

## Cost of the School Day Position Statement

### Strathaven Academy, South Lanarkshire Council

At Strathaven Academy, we recognise the need to reduce the Cost of the School Day for all our pupils and particularly for our pupils who are already experiencing poverty. We examine the School Day through the following headings; Uniform, Travel, Learning, Friendship, School trips, Eating, Fun, Clubs and Home Learning.

#### Uniform

Our current uniform is:

- white shirt or blouse;
- school tie
- black trousers or skirt;
- plain black footwear;
- school blazer.

Please note that tartan skirts are also available to purchase from our uniform supplier and a plain black, v-neck jumper is accepted.

Our PE kit includes a Strathaven Academy branded t-shirt.

Families can purchase uniforms from our supplier, Baru, either directly via the shop or phone order. We also have three uniform evenings throughout the school year for families to purchase clothing and some items stocked in the school office are available daily such as blazer, tie and PE kit.

Next session we intend to update our practice by ensuring consistency across staff in standards and ensuring systems are in place where pupils/parents/carers do not feel embarrassed asking for help/subsidy.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. Information about entitlement to this and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council web-site: [www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/) .

#### Travel

The majority of our children travel to school by walking, although a large number of pupils travel by bus. The Local Authority provides bus transport for the majority, although our placing request pupils, of which there are a high number, need to pay for their own transport costs, which we understand can be significant.

We are aware that this could mean many children are not able to attend after school clubs and we therefore ensure that we have lunchtime extra-curricular activities as well as after school. If a pupil wants to participate in a school activity and feels that financial circumstances with regard to travel would restrict this, then we would encourage parents/carers to contact the school under strict confidentiality to discuss ways in which the school could support pupil engagement. The pupil support teacher would be the first point of contact.

## Learning

Children at Strathaven Academy are only asked to pay for core learning activity in the Home Economics department:

- S1 – S3 Home Economics - £20 per year;
- National 5 Health and Food Technology - £15 per year;
- Higher Health and Food Technology - £20 per year;
- National 5 Hospitality - £45 per year;
- S3 Home Economics Elective - £5.

Pens and pencils are provided and young people do not need to bring their own equipment. We currently do not have a procedure for young people to borrow equipment if they need it for homework, although departments do this at present on an ad-hoc basis. Young people in receipt of Free School Meals do need to pay for core curriculum, although fees are reduced for all children as much as possible.

As a school, we will be working with all stakeholders to look at ways in which we can enhance the support to families who may be finding the financial expectations of a child's school experience a challenge. The following link will take you to the Child Poverty Group's support materials:

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/cost-school-day>

## Friendships

We ensure that any pupil experiencing poverty-related bullying has a way of reporting this in confidence. We intend to teach young people about poverty related issues as part of our curriculum. We do bring in outside speakers to discuss budgeting with S6 pupils before they leave school. We intend to gather the views of our young people and families on the Cost of the School Day and involve them in decision making around this.

## School Trips

Currently our policy for planning trips each year is for staff to submit proposals to the SLT in line with South Lanarkshire Council policy. The average cost of trips for pupils varies dramatically depending on the subjects studied and the trips that pupils want to engage in. We try to reduce the cost by seeking several quotes and creating a package that provides value for money. For longer trips, we try to ensure that maximum notice is given to enable a staged payment plan and would encourage all pupils who are interested to express this, and then have conversations with the school about how to achieve this. External funding is used where possible and last session we were once again backed by the PTA who provide financial support, including covering the cost of transport for all pupils attending S1 camp. We do not have a policy for families with more than one child and this will be a point of action for next session. The last two sessions, through equity finding, we have fully funded eligible pupils to attend trips including S1 Camp, football experience and band camp.

SLT within the school are in the process of creating an overview of overnight excursions for the last two sessions and looking ahead to session 2019-2020.

## Eating at school

Last school year we had 6% of pupils who were in receipt of Free School Meals. We are aware that there may be a stigma associated with a free lunch but the ParentPay and card system we operate in school for all pupils significantly reduces this perceived stigma. In order to increase the percentage of eligible pupils using this entitlement, we would encourage any parent/carer to investigate the conditions under which free school meals can be provided. Information about this is available through the following link:

[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/)

## Fun Events

Strathaven Academy recognise that events planned for enjoyment can actually put added pressure on to families. We intend to look carefully at attendance and participation in these events in order to see if there are any poverty-related patterns that require action. As with school trips, our Fun Events are planned by submitting a proposal to SLT, although they are often on an ad-hoc basis. This will be an action point for next session. Our most regular fundraising for the school fund is in conjunction with the PTA and we understand that not all families are able to contribute. As a result, we also fundraise through PTA events such as bag-packing that does not involve families from the school each time.

## School Clubs

At Strathaven Academy, we have the following clubs:

- Competitive sports teams including Netball, Football, Basketball and American Football;
- Several sports clubs such as Table Tennis, Handball, Volleyball, Badminton and many more;
- Homework Club;
- Debating Society;
- Chess Club;
- Gamers' Society;
- Sign Language Club;
- Young Engineers;
- Animation Group;
- S1 STEM Club;
- Film Club.

Most clubs are free or at low cost, although the cost per young person to take part varies depending on the club. In 2018-2019, the number of extra-curricular sports sessions delivered within the school was up 81% from the previous year. For children who receive Free School Meals we do reduce/negate the charge. Some clubs may require specific equipment e.g badminton racquet, football boots, and we do what we can to help families who may not be able to afford these by asking them to contact the school in confidence to explain their situation, and working in partnership to identify a solution.

## Home Learning

We try to reduce the cost of learning at home as much as possible by providing materials and offering pupils the opportunity to use school resources such as computers after school. A morning homework club was offered this session every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to give pupils access to staff and ICT equipment. We do not have a policy in the school about lending equipment for pupils who may struggle and we are aware that all pupils no matter their family circumstances should be able to complete homework. Homework is linked to our Behaviour Policy and any pupil who does not complete homework receives a sanction - this can vary from subject to subject but usually involves a de-merit and contacting home through letter or phone call.

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:

- Ensuring as far as possible an 'affordable school year' – spacing events out to try to avoid hotspots leading to increasing financial pressures;
- A policy for lending resources;
- Ensuring costs for trips are as affordable as possible;
- Ensuring Fun Events are accessible for all pupils.

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