

Affordable Schools Strategy

Primary



Wiltshire Council



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Foreword

Welcome to the Affordable Schools strategy and the opportunity to embark on a strategic school improvement journey which ensures all pupils have the opportunity to participate, learn and thrive. Designed with schools, for schools, this accessible guide brings together a large collection of ideas, experiences and practical suggestions to help schools build a universal, equitable approach, 'through the lens of affordability'.

We are especially grateful to our Wiltshire Pupil Premium Partner schools for their time, commitment and expertise in bringing the Affordable Schools strategy to life. Notably our thanks go to:

- Ashton Keynes CE Primary
- Greentrees Primary
- Manor Fields Primary
- Pembroke Park Primary
- St Michael's CE Primary.

Thank you also for your commitment to becoming an Affordable School. Schools are the change makers at the heart of each community and every day, in every interaction, it is in our gift to bring about the change required to steadily overcome the challenges of disadvantage; together we will make a difference.

Kate Wilkins (Wiltshire Disadvantaged Learners Lead & School Leadership)

Vicky Gordon (Wiltshire Vulnerable Pupils Advisor and SIA)

Affordable Schools: the background

The impact of poverty is one of the most significant barriers to overcome when improving the life chances of our most vulnerable learners. It is the strongest statistical predictor of how well a child will achieve at school but rarely has a single cause. Some children are born into poverty, while the lives of others may be shaped by life events which impact on financial stability, such as taking on a caring role, parent separation, bereavement, illness and changes to employment.

It is helpful to think about the barriers facing students in poverty as interconnected 'binds' which restrict and impact their educational journey. Children's efforts to negotiate these binds often have unintended negative consequences; e.g. parental job loss can prompt a move of home and school, in seeking social acceptance and belonging the child prioritises peer approval over success within the school where they have a weaker sense of fitting in and belonging, or the child doesn't tell Mum about the school trip because she knows Mum can't afford to pay for it. (Brown 2014)

What is Affordable Schools?

We recognise that, to authentically ensure equitable education for all our children, we must work in partnership to bring about system change, so a brighter future is a right for all, and not a privilege for some. The Affordable Schools strategy is a fully resourced, universal, non-stigmatising and proactive approach which will empower schools to:

- Develop a widely shared understanding of the causes, barriers and challenges faced by pupils and families who are living in poverty
- Make universal, positive changes to policies and practices that will improve the experience of all, especially the most vulnerable.

The 'Affordable Schools' strategy is built on a set of **guiding principles**, ensuring that every day, in all our interactions, we take advantage of opportunities to challenge and steadily overcome the effects of disadvantage

- An Affordable School is committed to reducing poverty related stigma by deliberately making positive changes to every aspect of school policy and practice through the lens of affordability
- Any 'affordable' provision is a universal provision: we cannot be certain at any one time which families, or members of the school community, are experiencing financial hardship so our policies and practice should not identify, exclude, treat differently or make assumptions
- Being 'affordable' means being creative and solutions focused to ensure our provision and curriculum offer is always easily accessible to all students, without limiting the quality of education
- Relationships are key to the success of the Affordable Schools strategy
- Strong leadership and positive action will make a difference to our school communities.

The **Affordable Schools** strategy draws widely on information and resources published by:

The Children's Society

The Children's Society a United Kingdom national children's charity allied to the Church of England. The charity's objectives are to improve the lives of children and young people and the related social attitudes [The Children's Society - UK children's charity \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

Child Poverty Action Group is a UK charity that works to alleviate poverty and social exclusion [CPAG - Home](https://www.cpag.org.uk)

Children North East (Poverty Proofing)

Supporters, professionals and volunteers who have been changing the lives of babies, children, young people and families across the North East for 130 years [Homepage - Children North East \(children-ne.org.uk\)](https://www.children-ne.org.uk)

“It doesn’t matter how great an educational idea or intervention is in principle; what really matters is how it manifests itself in the day-to-day work of people in schools.”

EEF Implementation Guidance Report 2019

The ‘Affordable Schools’ strategy is designed to fully support schools from the initial organisation and launch of the strategy through to securing sustained improvement which brings about deep and lasting change. While every school is different, there are common themes and needs across our settings which will be met through effective implementation as an on-going process rather than one-off event. By using the wide range of resources, guidance documents and planning materials which are available in the ‘Affordable Schools Toolkit’, we aim to deliver high quality, universal provision which benefits all, especially the most vulnerable. An [Implementation Plan](#) is included in the ‘[Strategic Plans and Resources](#)’ section of the toolkit on Wiltshire Right Choice to support effective implementation.

The Affordable Schools Handbook and Toolkit is organised into 4 themed areas:

Resourcing the School Day

Enrichment and Opportunities

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

Securing Positive Partnership

Each themed area has been broken down into key principles, common barriers, questions to explore, relevant policies, quick wins, ‘digging deeper’ strategies and resources. The statements and suggestions within each area provide useful hooks for schools to plan improvement; they are not exhaustive and can be used flexibly to meet the priorities of schools. Schools should aim to prioritise areas identified for improvement and build the strategy over a period of time (recommend 3 years for fully embedded culture and practice).

