

Underbank Primary School

Rationale

We recognise that poverty is by its nature often dynamic, and people move in and out of poverty. States of poverty can be short term, recurrent or persistent depending on individual and family circumstances.

Findings of the 'Growing Up in Scotland' 2020 survey have revealed that over the last 7 years only 55% of children in Scotland have experienced at least one year of growing up in poverty.

The Child Poverty Action Group recently commissioned and produced support materials to assist schools and school Parent Councils with ideas to alleviate some of these concerns. While it is clear that issues surrounding the ways to tackle poverty are societal, not just related to school, 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 dilemmas of providing support for their child's school experience.

As a school we aim to raise awareness of the supports we offer to parents and pupils, while at the same time observing the necessary confidentiality and sensitivity required when any parent or pupil requests assistance. Through our supports and caring ethos, we hope that all of our children are able to fully participate in school life and that no child or family feels 'less than' any other.

Aims

At Underbank Primary we aim to meet the key recommendations that the Child Poverty Action Group research have noted as being important markers in supporting children from a low-income background that include:

- School staff and pupils hold no assumptions about financial situations.
- Ensuring each session is an 'affordable school year'- including spacing events out to try to avoid hotspots which may lead to increased financial pressures.
- Include activities annually, which do not ask families to contribute to participate.
- Lending resources when required.
- Modifying tasks; offering/ providing support to access IT.
- Having consistent expectations and practice between staff members on uniform, resources etc.
- Rewards and merits are unaffected by issues relating to finances at home.
- Anti-bullying alert to income-based bullying or stigma.

Underbank Primary Cost of the School Day Policy

- Greater poverty awareness among children. We do this within such areas as Financial Education, Health and Wellbeing and Global Citizenship work.
- Making sure all families have an awareness of financial entitlements – e.g. clothing grants, free meals, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
- Staff discretion and empathy.
- Ensuring costs for trips are affordable for all children – or even free through school supports.
- Covering costs/ subsidising and supporting discounts where possible.
- Systems in place where pupils/ parents/ carers do not feel embarrassed asking for help/ subsidy.

At Underbank Primary School we also:

- Minimise the costs of activities and opportunities for our families.
- Seek outside funding to assist with the Cost of School Day.
- Promote an Eco culture within school to encourage families to reuse, reduce and recycle.
- Promote an 'open door' policy where families should feel comfortable discussing concerns or possible supports without stigma.
- Maintain continual dialogue between our Parent Council and Parents' and Friends' Association which ensures that there is a joint understanding of the CoSD and how this impacts on their work and our families.

Awareness and Empathy

Our CoSD lead ensures that all staff are aware of the issues around CoSD and the need to be compassionate regarding all families including those we know are impacted by poverty.

We do this:

- Through our annual Transition activities.
- By undertaking an annual awareness raising session and ensuring regular updates and changes in circumstances are shared with all staff.
- Through our school, Pupil Council, Parent Council and Parents and Friends Association, these groups carefully consider their proposed activities while reflecting on CoSD e.g. Timing of activities, frequency of activities, any materials needed, any costs, any contributions etc.
- By managing any costs for all families, especially those with more than one child in school e.g. one ticket is £3 but two or more are £5.

- Planned activities are reviewed termly, to give consideration to the CoSD, and any monetary contributions are timeously shared. Contributions can be paid in small instalments in order to be more manageable for our families.
- All staff will challenge any member of our school community if they hear insensitive remarks.

Communications and Support for Families

At Underbank we share information around potential supports and advice with all of our families, as we are mindful that we may not be aware of all who may be struggling financially or with materials, resources, uniform etc at any particular time.

Our CoSD lead also approaches individual families to signpost possible supports and resources.

We also promote an Eco culture within school, to encourage families to reuse, reduce and recycle and so families do 'pass on' uniform, Forest School clothing, footwear and school items etc, to other families or by donating directly to our school.

Information on supports is shared through our school communications – Fortnightly Updates, individual emails, Twitter, ParentPortal, class communications. Some supports are also accessible in school daily and/or at school activities and events.

To access our school uniform bank we have a confidential email address that parents can communicate their needs through.

upsuniformbank@gmail.com

Fundraising

At Underbank Primary we have two fundraising committees who have distinct roles:

- Parents and Friends Association – fundraising via internal methods.
- Parent Council – actively seek to raise funds via external sources e.g. grants, local businesses and contacts. Two parents from this committee lead and report on this. Information on possible funding streams is shared within our Learning Community.

We also have a 'Keep Underbank Active Fund' (KUA) which parents can contribute to at any time via ParentPay. There is no necessity or expectation to contribute but families often make small contributions if their child attends a block of extra-curricular activities or events that require us to pay for transportation to an activity or sports event.

Within our community, voluntary contributions can be made at our Christmas, Spring and Summer Celebrations at the local church. Only one of these collections is for school funds, while the others are for nominated charities.

We limit fundraising with pupil work to no more than twice annually. We are mindful to limit the costs attributed to these as these can place an emotional and financial burden on families.

Where possible, we avoid 'pay at the door' activities. We also always monitor any ticket sales for events and activities to ensure that all families can access these should they wish. We would always approach families that we feel may be impacted by cost to ensure they know they are welcome with no costs involved.

We do aim to learn about, and support nominated charities at Underbank. Our Enterprise & Charity Committee lead in the selection of charities we support with goods or financially each year, such as the local Foodbank. **We never focus on individual's contributions, or reward individuals for their contributions, but celebrate our collective achievement.**

The Cost of the School Day

Uniform

The uniform worn by Underbank Primary pupils is:
Jumper, cardigan or sweatshirt – blue
Trousers, skirts, pinafore – grey
Blouse, shirt or polo shirt – white or blue
Shoes – black

We welcome unbranded items and branded items. This is communicated in our Handbook but also annually to all existing parents and new parents.

