

Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty



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In partnership with



County Durham Children and Families Partnership




Acknowledgements

Staff and pupils of St Andrew's Primary and North Park Primary, Bishop Barrington School, St John's School and Sixth Form College and Belmont Community School.

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cpd@durham.gov.uk
 03000 265 850



4327C/PS



Introduction

Poverty can have a massive impact on people's lives! It can affect a child's social, educational, health and personal development. Living in a poor household can reduce children's expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. The Children and Families Partnership welcomes work to address the cause and impact of poverty on families across the county.

We understand the importance of addressing poverty and offering help as early as possible, and acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by the Child Poverty Working Group in identifying ways to cut the cost of the school day, helping to give young people the best start in life and enabling them to reach their full potential.

"To tolerate children and their families living in poverty is morally wrong. No civilised society should permit it. To invest in children is to invest in the future. I'm sure we would all commit to that. Let's do it"

Cllr Olwyn Gunn

Cabinet member for Children and Young People's Services

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Top tips to minimise costs

These top tips have been developed by staff and pupils who took part in the 'Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty' workshops. The areas for consideration were most commonly identified as placing financial pressure upon families. The top tips aim to provide schools with a list of suggestions to attempt to minimise the cost of the school day on all families. Some ideas may already be in place but these recommendations allow schools to further develop good practice.

School uniform and PE kits

- Allow uniform to be purchased from a range of suppliers as opposed to one single supplier with a set cost.
- Explore 'bulk buy/sibling deals' with suppliers to minimise costs.
- Explore the option of having sew on school logo badges to allow parents to buy generic uniform.
- Regularly hold upcycle school uniform/swap shop events and encourage pupils to take part in organising these events (avoid negative language such as second hand uniform sale).
- Have upcycled uniform readily available in reception everyday as well as during parents evenings, opening evenings etc.
- Link in with local charity shops to encourage them to have a school uniform section.
- Open these events to everyone: avoid targeting only Free School Meal/Pupil Premium (FSM/PP) pupils and families as personal circumstances may not have been disclosed.
- Allow for generic PE kit to be worn.
- Revise behaviour policies linked to incorrect uniform.
- Sign-post families to school clothing grants and vouchers (School Benevolent Fund) www.durham.gov.uk/schoolbenevolentfund



Training requests

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Food in school

Is the cost of your breakfast club a barrier for some pupils attending?

- Consider having volunteers run the club to reduce staffing costs.
- Contact local supermarkets/businesses for donations.
- Offer daily/weekly sibling deals for families to attend breakfast club.
- Consider providing all pupils with a basic packed lunch for trips not just those on FSM.
- In addition to the KS1 free fruit for schools scheme, explore the option of having fruit in the classroom each morning, available to everyone.
- Save uneaten fruit, yoghurts, cereal bars from packed lunches and have these available for pupils to take home if they would like them.



After school clubs and trips

- Ensure that dates and costs of trips are given out at the start of the academic year (or earlier) to give plenty of advance warning. Consider spacing trips out across the year more evenly.
- Set up payment schemes for parents/carers to pay towards school trips in instalments (link in with Durham Savers www.durham.gov.uk/durhamsavers) - ask parents to return financial contributions not pupils.
- Pupils to take part in fundraising events for school trips to minimise the amount of financial contribution needed.
- Consider each year group trips against one another to account for families with more than one pupil in school to avoid extra financial pressure.
- Revise any first-come first-served policies (with payments) as this may be excluding pupils from low income families from taking part.
- Review the range of clubs on offer to minimise the amount of charged activities.
- Have a weekly token scheme to enable free access once per week to any charged school clubs.
- Consider the equipment required for after school clubs (football boots, rugby kit, dance uniform) and whether these could be borrowed/rented from school to ensure all can take part.
- Avoid sending letters home with pupils that request financial contributions. Send these direct to parents/carers.

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Resources and equipment

- Have basic stationery readily available for all pupils to avoid them having to ask for this.
- Revise any behaviour policies for incorrect equipment.
- Consider the cost of revision guides for all pupils and not only FSM/PP as family circumstances may be unknown. Explore the option of a 'return your revision guide' scheme.
- Revise financial contributions required for subjects such as Food Technology, Art and Design Technology etc. High cost equipment may be a barrier to all pupils participating or taking up these subjects at GCSE.
 - Explore the option of providing all pupils with a 'start up' pack for these subjects.
 - Explore the option of paying towards materials for these subjects in instalments throughout the year.
- Be mindful when setting homework which may require ICT/internet access. Don't assume that all pupils have access to the internet because they have a mobile phone. Have paper handouts of all homework readily available to avoid punishments for not completing.
- Provide a homework club which has relevant materials - including ICT/internet access - consider the time of these clubs (normally during break/lunch time) and the potential stigma associated with attending.



Charity and special events

Revise your contribution policy for charity/fundraising days. This could include:

- Allow for family contributions for pupils with siblings instead of each pupil having to bring in a set amount.
- Pupils could donate their time to a charitable cause instead of money - look to involve the wider community when fundraising.
- Limit the amount of non uniform/fancy dress days. Consider alternate ways of celebrating such as creating masks or costumes in school.
- Attempt to celebrate/acknowledge every pupil's birthday as some may not get this at home.
- Revise charges for concerts, performances, discos and events.

Whole school considerations

- Consider every activity in school from the perspective of a low income family and the potential pressure this may place upon them.
- Avoid making assumptions that families with pupils who aren't eligible for FSM/PP do not experience financial difficulty - personal circumstances may be unknown and they may be unwilling to discuss these difficulties.
- Revise information on your website and newsletters to include support for financial difficulties. Provide ALL with an open door policy if they are experiencing difficulties with the costs of uniform, trips, dinner money etc.
- Review behaviour and reward policies which may include attendance, correct uniform, correct equipment etc as this may create a barrier for some pupils.
- Consider transport on offer should pupils wish to take part in an after school club: they may rely on school transport and be unable to pay for public transport.
- Consider policies relating to pupils bringing staff presents at Christmas/end of term. Request presents aren't brought in to remove 'pressures' placed on families to do so.
- Discuss costs with your pupils and their families to understand potential barriers and rethink policies to further support them.
- Hold high expectations for appearance of pupils but take into consideration individual circumstances of all.

Don't let household income be the last inequality we tackle.

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