

Rutherglen High School

Cost of the School Day (CoSD) Policy



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Background Information and Context

The **Cost of the School Day (COSD)** initiative in Scotland aims to **remove financial barriers** that prevent children - especially from low-income families - from fully participating in school life. It is about ensuring **equity and access**, so that costs (such as uniforms, lunches, trips, clubs, etc.) do not hinder learning or create stigma. The initiative is important as it:-

- Ensures **no child is excluded** from school events or learning due to inability to pay.
- **Reduces stigma** - for example, through discreet support like clothing banks, rather than singled-out assistance.
- Strengthens a **whole-school approach to poverty awareness**, improving well-being and attendance.

At Rutherglen High School, we realise insufficient household and/or disposable income can mean that young people simply do not have the resources needed for school and often cannot easily afford to take part in the wide range of our school activities. Consequently, some pupils are at risk of missing out and therefore may feel different, excluded and/or unhappy.

Relative poverty is defined as:

“the condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed in order to maintain the average standard of living in the society in which they live”.

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-relative-poverty-definition-causes-examples.html>)

We know that people can move in and out of poverty throughout their lifespan. There are transient, recurrent and persistent states of poverty depending on individual and family circumstances. In some more affluent areas, poverty can be hidden.

Rutherglen High School recognises that schools have a responsibility to help learners overcome any barrier to learning, including poverty. We will continue to work together with our wider community to alleviate some of the poverty related issues faced by our pupils and parents/carers. This will enable us to provide support to allow all Rutherglen High School pupils to thrive.

As part of our school plan to ensure equitable access to education, parents/carers can now request support with funding (e.g. for clothing, essential school materials, etc.). Any staff member involved in the request process will operate with the highest possible discretion and will be respectful of families' personal circumstances. Please contact the school office if you require a request for financial assistance form.

Please note any support that we may be able to provide will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Overall, our aims are to:

1. Reduce the financial burden on families associated with school costs.

2. Raise awareness amongst pupils, parents/carers, staff and other agencies of the supports we offer to our families, whilst also operating with discretion and respecting confidentiality when assistance is requested.
3. Improve partnership working amongst stakeholders to ensure equitable access to education for our pupils.

This policy is designed to outline action points for reducing costs and highlight the support we offer in school. If the school is not aware of issues, then the pupil experience may be affected. As a school, we would like the opportunity to support where possible.

Rutherglen High School encourages all of our pupils and parents/carers who find themselves in a situation, at any point in their child's school career where they cannot financially support their child for whatever reason, to contact their child's Pastoral Care Teacher or complete our request for financial assistance form. We hope this will lead to the school being able to offer the appropriate support/resource provision to allow pupils to receive as full and as rounded, a school experience as possible.

Where possible, at Rutherglen High School we endeavour to match these key recommendations from the Poverty Action Groups (<https://cpag.org.uk/>):

- School staff and pupils should hold no assumptions about financial situations.
- Spreading out school events to avoid hotspots leading to increasing financial pressures.
- Running fund-raising activities that do not always ask families to contribute.
- Lending resources without trouble.
- Offering/providing support to access IT.
- Having consistent expectations and practice between staff members on uniform, resources etc.
- Rewards and merits unaffected by issues relating to finances at home.
- Anti-bullying alert to income-based bullying or stigma.
- Greater poverty awareness amongst our own school community.
- Making sure families/students are aware of their financial entitlements (e.g. clothing grants, free meals, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)).
- Staff discretion and empathy in relation to equity issues.
- Covering costs/subsidising and supporting discounts where possible.
- Systems in place where pupils/parents/carers do not feel embarrassed asking for help.

Rutherglen High School will continue to use the above key benchmarks to look at ways in which we can further enhance our support to families, who may be finding the various costs of a child's school experience a challenge.

In general, school costs can be broken down into 10 key categories:

1. Getting Uniforms
2. Traveling to School
3. Learning at School
4. Friendships at School
5. Friendship and Bullying

6. Eating at School
7. Fundraising Events
8. School Clubs
9. School Trips
10. Understanding Attitudes Towards Poverty

Whilst the following information outlines our general school policy, we realise individual circumstances vary greatly and therefore exceptions may apply. If you are in any doubt, please contact your child's Pastoral Care Teacher for clarification on individual issues.