Affordable Schools theme	Coverage
Resourcing the School Day	Exploring, through a 'cost of living' lens, the demands of the school day and how to bring about positive change to policy and practice
Enrichment and Opportunities	A broad, rich and equitable offer at the heart of every school community with strategies deliberately designed to ensure access for all
Healthy Body, Healthy Mind	Considering equitable school provision which nurtures children and ensures basic needs are met so they thrive as learners in the classroom
Securing Positive Partnerships	Strong partnerships and relationships as central to securing whole school community success with strategies to promote engagement and improve outcomes

Key policies are highlighted in each themed section so that schools can prioritise these for review and make any necessary changes to practice and procedure. The following statement can be included in all policies which have been reviewed 'through the lens of affordability' to reflect the **Affordable Schools** commitment.

This policy has been reviewed through the lens of affordability ensuring that the principles of an Affordable School are active and have a positive impact on reducing poverty related stigma.

Groundwork

Working group identified. All staff awareness and buy in

Information gathering

Audit of costs throughout school

Staff views on costs, barriers and solutions

Pupil views on costs, barriers and solutions

Parent carer views on costs barriers and solutions

Analysis

What are the main issues? What do we focus on?

Action

Actions to tackle barriers identified



Reflecting on the following questions can help you consider the best ways to mitigate the effects of poverty in your school, particularly as a result of the pandemic and growing cost of living crisis.

- How affordable is your school? How confident are you that children and families feel that they will be met with understanding and empathy if in need of support?
- How effective is your Charging and Remissions policy in acknowledging poverty related stigma and highlighting your commitment to support lower income families?
- How effectively are financial entitlements like Free School Meals and support grants for families on low incomes being promoted to families? Do all families in the school know what is available if it is needed? Are there processes in place to support families to apply for and benefit from extra help?
- How are you communicating with families to find out what resources are needed for children to learn? What processes are in place to provide resources for all children who need them?
- To what extent are school policies and practices designed to reduce financial pressure on families and include children and young people on low incomes? Are there particular practices or policies that could be established or reinstated that have clear benefits for low income families, for example extended school services such as after school clubs?
- Is there a shared and assumption free culture which understands differing home circumstances and how they may impact on pupils' attitudes and learning (e.g. parents being 'time poor' due to shift working/additional hours etc rather than lack of interest)?

The Affordable Schools toolkit, hosted on the resource page on Right Choice, contains information, guidance materials and resources to support schools to effectively implement and deliver the Affordable Schools strategy. The Affordable Schools toolkit is designed to support school leaders and staff with conversations and activities which will embed the principles of an Affordable School, alongside providing comprehensive case studies of effective implementation.

Vision, Strategy and Implementation

Resourcing the School Day

Enrichment and Opportunities

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

Securing Positive Partnerships

Go to: <https://rightchoice.wiltshire.gov.uk/P30675>

Becoming an **Affordable School** requires a shared understanding and acknowledgement of how important 'affordability' is in all parts of school life. Ensuring that a rich and broad education is affordable for all, is **everybody's responsibility**.

Evaluating activities to see whether they are achieving their aims is crucial, but in practice can often be overlooked. To support practice, an Affordable Schools audit is included within the toolkit to help schools understand how 'affordable' they are in their approach and what else can be done to reduce poverty related stigma.

There are eight sections to the audit. Each section has been designed to give school teams opportunities to reflect on practice and secure the most appropriate next steps to help a school on their journey to becoming '**Affordable Schools Aware**'.

- School leaders are visibly committed to making their school 'Affordable'
- School ethos and culture
- Curriculum, teaching and learning
- Pupil voice
- Staff professional development.
- Monitoring impact
- Working with parents and carers
- Targeted support

Once schools have completed one year of their Affordable Schools journey, they will be eligible to apply for an 'Affordable Schools' mark which can be displayed on your school website and other areas to celebrate successful practice and communicate your commitment to universal 'affordability' practice which meets the needs of your school community. The 'Affordable Schools' mark will build through Bronze, Silver and Gold for each year of your commitment to the strategy and evidence of impact.

Year one Bronze

Adopt and implement Affordable Schools strategy



Affordable Schools
WILTSHIRE

Year two Silver

Deepen practice and on-going evidence of impact



Affordable Schools
WILTSHIRE

Year three Gold

Sustained, culturally embedded practice with notable impact on outcomes



Affordable Schools
WILTSHIRE

RESOURCING THE SCHOOL DAY

Exploring, through a 'cost of living' lens, the demands of the school day and how to bring about positive change to policy and practice.

Rationale

1. Access to the full curriculum and all learning tasks, wherever possible, is designed to require no financial outlay and reasons for non-completion of tasks/homework, and not having the correct equipment, are assessed through the lens of affordability.
2. Active measures are taken to support a student where their external circumstances present them with additional challenges that would prevent or hinder being ready to learn.
3. Parents should not have to consider the cost of a school uniform when choosing which school(s) to apply for. Therefore, schools need to ensure that their uniform is affordable. 'Where a school's uniform is too expensive it can place an unreasonable burden on families. No school uniform should be so expensive as to leave pupils or their families feeling unable to apply to, or attend, a school of their choice, due to the cost of the uniform.' [School uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).
4. We are mindful of the DfE Pupil Premium guidance 'Schools may be justified in funding items not listed where this is necessary to overcome specific barriers to student attainment, for example to meet acute needs around student equipment to ensure readiness to learn' which emphasises the importance of a nuanced and robust process for identifying needs. [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk).
5. Schools should commit to an assumption free culture in order to be sure we take a personalised, relational approach. (CPAG 'Don't assume families are ok financially. Instead, show everyone that you are aware of hidden poverty and explain the support that's out there, so nobody gets missed'.)
6. Schools should have a clear understanding of the total cost and commitment required by families to ensure full participation, including: uniform, equipment, themed days and events, celebrations and special occasions, cake days, fairs and fetes, Christmas, non-school uniform/dress up days etc.
7. Every child should feel like they belong – especially at school. A school's uniform can bring the school community together and create a shared identity. But when school uniforms are too expensive, this doesn't happen.

