



## **Cost of the School Day Policy**

**Created August 2023 - Reviewed September 2024**

### **COSD Landscape**

'Scottish government poverty statistics show 250 000 children (24% of all children) were still living in poverty in Scotland in the period 2019 to 2022. Children remain at significantly higher risk of poverty than pensioners (15%) and working age adults (21%).'

*J.Dickie, Director of CPAG in Scotland, March 2023*

Families continue to be under increasing financial pressure, with rising living costs including the basic essentials of food, fuel and household goods. The Child Poverty Action Group recently commissioned and produced some support materials, entitled **The Cost of the School Day** 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, it is clear 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 often-daily dilemmas of providing support for their child's school experience.

The impact of poverty on Scotland's children is stark. Dickie (2023) highlights '*Its children that pay the highest possible price for poverty – they pay with their health, their wellbeing and their life chances*'.

As a school we are clear of the role we must play in supporting the school community, using innovative ways to minimise the cost of the school day. This is an ongoing process involving all stakeholders to ensure we continue to meet the everchanging political and social landscape.

### **Our School**

Carstairs Junction Primary School is proud of its happy, nurturing, respectful and inclusive ethos and of the trusted and valuable relationships built within our school community. We listen carefully to the voices and views of stakeholders in respect of the cost of the school day and use these views to audit and improve our practice.

As part of our audit in session 22/23, we consulted with staff, pupils and parents/carers regarding their views on the cost of the school day. The collated data was insightful and reflected the context of our school. Feedback highlighted that the school offers an appropriate balance between providing different opportunities whilst minimising cost. We acknowledge it is imperative to provide our pupils with experiences, many of which were not possible during Covid restrictions, we just need to look at *how* we are able to achieve this through our cost of the school day lens.

**At Carstairs Junction Primary School the lead for the 'Cost of the School Day' is Mrs Jill Armour (Head Teacher).**

Parent, pupil and staff responses highlighted that uniform is the costliest expenditure for families, including the cost of shoes and bags. We continue to work with families to support in ways to minimise the cost of school uniform and make best use of grants to support families. South Lanarkshire Council have provided Winter Clothing Grants in recent years, and we provide support to families where needed using this funding. We have also applied for external clothing grants this session to support families, which has been highly appreciated.

97% (39/40) of parents felt that the cost for fun events was very minimal and appropriate. It was also acknowledged that external funding is explored to help reduce the cost to trips & residential. Feedback also provided next steps in further supporting families with supporting with aspects of the cost of the school day.

Our Youth Family Community Learning Officer (YFCL) and the school have worked together to create a termly Community newsletter this session. The purpose of the newsletter is to filter the wealth of supports available in the authority to highlight those in close proximity to the community and/or online. The newsletter also highlights the work of Carstairs Junction Welcome All Hub and the local church, including highlighting free holiday clubs, courses etc. The school also works in partnership with the YFCL in a wider sense to provide family learning opportunities which are at no cost to families. We intend on extending our partnership with YFCL to work towards providing opportunities for accreditation for our pupils linked to our Forest schools and Eco priorities.

I think the school is very focused on the cost of the school day & making it affordable to all.

*Parent*

There used to be many more days before Covid that the school requested money for, this has significantly reduced.

*Parent*

We work together to support families alongside other agencies.

*Staff*

It's good that we don't need to pay a lot of money.

*Pupil*

Elaine (YFCL) is invaluable as she works with us to source funding to help reduce the cost to families.

*Staff*

Snack is free!

*Pupil*

### **The Cost of the School Day**



#### **Getting dressed**

Our school uniform is grey trousers/skirt/pinafore with white shirt/blouse/polo shirt and maroon sweater/cardigan. We do not insist of badged polo shirts and sweaters and badged items are available in more than one outlet. There is no separate PE kit. School ties are kindly provided for by our Parent Council during the transition visits. Children who join part way through the year

are offered pre-loved items, if available in their size. 'Book bags' are provided for by the school for pupils starting Primary 1.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. There is information about entitlement to clothing grants and how to apply on the SLC website ([https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education\\_benefits/159/school\\_clothing\\_grants\\_and\\_free\\_school\\_meals](https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education_benefits/159/school_clothing_grants_and_free_school_meals)).