School Uniform

The Scottish Government has issued a non-statutory guidance designed to reduce school uniform costs with all school uniform and clothing policies informed and underpinned by the following key principles:-

- be informed by the views of pupils
- be informed by the views of parents, carers, teachers and school staff
- minimise the cost of school uniform and clothing for families
- consider and commit to fair and environmentally sustainable approaches
- support an inclusive, welcoming and equitable school culture
- promote equality, including recognising specific matters relating to religion and belief, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity
- eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation and engagement of pupils in school education
- apply to all school clothing, including PE and senior phase
- recognise the need for practicality, including in relation to weather and seasonal needs
- recognise and build upon current good practice within schools
- support and encourage pupils to observe school uniform and clothing policies, while recognising their individual needs, circumstances and identity
- continue the position of no legal requirement upon pupils to wear school uniform

Rutherglen High School promotes the use of affordable, inclusive and flexible uniforms. In order to promote a sense of belonging and pride of our school, all children and pupils are encouraged to wear an affordable school uniform. We actively promote both badged and non-badged uniform as well as a flexible PE kit.

Parents on certain benefits can access a clothing grant to help with school uniform costs. Currently, the South Lanarkshire Grant is £150. Information about entitlement to clothing grants and how to apply is available on the South Lanarkshire Council website: www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200186/

Last year we introduced a clothing recycling point within the school. Both current and former pupils are invited to donate items of uniform, which they themselves can no longer use but are still in wearable condition. This creates for a more sustainable environment as well as allowing pupils access to uniform should they require any items.

Any items of clothing not collected from lost property will be transferred to our uniform recycling bank on the last day of each term.

Furthermore, as with all SLC establishments, free female sanitary products are available. These can be located in the girls' toilets and from the school office.

Travelling to School

Transport costs are significant for low-income families and can affect children and young people's attendance and participation at school. We are aware that in more rural areas, own transport is a necessity rather than a luxury and families can struggle to meet the fuel and running costs of journeys to school.

As a school, we follow South Lanarkshire Council's policy on the provision of free transport and all pupils are provided with free school transport. This will normally be provided through either a private shared minicab service; a larger minibuss vehicle; or an adapted minibuss or other such vehicle. The specific type of vehicle provided will be suitable for the assessed needs of the pupils travelling. All legislation regarding the safety of wheelchair users is considered in allocating school transport. In addition, current guidelines around the safe transportation of oxygen are also adhered to at all times.

Getting school transport right and making it accessible to all can be an enabler for many young people to reach their full potential and live fulfilling and independent lives. The journey to and from school should not be underestimated in the role that it plays in building confidence in young people to travel more independently, which may help them access higher and further education and ultimately, support with employment.

On 31 January 2022, the Scottish Government introduced the Free Bus Travel Scheme. This scheme allows all young people aged between 5-21 to apply for a card which entitles them to free bus travel throughout Scotland.

Pupils can find out more information and apply for their card by accessing the Transport Scotland website:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/under-22s-free-bus-travel/#:~:text=Who%20can%20get%20free%20bus,guardian%20must%20apply%20for%20you.>

Learning at School

There are no curricular charges for timetabled classes at Rutherglen High School. However, we recognise that the cost of materials for different subjects can soon add up for families. As such, pupils are not asked to provide core items such as pencils, erasers, jotters or folders.

Pupils can also access ICT equipment such as Chromebooks and iPads should they require these. Items can be accessed before school, during interval and lunchtime.

This year we will be launching "Be Ready to Thrive" station where pupils can collect material they require to help them thrive within and out with school. All material is available to pupils in S1-S6 should they be unable to provide their own materials due

to financial circumstances. The station will contain items such as: stationary, folders, flashcards, reusable water bottles, toiletries etc.