Questions to explore

- What does it feel like to be a pupil in your school (day in the life of...)?
- Can all students access all elements of the curriculum irrespective of their financial circumstances? What does student/parent voice tell us?
- Are students required to bring in their own pencil cases or other equipment from home?
- Is uniform affordable and information readily available on your school website?
- How often do uniform sales take place?
- What pre-loved uniform provision is available at your school students and families access it?
- Can parents buy uniform from supermarkets, or do they have to go to a single, specialist supplier?
- How do we identify families who would need support?
- How easy is it for families to purchase or order?
- What resources are required for students to complete their homework currently and do we consider impact on financial circumstances?
- Have we considered what families have available on a daily basis (e.g. computers, paper etc) and are we satisfied that we keep up to date without understanding of family circumstances to be confident of equitable access for all?
- What support is available for those who may not have these resources at home?
- Are there opportunities for students to complete their homework in school if they face barriers at home?
- How equitable is the homework policy – what prevailing culture does it communicate?
- What happens if children don't have the correct uniform? Are staff responses consistent and delivered 'through the lens of affordability'?
- Are children sanctioned if they don't have the correct uniform, shoes, PE kit etc?
- Can children take part if they don't have the correct clothing?
- Have transport costs been considered? How do pupils get to school?
- If the school offers support with transport costs, who benefits?

Key policies to be reviewed

- Charging and Remissions
- Uniform and equipment - Statutory guidance: [cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) , non-statutory guidance [School uniforms: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Home learning agreement
- Behaviour in schools (school response and sanctions).

Once reviewed, include the statement 'This policy has been reviewed through the lens of affordability ensuring that the principles of an Affordable School are active and have a positive impact on reducing poverty related stigma.'

Common Barriers

- Expense of compulsory school uniform
- No pre-loved uniform available
- Lack of washing facilities in the home
- Requirement to have specialist equipment for residential or events e.g. sleeping bags
- Sanctions in place for students who do not bring their PE kit to school or do not have the correct uniform, which leads to pupils feeling disengaged
- Expense of day-to-day resources (pens, pencil cases etc) when the prevailing culture expects 'bring from home'
- Expense of resources linked to the curriculum/enrichment such as money for cookery ingredients (extras) or special kit for an after school sport activity
- Expense of text books and revision resources linked to the curriculum
- Homework requires a suitable place to work, resources from home or digital access esp. phones and competing family needs for technology
- Homework requires specific/time consuming support from an adult e.g. projects (living in poverty puts stress on a family. Parents may be holding down multiple jobs, working difficult shifts)
- Broadband issue or getting enough easy access to the Internet
- Time to complete the homework or competing family needs (caring role)
- More than one child in the family home competing for resources (multiplying cost).

Linked policies and guidance documents

- Accessibility
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour in schools
- Charging and remissions
- Health and safety
- Uniform and equipment
- Home/school agreement
- Pupil premium statement
- School travel plan
- SEND/inclusion
- Homework/home learning
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions.

Quick wins

- Establish a prominent 'Affordable Schools' space on your school website and populate using materials from the Affordable Schools toolkit (template, model wording, resources)
- Establish a dedicated email address where students and families can communicate challenges which they have around resources, uniform, equipment (e.g. affordability@aschool.co.uk). Explain that this email address will be viewed only by x member(s) of staff (someone with seniority and a visible, positive relationship with parents) and confidentiality maintained when providing support
- Ensure non-uniform events (Christmas jumper day) have minimal expectations and that these are well communicated. If there is a more specific requirement make sure this resource is available free of charge for all families (universal)
- Review the cost of the school day using the calendar and identify events and activities which could be quickly considered to align with your Affordable Schools commitment (NB there will be some quick wins here but also necessary for a longer term 'digging deeper' approach) <https://children-ne.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day-calendar-2022-23/>
- Design after-school clubs through the lens of affordability and provide resources, as appropriate
- Provide easy access to digital resources for students experiencing digital poverty or with competing family needs e.g. homework/study clubs, cyber cafes during school or after school
- Use more than just online resources to communicate homework tasks

