

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 March 2024
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Cost of the School Day Guidance for Schools and Early Years Establishments
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on the work of Education Resources to support Cost of the School Day (CoSD) across South Lanarkshire schools and Early Years establishments

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the work undertaken by Education Resources on the Cost of the School Day be noted; and
- (2) that the proposals contained in South Lanarkshire Council's (SLC) Cost of the School Day Guidance for schools and Early Years establishments, as detailed in section 5.2 and Appendix 1 of the report, are approved.

3. Background

3.1. Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that Primary education should be free and compulsory. Education in Scotland is free at entry, but evidence shows that there can be off costs as many aspects of the school day cost families money.

3.2. The most recent figure (June 2023) indicates that 'just over 14,000, 23%, of children in South Lanarkshire live in relative poverty once housing costs have been taken into account'. Campaign to End Child Poverty/End Child Poverty Coalition (ECPC).

3.3. In South Lanarkshire Council Schools

- ♦ 19.7% of learners live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)1 or SIMD2 areas (2023/2024)
- ♦ 21.5% are entitled to Free School Meals (based on P6-7 pupils for 2023/2024)

This compares Nationally to

- ♦ 22.7% of learners live in SIMD1 or SIMD2 areas (2022)
- ♦ 21.4% are entitled to Free School Meals (based on P6-7 pupils only-Healthy Living Survey 2022)

3.4. South Lanarkshire Council has been working for several years now to reduce the amount families are charged regardless of their economic status. Our schools and

centres actively support families living in poverty to ensure they are protected from any school charges and signposted to other agencies and organisations who may be able to help them.

4. Cost of the School Day in South Lanarkshire Council

- 4.1. Prior to the pandemic, every South Lanarkshire Council school was required to produce a Position Statement on the Cost of the School Day in their establishment using guidance produced by Education Resources. As part of the guidance issued to schools, they were asked to reflect on all costs incurred by families as well as the frequency of these charges. This included the cost of school uniforms and all other aspect of education which came with a cost e.g. school trips, fun events, school lunches.
- 4.2. Training on Cost of the School Day has been available to schools since 2019, but it was recognised that many of our schools struggled to appreciate the need to reduce costs as they had no lived experience of poverty. A Poverty Awareness course was then developed and delivered by a central officer with a remit specific to Cost of the School Day.
- 4.3. Evaluations for these events were consistently high, however, it became clear that robust guidance was required to ensure all establishments were able to offer the same provision to children, young people and their families, regardless of the demographic of the school.
- 4.4. Education Resources have been reviewing the historic nature of overseas and residential excursions with the new guidance being provided to schools and services on looking at the implications of the costs of these excursions in light of CoSD and affordability.
- 4.5. In January 2020, Head Teachers from across South Lanarkshire Council came together for our first Cost of the School Day Conference. Delegates heard from Sara Spencer of the Child Poverty Action Group and from David Harkness of Money Matters. The conference ended with schools making pledges on how they would reduce costs for their families. These pledges were revisited later as part of a Learning Community meeting.
- 4.6. Biggar High School, St John Ogilvie High School and Rigsides Primary featured in the Child Poverty Action Group Scotland's (CPAG) [Talking About Costs and Money at School](#) national resource. These schools were identified as having good practice in relation to Cost of the School Day and their communication around this with pupils and families. St John Ogilvie High School and Rigsides Primary School also presented their work at a CPAG national event in 2021. St John Ogilvie's Cost of the School Day lessons generated particular interest and are being shared nationally.
- 4.7. Work also continues with Money Matters and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund through the supports offered by the Family Support Hubs. Schools are encouraged to access these services and direct families for advice. This work is a key feature of the SLC Child Poverty Plan and the Child Services Plan.
- 4.8. In addition to the guidance issued to schools, Education Resources completed an initial audit in 2019 on charges associated with extra-curricular trips. Findings from the audit highlighted that trips could cost as much as £1,800 per pupil, with one trip costing £3000. Advice on charges associated with extra-curricular activity is now included in the guidance to ensure equity for all children, young people and their families.

- 4.9. Further information will be provided to schools following publication of the guidance on operating procedures to support the planning and organisation of educational excursions, taking account of the principles of equity and Cost of the School Day.

