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**The impact of child and family poverty for schools**

The school is determined that all children and young people achieve highly. The school recognises that it serves a challenging area in which poverty has the potential to lower community and personal aspirations thereby reducing self-esteem and damaging current and future prosperity. This paper, drawing on the findings of research, sets out to define poverty, make clear its consequences, and outline the responsibilities of the school to ensure its children and young people ‘buck the trend’.

**A definition of poverty in an affluent society**

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.

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| **The true cost of schooling nationally** |
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| £800 is the average amount parents spend on school costs for each child each year |
| £316 is the average amount spent on secondary school uniforms for each child each year |
| £167 is the average amount parents spend on school trips for each child each year |
| 3.9 million children are living in poverty in the UK with six in 10 in low income working families, (28% of all children), and the number is rising each year |
| 67% of the 3.9 million have at least one parent in work, and many of them will not qualify for free school meals |
| 95% of the poorest families struggle with the costs of school |
| 55% of the poorest families have had to borrow money to cover school costs |
| 1 in 4 children in the poorest families have been bullied as a result of being unable to afford a school expense |
| 1 in 3 children living in the poorest families have chosen not to do a course due to cost |
| 2 in 3 children from the poorest families have missed a school trip because of the expense |
| 400,000 children whose families can’t afford uniform costs have been sent home from school for wearing ‘incorrect’ uniform |
| 1 in 3 children living in the poorest families have fallen behind at school because their family couldn’t afford computer or internet access |
| 1 in 4 children in the poorest families have felt badly prepared for an exam because they couldn’t afford revision materials |
| School holiday hunger is a particular problem, in that the children do not then have access to free school meals |

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| **Comments from students nationally** |
| You can only get [school uniform] from one shop and it’s really expensive |
| ‘…you notice if someone’s sleeves are too small or their top rides up or they’ve got trousers that are too short for them and if they’ve got really tattered shoes. It’s really noticeable. |
| ‘…they don’t believe that someone like me where I live could actually be in poverty.’ |
| ‘When my mum’s got the money then we can get snacks. It’s 25 pence per item. We don’t get snacks if it’s a bad week. Sometimes we’re hungry |
| ‘I remember when I was paying with a token, someone just came up to me and said ‘why do you use that… are you free school meals?’ and started saying I was poor and everything like that. |
| ‘When I first got into secondary school, it got progressively tougher because of the requirements. We needed to pay for things like my sketchbooks for Art and Tech… The money was being stretched quite far, and, like, I started realising then that I couldn’t keep asking for those things.’ |
| It felt bad when everyone came back [from the trip] and said what an amazing time they’d had.’ |
| ‘…the teacher started shouting at me because I didn’t do {the homework]. I had to say out loud that I didn’t have a computer and everyone started laughing.’ |
| I know that mum has a lot that she has to do to keep us in school and it’s quite a struggle.’ |
| On non-uniform days I get shown up because I don’t own the smart clothes that other students have |

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| **A day at school for some students nationally** |
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| 7am Up early to get ready to walk to school. It’s a bad week so no breakfast today. Got to wear the same shirt again. |
| 8am Walked to school in the cold - can’t afford the bus like my friends. |
| 9am Told off for being ten minutes late – and for still having trainers instead of school shoes since I grew out of the last pair. |
| 9.30am English class. Forgot a pen today and the school charge for replacements – that’s the bit of change I saved from walking to school gone. |
| 10.30am Morning break. Embarrassed about having no snack. Wandered alone near the bike sheds. |
| 10.45am Maths class. Got really hungry, couldn’t concentrate. |
| 12.30pm Had to show my Free School Meal card at the front of the queue. Considered not eating as it’s so embarrassing, but too hungry. |
| 1.30pm PE class. Wish I was taking rugby but can’t afford the boots and kit. |
| 2.30pm Art class. Hadn’t brought in the homework as can’t afford paints. Teacher asked me why in front of whole class. Can’t say. Detention tomorrow. |
| 3.30pm Went to hear about joining the after-school drama club. Won’t be able to afford the theatre trip |
| 5pm Still at school library - needed computer and internet to do history homework for tomorrow. Had to rush it as getting dark outside and needed to walk home |
| 6.30pm Home. Didn’t tell mum about detention tomorrow. Hid letter about theatre trip costs from her until I can throw it safely away |

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| **The consequences** |
| Children from poorer backgrounds lag at all stages of education |
| By the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds |
| By the end of primary school, students receiving free school meals are estimated to be almost three terms behind their more affluent peers |
| By 14, this gap grows to five terms |
| By 16, children receiving free school meals achieve 1.7 grades lower at GCSE |
| Many poorer students have a miserable and humiliating time at school, often causing problems of stress and depression |
| This experience will adversely affect the students’ future life chances |

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| **What our school can do to help** |
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| Identify those students living in poverty, and ensure that support covering all aspects of learning and living is available for them as needed |
| Be aware of barriers to school life for children in poverty - tackle the costs of school materials and trips and make sure no student is excluded from any activity due to an inability to pay |
| Ensure that all students learn from the curriculum about the causes and effects of family poverty |
| Encourage pupils/students to be active participants in reducing the impact of poverty on their school and the wider community |
| Create a school ethos where students do not laugh or mock poorer students |
| Have a fund of money that can be used to confidentially help poor students access all aspects of school life |
| Provide a small stock of essential items for learning such as essential ingredients for food technology, sanitary products for girls etc to be used for those students in the very greatest need |
| Keep stocks of school supplies, snacks, clothes and other basic necessities handy for students who may need them, but find quiet ways to distribute them to avoid singling anyone out |
| Provide computers/tablets for the use of poorer students |
| Give options to pay by instalments for school activities with no non-returnable deposits |
| Communicate directly with parents rather than via children for school costs and trips |
| Choose a simple coloured school uniform, available from affordable shops – with sew on or iron on logos available |
| Be transparent with parents and students on how pupil premium money is being spent, giving students a say in this, and make sure that it is spent effectively with a focus on those needing the most support |
| Have a cashless system for school meals and enable unspent free school money to roll over from day to day |
| Provide itemised costs to parents before a student signs up for a course |
| Organise a breakfast club each morning |
| Make it possible for poorer children to get involved in extra-curricular activities |
| Have in place a programme to help develop the life skills of students |
| Provide support for families as part of the school’s community outreach programme |
| Provide equipment such as microscopes for use by families |
| Encourage the use of the central trust fund that supports gifted pupils/students to participate in sport and the arts |
| Make sure teachers, support staff, governors and trustees receive training and/or information as required to improve their understanding of poverty |
| Provide an excellent education so that students have every chance of the academic success that will boost their life chances and are encouraged to have high expectations and aspirations |
| All of this will only be achieved if we have the highest standards for ourselves and work relentlessly to improve our own performance |

**What next?**

The school undertakes to keep mitigation against poverty at the heart of discussions by:

* ensuring we have in place policies and strategies to address the issues outlined above
* providing support and challenge, through CPD for example, to ensure staff and governors are aware of the above and best practice in addressing the issues outlined
* making clear the opportunities, apprenticeships for example, where the school can support the breaking of the ‘cycle of poverty’.

We will:

* make this paper available to all staff and governors so that all are aware of the issues and potential solutions
* review its policies and strategies to ensure the issues raised above are being addressed
* monitor, evaluate and report, as part of its regular pattern of meetings, including governance, the effectiveness and impact of actions taken to mitigate against poverty.

Tony Stephens