- Offer opportunities to complete homework in school through breakfast club, after school clubs or a lunchtime homework hub
- Have a clear approach and consistent response to issues regarding incomplete homework so that children who would be challenged to complete homework on time are supported (e.g. free homework club is available, support in place for young carers)
- Provide pots of pens and pencils in all classrooms, replenish regularly
- Through the 'lens of affordability', consider special occasions, such as children's birthdays and end of year gifts for teachers, and design an approach which reduces poverty related stigma (e.g. an Amazon 'wish list' where families can optionally purchase a gift for the class instead of directly giving a gift to the teacher; each child is given a piece of card and access to materials where they could make a card to say 'thank you' if they wished)
- Run fairs and events during the school day so all children can attend and help with the stalls and give every child a 'Free Go' ticket so they can go on a ride or play a game
- Review non-school uniform days and requests for donations to charities etc. Could pupils work together to make something which would raise money?
- Remove highly visible collection points – charity donations, bring something for Harvest etc – which may expose pupils who are unable to make a donation
- Provide vouchers for cake days so everyone has the same
- Consider school fun events through the lens of affordability and ensure arrangements are in place to mitigate against risk of exclusion or poverty related stigma (e.g. free entry to school discos/Christmas Fair, free refreshments, end of year celebrations etc)
- Use the Sports Premium Grant to buy kit and boots so that participation in school sports clubs is not affected by lack of resources
- Make sanitary products readily available.

Digging deeper

Ensure a clear understanding of the total cost and commitment required by families to ensure full participation, including: uniform, equipment, themed days and events, celebrations and special occasions, cake days, fairs and fetes, Christmas, non-school uniform/dress up days etc.

<https://children-ne.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day-calendar-2022-23/>

Review of uniform policy to include:

- Keep use of branded uniform items to a minimum
- Ensure that uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money (including the quality and durability of the garment)
- Ensure the majority of uniform items, and PE clothes, can be purchased from affordable sources such as supermarkets e.g. remove the need for logos at all or limit to a key item
- Remove blurred lines around shoe choice e.g. commit to no brands and black but don't worry about the style (inc. black trainers)
- Fund logo items for all FSM students to match the expectations for all
- Simplify uniform requirements e.g. black leggings rather than a specific type
- Avoid parents having to duplicate items to fit with the school policy (e.g. particular bags, coats)
- Ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire and information on second-hand uniforms should be clear for parents of current and prospective pupils and published on the school's website
- Create a pre-loved uniform store in school – link to reducing environmental impact so the stigma is removed e.g. Monday school rails or hand-down uniforms at the end of year 6 – ensure uniform is clean and name labels removed
- Consider how to link with other organisations or sponsors to provide PE kit, uniforms, boots/ trainers/ swim wear & towels and other related items of equipment provided at the start of the year(or vouchers or starting school bundles).

Equipment:

- Consider how to reduce stigma and bullying associated with possessions brought into school e.g. basic equipment such as bags / pencil cases / water bottles / items associated with fashions and trends etc
- Consider how to establish a prevailing culture where stationery i.e. bags, pens/ pencils, colouring items, rulers, calculators, other mathematical equipment, pencil cases are school resources rather than bought from home

- Explore fund-raising options that can subsidise the cost of full participation in school life for pupils living in poverty
- Review curriculum areas through the lens of affordability so cooking ingredients, dishes, carrying containers, fabrics etc are supplied
- Ensure that revision guides or additional support materials are loaned/ provided at no cost
- Establish an “equipment lending library” for residentials, forest school and LOTC activities - Collect some garments and equipment that can be loaned, such as waterproofs, hats, small rucksacks etc. This can be supported by encouraging families to speak to relatives or friends to be able to borrow equipment
- Have a readily available supply of spare coats, wellington boots, gloves, scarfs etc.

Homework:

- Profile homework/curriculum activities to understand what is being asked of pupils and parents and make reasonable adjustments (e.g. gathering together resources for projects, need for internet access and a computer, junk modelling activities)
- Establish a resource area where resources can be taken home e.g. when completing a creative homework task
- Agree a homework policy that prioritises practice or overlearning of essential skills taught in school which require limited resources (e.g. times tables, spellings and reading)
- Provide a menu of homework ideas rather than one specific task
- Assign family support workers (or similar) to build strong relationships with families around homework
- Link with other agencies to provide training for parents e.g. Wiltshire Family Learning
- Develop how pupils learn skills that allow them to work independently - link to transition projects with secondary schools and implement metacognition and self-regulation training for staff and parents/carers.

Behavior:

Reviewing the Behaviour Policy through the lens of affordability to reflect:

- Build positive relationships with individuals with a culture focused on anticipating pupil needs and taking a positive, solutions focused approach

- Profile pupils who are regularly wearing incorrect uniform/not having the correct equipment to understand the root causes and consider actions which can be taken to mitigate against this and the risk of poverty related stigma
- Fully establish a shared understanding of the causes, barriers and challenges faced by pupils and families which enables all staff to respond sensitively to individual pupil circumstances and enables flexibility of response.

Transport:

- Profile your school community to understand the geographical spread and challenges 'through the lens of affordability' which may affect attendance and punctuality or attendance at after school clubs etc
- Take a creative, solutions focused approach to address the identified challenges, on a case by case basis.

Resources

School uniform:

Statutory guidance: Cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Non-statutory guidance: School uniforms: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-law-to-make-school-uniform-costs-affordable-for-all>

The Children's Society, Child Poverty Action Group and Children North East joined forces to share some ideas and good practice to show how, with some adjustments to policies and practices, schools can relieve the pressure of uniform costs on children and their families.

