

Cost of the School Day Position Statement

Underbank Primary School, South Lanarkshire Council

At Underbank Primary School we recognise the need to reduce the Cost of the School Day for all of our pupils and particularly for our pupils who are already experiencing poverty. We have already gathered the views of our staff and families on the Cost of the School Day to involve them in decision making around this.

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 grey trousers and skirts, blue sweatshirts and white polo shirts or white shirts and our school tie. 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. Our Parent Council have a uniform bank of 'previously owned' items which can be accessed at any time. The uniform bank is also discretely displayed at events such as parent consultations. This allows families to pick up some items free of charge or for a small donation if they wish.

Our aim is to extend our bank to include clothing suitable for Forest School eg waterproof trousers and wellingtons.

Travel

Some of our children travel to school by school bus but the majority of our children travel by car. School transport is provided by the Local Authority. We are aware that this could mean some children are not able to attend after school clubs. We therefore ensure that we have lunch time activities as well as after school clubs to alleviate the pressure of children being collected from clubs at 4pm.

Learning

Children at Underbank Primary School do not need to pay for any core learning activity. 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. We currently have a procedure for learners to borrow equipment if they need it for homework (e.g. a calculator or craft equipment). We also allow access to our computers for children who may have difficulty accessing the internet at home. Our aim is to ensure that all learners can complete activities no matter their family circumstances.

Friendships

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. Some of our outings do have a cost involved while others do not. We try to reduce the cost of outings through the valuable support of our PFA and by using school funds. We also aim to give families as much notice as possible if there is a cost involved. Such outings as our Outdoor Centre experience can be paid in instalments over a longer period of time. We often support families who have more than one child attending any outing or whom we know may be experiencing difficulties.

Eating at school

Last school year we had only 2% of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals. 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 this removes any stigma previously associated with children not paying for their lunch with cash. We remind P1-3 parents regularly about their entitlement to Free School Meals. We estimate that approximately 75% of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals take up their entitlement. Free School Meal entitlement is now allocated automatically if a family has qualifying benefits. This information can be accessed within our Handbook.

Fun Events

Underbank Primary recognise that events planned for enjoyment can actually put added pressure on to families. We look carefully at attendance and participation in these events in order to see if there are any poverty-related patterns that require action. When young people cannot afford to take part in any activity we ensure they can still experience it by ensuring families know that those experiencing financial difficulties can speak confidentially to the school and there will be an arrangement put in place to support them and their children discretely. When undertaking school or PFA fund raising events we recognise that not all families are able to contribute and also deal with this in a discrete manner. Our PFA actively help us to support families who may be experiencing financial difficulties through their contributions. To participate in some of our events we simply ask for a donation and not a fixed amount.

School Clubs

At Underbank Primary we have many clubs including; morning energiser, dance, tennis, netball, football, multi-sports, running, chess etc. We do charge a small fee for pupils to take part but are mindful that not all children can contribute to this and so they are not excluded in any way. Some clubs may require specific equipment e.g. badminton racquet, football boots, and so we do what we can to ensure the necessary equipment is available for all children in the school.

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. In our Improvement Plan for 2019/20 we will be focusing on;

- Providing advance notice for parents of activities and events that have a cost involved.
- Clearly communicating that non-branded school uniform is totally acceptable at Underbank.
- Encouraging learners to keep expensive equipment such as pencil cases and pens/pencils in their bags or at home as school has all the equipment they should need.
- Extending our Clothing Bank to include pre-used footwear that is still of a good quality.
- Monitor club participation and offer regular lunch time clubs to pupils who may have issues with transport at the end of the school day.
- Continuing to ensure that we as a school and our PFA are alert to our concerns around The Cost of the School Day when planning events and activities.

This bespoke statement for Underbank Primary School, was created after all primary establishments within the Lanark Learning Community reflected on CoSD guidance.

(This statement will be replaced by June 2020 with a School Policy on Cost of the School Day.)