Our school uniform can be purchased with the annual clothing grant (£130 per year for primary pupils).

To access our school uniform bank we have a confidential email address that parents can communicate their needs through.

upsuniformbank@gmail.com

A spreadsheet with all available items is shared monthly with all families. We also make items available at some school events so that items can simply be lifted.

We make it clear that it is not necessary for pupils to have a blazer as we often find pupils get little wear from this in our Scottish climate. Any type of jacket is welcomed whether it is school branded or not.

We welcome SLC and National campaigns around clothing e.g. SLC Winter Jacket Campaign and SLC Library Welly Boot Campaign

Travelling to School

We know that a number of our children travel via school transport, therefore we offer some lunchtime clubs that they can access without impacting on their travel home.

Breakfast Clubs and Break Times

At Underbank Primary we offer a free breakfast service; the service runs from 8.15am to 8.45am each school day.

We check that children who arrive late have had breakfast and can offer toast.

At playtime, children can access a snack at no cost.

We also have a supply of re-usable water bottles in school. Any child who doesn't have their own or has forgotten their bottle can have one of these for refilling. Bottles are labelled with the child's name.

Learning at School

Our classrooms have all the learning tools that a child will need – pencils, crayons, erasers, rulers, protractors. These are accessible to all of our children.

Wellbeing, Friendships and Attitudes to Poverty

We ensure that any pupil experiencing poverty-related bullying knows that they should report this to an adult in school or to their parent. Incidents will always be carefully handled.

We teach young people about poverty related issues through our curriculum within such areas as Financial Education, Health and Wellbeing and Global Citizenship work and also through our charity work e.g. Local Foodbank.

Challenge Poverty Week will be highlighted in some way annually e.g. school assembly, school activity.

All schools, including Underbank Primary, have made sanitary products easily accessible to all, without stigma. Bulk supplies can also be accessed prior to holiday periods.

School Trips

We aim to reduce costs of local trips through the use of the KUA Fund, our School Fund and/or PFA funds. All planned trips are considered to be important for the education of a particular class or group and therefore we will not exclude pupils whose family may be unable to pay. Staff negotiate costs with the provider to arrive at the best price and may also seek external funding to assist with costs.

Planned activities are reviewed termly, to give consideration to the CoSD. Contributions can be paid in small instalments in order to be more manageable for our families and larger costs would always be timeously communicated to parents.

A residential outing may not always be possible, and an alternative experience will always be considered. This may not include overnights as this can reduce the cost considerably.

We would always consider contacting parents of pupils who say they won't be going to ask if we can support in any way. This may be a monetary support or support with equipment. We can also support families who have more than one child attending any outing or whom we know may be experiencing difficulties.

School Lunches

Currently all P1-5 pupils are entitled to free school lunch. We promote school lunches through our usual communications, at parent consultations, SLC communications, at P1 transition events and a 'Come and try a school lunch session' for new P1 pupils and their parents.

All children order lunch in the same way via ParentPay and are issued with the corresponding band before lunch break. Milk bands are also issued to all pupils having milk with their lunch. Milk is free for those entitled to a free school meal or can be ordered by a parent via ParentPay. Pupils all sit together in our hall and packed lunch children do not have a separate space. Staff encourage both school lunch and packed lunch pupils to eat well to refuel.

Our cook identifies any leftovers and staff do offer this to all children, if available. Pupils who wish to supplement their packed lunch with fruit or salad, are free to do so.

Fun Events

We are mindful of any costs involved for fun activities and try to keep these to a minimum cost or free. During such events as P7 Fun Playtime, we incorporate some free activities so that a selection of activities have no cost.

We periodically have Dress Down Days in a school session, many have no cost attached and some are 'Give a donation if you wish'.

At Christmas time, we have Christmas jumpers/ party clothes available for all to access.

At Halloween time, we have Halloween costumes available for all to access.

World Book Day activities keep the focus on books and reading, without requiring children to have a costume.

On 'Be Bright Be Seen Day' we keep the focus on the road safety message and there is no cost involved.

School Clubs

We offer lunchtime, after school clubs and some pupil led playtime clubs, and are mindful that some of our children travel home at the end of the day on school transport. All equipment is provided for our clubs.

We have a 'Keep Underbank Active Fund' (KUA) which parents can contribute to at any time via ParentPay. There is no necessity to contribute but families can make a small contribution if they wish e.g. if their child attends a block of extra-curricular activities or events that require us to pay for transportation to an activity or sports event. The funds are used to fund buses for outings and sporting events.

Learning at Home

We do issue homework activities but communicate that should a parent or child need any school resources or materials to complete tasks or projects then these are available from school. This includes the use of a Chromebook if required. Pupils can also have access to the Internet and to printing in school time, in order to tackle a home learning activity during the school day. It is never a necessity for projects to be word processed, these can be submitted in any format including being handwritten. Practice is consistent across our school.

Some of our classes use Google Classroom but there is always the option for a family or child to have paper copies instead. Support accessing Google Classroom is also available on request.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe we have positive partnership working with our pupils and parents/ carers but do recognise that reaching out isn't always easy. We would like to reassure all that we would always observe the necessary confidentiality required when a request for assistance or support is made. We would always encourage parents/ carers to speak to or communicate with the Head Teacher, our CoSD Lead or a staff member that they feel comfortable with, to identify any ways that we can support or actively seek a solution for a child or family.