<https://cpag.org.uk/affordable-school-uniforms-guide>

<https://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/making-school-uniforms-affordable-a-case-study-cost-of-living-crisis-poverty-guidance-parents-families/248160/>

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/family-learning>

<https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/starting-secondary-school/supporting-your-childs-development-at-home-12-to-19-years>

<https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk> – help fund the purchase of puddle suits

Period Poverty:

Period product scheme for schools and colleges in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Affordable Schools: Resourcing the school day at **Greentrees Primary School**

Greentrees is a large thriving primary school with a Resource Base, situated in Salisbury. The school supports an area of significant deprivation with 18% of their children in receipt of pupil premium. The school team understands the needs in their community and how hard it is for their families to finance resources for their children, so they come to school ready to learn.

As part of their 'Affordable Schools' strategy development, the team has made some significant changes to their expectations around school uniform, which have been met with huge support from the community.

The school, had already made some changes to how they approach school uniform but the Affordable School strategy allowed them to fully implement a strategic approach.

The school team started by:

- Building a shared vision for Affordable Schools through surveys and staff meetings
- Building a team around Affordable Schools, and begin to unpick barriers (one of which was uniform)
- Reviewing the uniform policy in light of staff, pupil and parent voice.

This review of the uniform policy and the surveys has resulted in the school team being able to make some key changes including:

- Removal of the requirement for pupils to wear branded items with school logo
- Removal of requirement to wear school P.E. kit
- Allowing pupils to wear black trainers.

Affordable Schools: Resourcing the school day at
Greentrees Primary School

Impact

These changes have been well supported by all members of the community:

'The stigma of wearing non-branded items has gone as more children are wearing them.'

Teacher at Greentrees

'It saves time because we don't have to change shoes to play football at break and we don't have to change back into our school shoes afterwards – we can just go straight into lessons'.

Pupil at Greentrees

'Thanks so much to FrOGS (PTA) for arranging the (uniform) sale. Saved me having to buy new things for just a few months.'

'Thanks for the change re the trainers – so sensible and such a help to parents.'

'Such good news about the trainers. Makes perfect sense.'

Parents at Greentrees

Greentrees Primary School has looked at uniform through the 'lens of affordability' and taken sensible steps which, in turn, has made a huge difference to children and their families.



ENRICHMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

A broad, rich and equitable offer at the heart of every school community with strategies deliberately designed to ensure access for all.

Rationale

- Enrichment policy, practice and process should be reviewed through the lens of affordability so that it meets the needs of the wider school community and individuals
- Active measures should be taken to ensure extra-curricular activities are planned through the lens of affordability without causing embarrassment and stigma. This will ensure students can access all available activities and do not have to make choices based on price and equipment needed
- We are mindful of the DfE Guidance for use of Pupil Premium and understand that PP funding can be used for 'Extra-curricular activities, including sport, outdoor activities, arts and culture, for example music lessons and school trips' [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- By thinking creatively, many enrichment opportunities and experiences can be provided free of charge and the school is committed to this approach where possible.

Key policies to be reviewed

- Enrichment/extra-curriculum activity
- Educational Visits/Learning Outside The Classroom (LOTTC).

Once reviewed, include the statement 'This policy has been reviewed through the lens of affordability ensuring that the principles of an Affordable School are active and have a positive impact on reducing poverty related stigma.'

Questions to explore

- What do you have planned for the academic year, what are the costs involved in these activities and how much will families be asked to contribute?
- How do you communicate with families about the curriculum and enrichment offer and financial support which is available?
- How can you ensure that families have enough time to pay for school activities and events?
- Are plans for educational visits across the year mindful of overall cumulative costs to parents? i.e. balance local low / no cost activities with activities further afield that include costs?

- How do you track enrichment, take-up of clubs, and pupil participation?
- Who does and doesn't take part in clubs? Are there any patterns by income? How could you improve engagement?
- Does the school offer transport or assistance for pupils to attend extracurricular activities? (after-school clubs, supported study)
- Is there resilience within school finances to ensure that students receive the curriculum entitlement, and enrichment, through LOTC opportunities?

Common barriers

- High cost school trips which place pressures on pupils from lower income families
- Level of cost associated with after school clubs/curriculum/enrichment/materials
- Families not given enough notice when trips, extra-curricular activities and fundraising events are organised
- Cost of travel, or travel logistics, to and from after school activities
- Parents may not have regular online access, or be time poor, so struggle to sign up for activities within allocated time frames
- Pupils may be anxious about the cost of some activities because they know this may place undue financial pressures on their family
- Families may struggle to prioritise competing needs of several family members
- Students may miss out on regular physical exercise opportunities, due to affordability
- Lack of consideration 'through the lens of affordability' about experiences and cultural capital which pupils bring to learning in the classroom (e.g. asking children to write about what they did at the weekend/during the holiday etc)
- Access to activities and enrichment experiences during the school holiday.