5. Cost of the School Day – 2023/2024

- 5.1. A Cost of the School Day Working Party was established in 2022 with the remit to produce Cost of the School Day Guidance to support schools in moving from an initial Cost of the School Day position statement to policy. The Working Party consisted of school leaders from each of the four SLC localities and included both Primary and Secondary practitioners. The draft guidance can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- 5.2. The completed Guidance contains ten SLC Proposals to reduce the cost of the school day in all of our schools and Early Years Establishments alongside advice on communicating with families. The proposals are:-

- ◆ WE PROPOSE: All South Lanarkshire schools will promote the use of affordable, inclusive and flexible uniforms for children and young people,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: South Lanarkshire Schools will encourage and support young people to apply for their Under 22 free bus pass,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: No child or young person will need to pay for any aspect of their core curriculum/education,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: All South Lanarkshire schools will take part in the annual Challenge Poverty Week to raise awareness among our children and young people,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: Cost will never prevent any South Lanarkshire pupil attending an Educational Excursion held during the school day,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: All children and young people within South Lanarkshire schools will be encouraged to maintain healthy eating habits in line with the Schools Act (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2020,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: All South Lanarkshire schools/Early Years Establishments will complete a Cost of the School Day calendar at the start of each year to ensure fun events are spread evenly through the year and include cost-free events,
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: every child or young person will be able to take part in at least one free extracurricular club each school year.
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: no learning at home activity will have financial implications for families
- ◆ WE PROPOSE: All South Lanarkshire Schools and Early Years Establishments will have a Cost of the School Day Policy which will be:-
 - ◆ Regularly reviewed
 - ◆ Recognised within the Equity section of Establishment Improvement Plans
 - ◆ Written in consultation with all stakeholders
 - ◆ Shared annually with staff during the first in-service day and available to families through usual communication methods

- 5.3. The guidance also includes:-

- ◆ Departmental Guidance for secondary schools
- ◆ suggestions for grants/funding available to support Cost of the School Day activity in establishments
- ◆ advice on low/zero cost curricular trips
- ◆ a step-by-step guide to help increase the uptake of Free School Meals

- ◆ a Cost of the School Day Audit Tool for schools to work on with their staff, pupils and partners
- ◆ an exemplar of a CoSD Policy along with an example of a parent-friendly Policy
- ◆ examples of good practice from four SLC schools

5.4. Additional resources to support establishments can be found on the Cost of the School Day sections on the SLC Staff Learning Centre and the Equity Hub. Resources include, exemplars, materials from the CoSD Conference, resources to help consult with pupils, staff and parents/carers, self-evaluation and professional learning materials and examples of good practice from SLC Schools.

5.5. The section on 'eating' in schools, which can be found on page 8 of the guidance, was presented to staff from the Facilities Service to ensure the messages within the Guidance are consistent in every school.

6. Cost of the School Day and the Scottish Attainment Challenge

6.1. Cost of the School Day has been included in our Scottish Attainment Challenge Strategic Equity Fund plan for the last two years as one of our core plus measures. Our measure is that by June 2024, all South Lanarkshire schools will move from a Position Statement on Cost of the School Day to an establishment Policy. We are currently on track to achieve this measure.

6.2. Each establishment's completed policy will then be available on their websites. Establishments should also continue to support families to access all financial supports and entitlements. This includes working to increase the uptake of Free School Meals and Clothing Grants by all who are entitled and signposting families to other agencies when required.

7. Planned Outcomes for Cost of the School Day

7.1. Establishments will:-

- ◆ deliver CoSD messages at the start of each school year
- ◆ appoint a CoSD Lead in each establishment
- ◆ maintain a CoSD Calendar which will be shared with all partners
- ◆ keep an annual record of any money asked for from families and work to reduce this figure year on year
- ◆ follow the best practice examples under each SLC Proposal wherever possible
- ◆ by removing as many cost barriers to engagement and participation as we can, hope to succeed in our mission to not only close the poverty-related attainment gap but provide the best possible experience for all children and young people in South Lanarkshire.

8. Next Steps

8.1. The new Cost of the School Day Guidance and supporting materials will be presented to Head Teachers at a CoSD Conference in March 2024. Awareness of the 'hidden' costs that can occur will be shared, so that there is a better understanding of the need to consider these factors during the planning and assessment process.

9. Employee Implications

9.1. None

10. Financial Implications

10.1. There are no financial implications in terms of the information contained within this report.

11. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

11.1. There are no significant implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment arising from the recommendations in this report.

12. Other Implications

12.1. There are no risk implications in terms of the information contained within this report.

13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

13.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

13.2. Consultation, dialogue and engagement has taken place with schools, headteachers, teachers, other services, Education Scotland and the Corporate Management Team. Support has been provided through professional learning at school and learning community level.

Carole McKenzie

Executive Director (Education Resources)

12 February 2024

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Education and learning: inspiring learners, transforming learning, strengthening partnerships

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- Cost of the school day guidance

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Jacqueline Wallace, Head of Education (Early Years and Primary)

Ext: 4468 (Tel: 01698 454468)

E-mail: jacqueline.wallace@southlanarkshire.gov.uk