennedy to identify ways in which the school could support pupil engagement. This could apply, for example, to an after-school club or to an event which means the pupil may be returning late to school and requires to be collected.

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 Coulter Primary 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 girls' toilets to reduce embarrassment/ stigma. Sanitary products are also made available over school holidays.

Learning

Children at Coulter PS do not need to pay for any core learning. Pens and pencils are provided, and young people do not need to bring their own equipment. Pupils can borrow equipment if they need it for homework.

School Trips

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. Families can be embarrassed about asking for financial help. 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. For 'local trips' pupils can be asked for a donation but we try to meet the costs through grant funding and support of our Parent Council. Equity pupils' trip costs will be met fully by the school. Again, if there is an out of school activity being run and a pupil is reluctant to participate because of family financial constraints, we would encourage you to contact the school in confidence to seek support and identify ways to subsidise/support attendance and participation in the identified activity.

For longer school trips, we try to ensure that the maximum advance notice is given to allow pupils and parents to work out a staged payment plan that provides the opportunity for participation. Again, we would encourage all pupils who may be interested in participating in any activity to start off with the view that participation is possible, to express an interest and then have conversations with the school about how to achieve this.

Currently, our trips are planned each year by pupil vote. We try to meet all costs by applying for external funding or asking for donations from the Parent Council.

Eating at school

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, or speak to Mrs Kennedy.

If you have any problems in accessing IT or require further assistance in completing the online application we would be more than happy to support you to do so. All pupils now have free access to water at all times during the school day and we would encourage them to use this facility- both on cost and health/ nutrition grounds. Again, if there are any issues relating to access to food during the school day we would encourage pupils/ parents to contact the school.

Fun Events

Special days, events and activities are a fun part of school life and often raise valuable funds to subsidise trips and provide additional resources. 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. In some of our communities, particularly rural ones, families travel long distances to work and making extra trips to school has a large impact on their finances. All our fundraising activities take place during the school day. We have one dedicated charity fundraising event and three non-uniform days at the end of each term to raise funds to support pupil-related school activities. The main charity fundraiser invites all pupils to contribute what they can, and the non-uniform days ask for a donation.

School Clubs

We offer a range of 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. Again, as noted previously, many of our extra-curricular activities take place at lunchtimes.

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 are already aware of local community issues in relation to intermittent or poor broadband connection(s) that inhibit some pupils' access to online materials and working. From session 2021/22 core curriculum costs across a range of subjects will be met centrally for all pupils. We are also aware in the years ahead of the increased use of smart phone and other digital technologies to support learning- in relation to school work, homework and home study- and that this does potentially create situations of disadvantage for some of our pupils. Any pupil who for whatever reason

cannot access technology / Google Classrooms will be provided with paper copies of any classwork/ homework materials and Please let Mrs Kennedy know immediately if this becomes an issue at some point during the school session so that teaching staff can prepare accordingly.

All pupils who receive free meal entitlement have been offered/ provided with a chrome book to use at home to support their learning and we have also provided chromebooks for full use to other pupils who we know need this technology to support their home and school learning. The school is always actively looking at ways to support pupils who for whatever reason do not have access to IT.

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 constantly ask the questions below:

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Poverty in your school community

Reflective questions

- ✓ Throughout the school day, are there costs which could place pressure on families, create stigma or limit participation?
- ✓ What impact is Covid-19 having on your children and families?
- ✓ How do you tell if families' financial circumstances have changed?
- ✓ Can parents talk to someone in the school about costs and money worries?
- ✓ What do you do best to support children and young people on low incomes?
- ✓ Are all eligible families receiving free school meals, clothing grants and other entitlements?

What further action would you like to take?