Policies

- Educational Visits
- Anti-bullying
- Accessibility
- Careers education
- Attendance
- Charging and remissions.
- Pupil Premium Statement
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Behaviour in schools
- Health and Safety

Quick wins

- Offer a range of clubs at lunchtimes
- Use a portion of PPG funding (wider strategies) to help vulnerable students access high-cost activities
- Spread the cost of visits and activities using Parent Pay (or similar) and payment plans
- Introduce a voucher system for spending money on residential trips e.g. all students have vouchers to spend (some students will be provided with vouchers whereas others will pay for the vouchers)
- Access the heavily subsidised music tuition service (Wiltshire Music Connect)
- Always ensure a minimum expectation of applications for a trip are taken up by vulnerable pupils (schools set own % targets)
- Consider the ease and equity of your sign-up system for clubs and activities to understand whether it advantages those who are already advantaged (e.g. if first come, first served then is it the same families who are always at the front of the queue?)
- Consider the geography of your school community and identify whether there are any pupils and families where transport may be a barrier to accessing extra-curricular activities
- Consider providing taxis or use the school mini bus to transport children home after clubs
- Engage with organisations, such as Platform who provide free [workshops](#), [train-trips](#), and bespoke, local [resources](#) to support schools in building cultural capital with out-of-classroom experiences
- Locality should be considered as a useful LOTC resource for frequent LOTC opportunities. Low cost and local often go together

- Create a lending library of craft materials, board games, popular magazines, outdoor games & activities, dressing up etc and establish a system built around equitable access
- Prioritise reading, and love of reading, and make access to books readily available ('Reading can achieve something teachers and policymakers have been attempting for decades: to lessen or even eliminate the impact of early life disadvantage'. Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP)
- Ensure information and sign up to all holiday club activities (e.g. FUEL)
- Make full use of the school grounds and organise on site 'Learning Outside the Classroom' activities and residential experience opportunities (e.g. a sleep over in school).

Digging deeper

Strategically review all aspects of enrichment policy and practice to identify pressure points for pupils and families including taking account of the following strategies:

- Create a fully costed calendar of enrichment and extra-curricular events for each year group to help understand the cost of a year and what that would equate to on a weekly/monthly basis
- Identify cost saving measures which could be taken to reduce overall affordability (e.g. cluster/partner school collaboration, staff expertise, transport sharing, resource sharing etc)
- Clearly communicate the fully costed curriculum/enrichment offer at the start of the year and provide options for an appropriate payment schedule which spreads the cost and secures greater affordability (e.g. costed menu with option to spread into monthly instalments) or, as a minimum, ensure cost of activities is communicated with strong consideration given to providing notice (e.g. provide at least a year's notice for trips abroad or high expense activities)
- Ring-fence monies, identify charities, community groups, organisations and bursaries which can finance/supplement high cost activities
- Track take up of residential, enrichment and extra-curricular activities to ensure equitable access to the opportunities on offer; act quickly to ensure no child is left behind (this could be linked to a pupil entitlement charter)
- Approach/offer sign up to vulnerable families first; do not rely on all parents being able to respond to systems such as a 'first come first serve' approach
- LOTC opportunities further afield will provide the support, enrichment and extension needed for students. Consider the curriculum links to LOTC and the visits that would provide cross-curricular support, life skills links and enhancement of prior learning, i.e. which visits are the most cost effective in terms of the impact gained to support student progress

- Consider costs of an educational visit as a group issue rather than an individual participant responsibility and organise fundraising activities on a group basis to subsidise or wholly fund the visit
- Adopt an 11 by 11, or activity passport, approach with activities (many no cost) which inspire children's ability to problem-solve, see or visit new places and develop wide interests in new subjects (e.g. Get soaking wet in the rain, skim stones, build a den, see the sun rise/sun set, make a home for an insect or small creature, roll down a hill, take part in a treasure hunt etc)
- Approach the PTA / Friends of School to help access charitable trust funding.

Resources

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom <https://www.lotc.org.uk/>

Learning through Landscapes (school grounds educational charity) <https://www.ltl.org.uk>

Low cost models for Residential Visits <https://www.learningaway.org.uk/free-resources/lower-cost-models/>

<https://wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk/schools/inst-vocal/subsidies/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/life-skills-enrichment>

<https://governorsforschools.org.uk/blog/enriching-experiences-for-every-child/>

Home - Platform (platformrail.org)

50 things to do before you're 11¾ activity list | National Trust

My activity passport - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

EEF enrichment tracker

FUEL is the holiday activity and food programme funded by Department of Education and aims to provide children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals (FSM) with free access to enriching activities, nutritious meals and healthy eating information during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays.
FUEL programme - Wiltshire Council

Oxfam's Global Citizenship Curriculum: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620105/edu-global-citizenship-schools-guide-091115-en.pdf?sequence=11&isAllowed=y>

Affordable Schools: Enrichment and opportunities at Manor Fields Primary School, Salisbury

Manor Fields Primary School is a thriving inclusive school in Salisbury with a Resource Base. The school has witnessed first-hand the impact of increased austerity and has taken action to combat the impact of deprivation by implementing 'Affordable Schools' and building an 'affordable' approach to enrichment. After building a team around the Affordable Schools Strategy, Manor Fields invested time in collecting the views of parents, pupils and staff around the affordability of school. This feedback prompted the development of a number of actions including:

- An affordability section in the family handbook, school newsletters and on the school website;
- An overview of all trips for the year available at 'Meet the Teacher' events in September – including cost and payment options;
- A thorough review of enrichment activities and their affordability.

The review, led to further developments to the school's Enrichment strategy such as:

- Securing PTFA commitment to subsidise agreed events
- Building a bank of resources that can be borrowed for trips and events such as sleeping bags, lunch boxes, wellies, sports kit and dressing up clothes
- Ensuring, where possible, events are combined to reduce the amount of hours parents and carers need to take off work
- Using Evolve to complete post event analysis.