We have an ELC/ school grab rail for families to access pre-loved uniform items. This resource is available daily and this resource is highlighted to families through our newsletter on a regular basis. Donations to the grab rail are also very much appreciated. We have seasonal items for parents to access such as Halloween costumes and winter clothing. We also make full use of our local authority Winter Clothing Campaigns providing winter items to families. We recently accessed external funding for families requiring support with clothing and will continue to make use of this excellent means of funding as required.



### Travelling to school

Children and families are encouraged to apply for the Under 22 free bus travel - <https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/nec/>

Over 1/3 third of our primary pupils are in our supported classes and are brought to and from school by taxi. The majority of our pupils in mainstream live locally and walk. We actively encourage walking to school to minimise congestion.

We support families on an individual basis and are flexible in our approach if they have difficulty bringing their child to nursery due to bus limitations from the nearby village.

We offer lunch time and after school clubs so that everyone has the opportunity to attend.

We look at individual circumstances and seek support for families where we can with transport in order for them to attend transition programmes at secondary school etc.



### Learning at school

Children at Carstairs Junction Primary School do not need to pay for any core learning activity. Stationary is provided for all pupils, and they have can borrow or access materials for homework if needed e.g. craft activity.

We have a water bottle bank which pupils can access independently if they have forgotten, lost or do not have a water bottle.



### Friendships at school

As a nurturing school, we promote an inclusive and respectful ethos. We pride ourselves on how well pupils look after one another across the school e.g. buddy time, supporting in canteen,

playtimes. Our extra-curricular clubs also give pupils the opportunity to work together across classes and stages.

We ensure that any pupil experiencing poverty-related bullying has a way of reporting this in confidence. Pupils are encouraged to share their emotions through daily check ins, and through nurture and health and wellbeing activities. We intend focusing further on poverty related issues through our Making Rights Real Committee work. Pupils are involved in decision making through our Participatory Budgeting.



### School trips

At Carstairs Junction Primary School, trips are planned in response to learning within the classroom. Transport costs to venues are significant due to our rural location. We aim to keep the cost of class trips as minimal as possible. In session 2022/23 there was zero cost to families as our participatory budget was allocated to minimise the cost to families for excursions. The parent council funded the remaining costs.

Our children have the opportunity to attend events out with school throughout the session, which are fully funded by the school e.g. Cross Country, Small Schools Football and Transition activities. As our transition programme has developed, we recognise as a school we need to plan in close partnership with nearby schools to help reduce the transport costs by planning visits together where appropriate.



### Eating at school

All pupils from Primary 1 through to and including Primary 5 are entitled to a free school meal. We are aware there may be a stigma associated with a free lunch and we try to reduce this by staff knowing who is entitled to a Free School Meal so that this doesn't need to be discussed with the child.

Information on how to apply for Free School Meals is available on the SLC website ([https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education\\_benefits/159/school\\_clothing\\_grants\\_and\\_free\\_school\\_meals](https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200259/education_benefits/159/school_clothing_grants_and_free_school_meals)).

We provide a free breakfast club which is offered to all Primary 1 – Primary 7 pupils each day. We ensure sufficient time is provided for children who arrive by taxi nearer 9am to have a breakfast if required.

The school also directs families to the local foodbank at Carstairs Junction Welcome All Hub.



### Fun events

Fun events are planned at Carstairs Junction Primary School throughout the session in consultation with pupil committees and Parent Council. These events, along with charity events are planned in advance as highlighted in our CoSD Planner. Over the course of the session, we provide discos (approximately two per year), Christmas parties, House events, Sports day as

well as focus weeks. Dress down days are kept to a minimum and considered as part of the CoSD planner. Almost all are free of charge, with the exception of parties, where there is minimal donation of approximately £1. There is no obligation or pressure for the donation to be made and all children take part.

As part of our participatory budget in session 21/22 we purchased different coloured House t-shirts and school team tracksuits so that there is no added pressure on families when their child is taking part in House or sporting events.

Any planned events such as coffee mornings have a minimal donation with all pupils taking part.

At Carstairs Junction Primary we provide a range of lunch and after school clubs and consult with the pupils as to which clubs they would like. Recent clubs have included Cookery, Knitting/crochet, Football, Multi sports, Lego and Games. There is no charge for participation in any of the clubs.

Our Cost of the School Day policy helps us to remain vigilant and ensures consistency of approach in considering how best to continue to minimise the financial pressure on parents.

*Reviewed September 2024*