Friendship and Bullying

During Health and Wellbeing, poverty and the surrounding issues will be discussed as part of our curriculum, which will help to raise awareness and understanding between pupils and therefore reduce stigma.

Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals have the facility to pre-order their lunch, meaning that they are able to collect it and then remain with their friendship groups should their friends be leaving the school premises at lunchtimes.

As part of the school's anti-bullying policy, stigma (including poverty-related stigma) is discussed at length with pupils. For information on how to report bullying incidents or to read the school's stance on any bullying-related issues, please refer to our anti-bullying policy available on the school website.

If you are aware of any examples where your child expresses concern over any form of bullying they are experiencing with regard to financial issues, we would ask that this is communicated to us at the earliest opportunity to allow us to have restorative conversations with all involved and offer support and re-assurance to any pupil affected.

Eating at School

All pupils are encouraged to maintain healthy eating habits in line with the Schools Act (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2020.

Food costs can be significant and all of our pupils receive Free School Meals (FSM) which lessens the financial burden on families. £2.40 is pre-loaded onto pupil accounts each school day which can be used in our school canteen at break or lunch time.

We also run a free breakfast club for pupils each week morning and pupils are encouraged to attend so that as a school we offer them the opportunity to eat a nutritious breakfast and enjoy the social aspect of food. Staff also attend which helps reduce stigma for pupils and provides further opportunity to build positive relationships. Any pupil who arrives late can access fruit from our street area.

Fundraising Events

Special days, events and activities are a fun part of school life and often raise valuable funds. However, such events can create difficulties for some pupils due to a lack of immediate funds, hidden costs and feeling embarrassed are marginalised if they are unable to take part.

All our fund-raising activities take place during the school day. We plan in advance to ensure these are spread evenly. Non-uniform days are spread throughout the year, to help raise funds for charity with a voluntary donation of £1.

School Clubs

We offer a range of lunch time clubs, all of which are free. These clubs are a valuable resource for pupils, offering new interests and experiences accessible to them.

If a pupil feels that there is a reason that they cannot participate because of the lack of a resource/equipment, this should not prove a barrier to involvement and the pupil or parent should approach a member of staff to help us to identify a solution.

School Trips

The school only arranges events outside of school that we feel will enrich a pupil's school and life experience. School trips can be difficult for families on low incomes to afford. Missing school trips means that pupils miss fun, new experiences and personal development and may feel left out with families embarrassed about asking for financial help.

We aim to reduce costs of local trips by subsidising with school funds, fundraising activities or Parent Council support. For longer trips we give maximum advance notice and put a staged payment plan in place. Families who need support are encouraged to contact the school. No pupil will not be given the opportunity of a school trip due to financial restraints.

All pupils will be offered a school packed lunch to take on school trips and these can be pre-ordered and packed for pupils leaving the building.

Last year we offered a variety of school trips which were funded by fundraising activities and/or Parent Council donations. Our S5/6 pupils also received subsidised ticket prices for prom.

Learning At Home

Learning at home activity will have zero financial implications for families. Rutherglen High School will provide pupils with any and all resources needed to complete homework. If pupil work needs to be printed, then staff will ensure this can be done in school.

Any pupil not submitting homework will have a supportive conversation to understand what support can be provided to help them complete homework.

Understanding Attitudes Towards Poverty

Parental views are taken into account and we aim to work in partnership to alleviate any issues for pupils.

The Parent Council were consulted in the development of this policy and their suggestions integrated into our final report.

Parents/carers are signposted towards help and support through a variety of forums:

- Letters
- School website
- School Twitter
- Emails
- Updates via parent portal
- Information at Reception
- Telephone consultations and/or meetings with Pastoral Care Teachers and Senior Leadership Team

All school staff will receive appropriate training on child poverty and CoSD during the academic session 2025-26. Parents/carers, pupils and staff will also be issued with a CoSD survey. From this, we will be able to collate responses, gather views and plan for our next steps.

All pupils and parents/carers are encouraged to speak to a trusted member of staff or complete our request for support form, if they feel they are at a disadvantage from financial issues. Staff will discretely work to resolve issues to help remove barriers to learning.