Impact

Already, the impact is tangible. The Manor Fields team share a deeper understanding of the barriers linked to affordability:

"Over time, our financial commitment to securing 100% participation has seen a significant reduction in the number of families who do not make a contribution".
School Business Manager.

"We take so much for granted and forget how difficult it can be to manage the pennies".
Chair of Finance and Staffing

Most importantly, Manor Fields are making it easier for their families.

"Me and my mum do worry a bit about money but know I'll be able to join in".
Manor Fields Pupil

Together, Manor Fields are making a difference.

Affordable Schools: Enrichment and opportunities at St Michael's CE Primary School

St Michael's is a highly successful village primary school in Aldbourne. Whilst Aldbourne is a relatively affluent area, this is not every child's experience. The team at St Michael's recognise that they need to work harder to ensure poverty related stigma does not play its part when designing their curriculum and asking families to resource their children.

The team at St Michael's has recognised that a significant challenge facing their disadvantaged pupils has been emotional stability and self-regulation. 74% of their disadvantaged learners are emotionally vulnerable. Whilst the team has been looking at ways to support this area for some time, the 'Affordable Schools' strategy gave them the opportunity to look again at their strategies through a different lens.

St Michael's used the Affordable Schools implementation plan to fully understand the links between social and emotional learning and poverty related stigma. Their implementation included:

- Surveying their staff, parents, carers and pupils
- Building a team around Affordable Schools with the specific focus on social and emotional learning interventions
- Building a deeper understanding of what was already in place and strengthen practice through the lens of affordability.

The specific review of their Forest Schools programme, along with a broader understanding of the impact of limited finances for some families allowed them to make tweaks to their programme such as:

- Providing Forest Schools clothing
- Washing clothes for children when things get muddy
- Ensuring the Forest school cycle prioritises those children who need this experience the most, and maintaining this so these children get regular access
- Developing staff awareness around the value of Forest Schools – anxious children can't learn.

Affordable Schools: Enrichment and opportunities at
St Michael's CE Primary School

Impact

St Michael's has used the Affordable Schools Strategy to enhance their existing work around Forest Schools. This had embedded the positive impact and provided the school with some exciting feedback:

"It gives me a boost in my confidence – I feel happy, calm, not stressed."

"Forest School gives me the chance to calm down and fix arguments."

St Michael's Pupils

"I can tell if he has been in the forest – you can physically see it in him, he is relaxed. He says, 'it is my happy place'".

Parents at St Michael's

St Michael's has recognised the value of looking at a strategy through a different lens. This has ensured that every day, in every interaction the team is steadily reducing the impact of having to live with less available resources.



Considering equitable school provision which nurtures children and ensures basic needs are met so they thrive as learners in the classroom.

Rationale

- An Affordable School will mitigate against the causes, barriers and challenges faced by lower income families and devise strategies to address the impact on mental health and wellbeing
- An Affordable School will operate with transparency and take active measures to address challenges presented by food poverty (e.g. availability and costings of food so pupils can make personal judgements about affordability)
- We are mindful of the DfE Guidance for use of Pupil Premium and understand that PP funding can be used for 'Breakfast clubs and meal provision' [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/parent-information-for-primary-schools/using-pupil-premium)
- Exploring poverty and inequality and thinking about how to make their environment more inclusive for all can also support children's participation, voice and activism around social issues.

Key policies to be reviewed

- Food and nutrition
- Anti-bullying
- PSHE & Citizenship.

Once reviewed, include the statement 'This policy has been reviewed through the lens of affordability ensuring that the principles of an Affordable School are active and have a positive impact on reducing poverty related stigma.'

Questions to explore

- Can students at your school identify which of their peers are in receipt of free school meals?
- What do students think of their school lunch experience?
- How do we collect insights into what students think of lunchtime at your school?
- Do students on free school meals have the same school food options as their peers, including at break times and at different times of the year?
- Do all students take up their free school meal entitlement?
- How effective is your food policy and has it been considered through the lens of affordability?

- How can we best use foodbanks?
- How is the school providing visible senior leadership for the impact of poverty related stigma on mental health and wellbeing?
- How does the school anti-bullying policy respond to incidents which are related to poverty?
- How does the school assess the needs of students and the impact of interventions to improve wellbeing and reduce poverty related stigma?
- How does the school ensure timely and effective identification of students who would benefit from targeted support and ensure appropriate referral to support services?
- Are pupils able to access a wide range of physical activities and opportunities inside and outside of school to improve mental and physical health?
- How do we design our curriculum to enable discussion and development around:
 - Reasons behind inequalities in society
 - Causes and consequences of poverty
 - The social security system and welfare reform
 - Poverty and children's rights
 - Food insecurity.
 - In work poverty and low wages
 - Attitudes towards poverty in society
 - What poverty looks like globally, nationally and locally
 - Media representations of poverty

Common barriers

- Mental health can be a sensitive subject to discuss, especially so in families where mental health is presenting challenges
- Mental health is seen as the cause rather than the effect (of living in poverty)
- Recognising emerging issues in the early stages
- Families not taking up entitlement to FSM because of poverty related stigma and pupils not taking up the offer of FSM on an educational visit when it is offered to them
- School systems and processes inadvertently exposing pupils who are in receipt of FSMs
- Pressures around food affordability cause stress and anxiety (mental health)

- Families getting into arrears with school lunch payments placing additional negative pressures on the relationship between the family and the school
- Pupils display negative behaviours and lack of concentration because of lack of breakfast/feeling hungry, tired etc
- Lack of opportunity to access regular physical exercise (see enrichment)
- Home circumstances as contributing factors to pupil mental health and wellbeing (e.g. bed poverty, lack of sleep, overcrowding in houses, washing facilities, warmth, low energy due to lack of meals etc)
- Families having insufficient, timely access to services and specialist support
- School judgements about content of pupil's lunchboxes without thinking 'through the lens of affordability'.

Policies

- Protection of biometric information of children in schools and colleges
- PSHE/RSE
- Anti-bullying
- Health and safety
- School protocol for meeting with parents.
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- SEND
- Behaviour in schools
- Exam policy

Quick wins

- Consider the 'root causes' of any negative behaviours/lack of concentration and provide snacks/breakfast etc to meet basic need (e.g. if a pupil presents as angry establish whether they are hungry, if a pupil presents as tired understand whether they are able to get a good night's sleep/bed poverty etc)
- Gather student voice around meal choices, the lunchtime environment and processes, to understand the 'lived experience'
- Purchase a set of lunch boxes which can be used for FSM pupils instead of paper bags to reduce poverty related stigma
- Ensure a relational approach to contacting parents when communicating any challenges around food and eating in school

- Provide fruit and healthy snacks to supplement food for all pupils, and encourage a healthy diet, especially for PP
- Provide 'toast for all' every morning - as a positive behaviour reinforcer and to combat hunger in the morning
- Send invites to a Breakfast Club/ early school opening/ social time with food
- Empower your catering team to play a frontline role in pastoral care/ wellbeing support and, where appropriate, communicate observations quickly to senior leaders so necessary support can be provided
- Set up a universal 'help yourself' resource for any extra food or snacks that may become available
- Add helplines, links and information about FSM eligibility for families to your website and weekly/termly newsletters (Affordable Schools section on websites)
- Make best use of CPOMS (or safeguarding systems) to regularly update information and bring together bits of the 'jigsaw' which may be an indicator of vulnerability 'through the lens of affordability' (e.g. came to school hungry etc)
- Consider the mental health and wellbeing of all members of staff 'through the lens of affordability' and make adjustments to staff activities (e.g. affordability of staff get togethers or events).

Digging deeper

Address poverty related stigma, which can lead to bullying, feelings of isolation, anxiety and attendance concerns, by:

- Review the whole lunchtime experience through the lens of affordability and the 'lived experience' of pupils from lower income families and strategically plan to bring about improvements
- Review the anti-bullying policy through the lens of affordability and understand the nature of incidents where poverty related stigma may have been a contributing factor
- Build a mental health awareness cycle across the school year so that you are regularly talking with pupils about their experiences of school life, including cost of living
- Ensure mental health and cost of living has sufficient coverage in your curriculum
- Build a common language to support cost of living discussions

- Carry out the Wiltshire Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Schools survey and act on findings
- Use health and wellbeing data to identify health behaviour inequalities for those pupils with indices of living in poverty. e.g. annual dentist check, eye examinations, up-to-date vaccinations
- Work to achieve levels of the Wiltshire Healthy Schools Programme
- Adopt Five to Thrive as a universal provision
- Build relationships with local businesses such as supermarkets who may be able to provide food vouchers, food donations and other resources to support school delivery of clubs and activities
- Carry out a curriculum review and build opportunities to explore:
 - Reasons behind inequalities in society
 - Causes and consequences of poverty
 - The social security system and welfare reform
 - Poverty and children’s rights
 - Food insecurity.
 - In work poverty and low wages
 - Attitudes towards poverty in society
 - What poverty looks like globally, nationally and locally
 - Media representations of poverty
- Build a programme of financial education (mathematics, citizenship and PSHE education) to help give the confidence, skills and knowledge needed to manage money, now and in the future. [Young Enterprise | Leading UK Charity | Empowering Young People \(young-enterprise.org.uk\)](https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/).

Resources

Financial Planning

The **Primary Planning Framework** aims to support the planning, teaching, and progression of financial education by setting out the key areas of financial knowledge, skills and attitudes, across four core themes:

- How to manage money
- Becoming a critical consumer
- Managing risks and emotions associated with money
- Understanding the important role money plays in our lives.

[FINANCIAL-EDUCATION-PLANNING-FRAMEWORK-3-11-ONLINE-2020.pdf \(young-enterprise.org.uk\)](https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/)

Young Enterprise Teachers Hub

Free resources, lesson plans and tools to support financial education from KS1 – 5
[Teachers Hub - Young Enterprise & Young Money \(young-enterprise.org.uk\)](http://young-enterprise.org.uk)

Values, money and me

Values Money and Me is a free KS1 & 2 online resource to help children explore the world of money with teachers, parents and carers. [Homepage | Values, Money & Me \(valuesmoneyandme.co.uk\)](http://valuesmoneyandme.co.uk)

Food and Nutrition

“Wake up, mum. I’m hungry!” This is the opening line to the children’s book, *It’s a No-Money Day*, by Kate Milner, a powerful exploration of food banks and life below the poverty line.

[Healthy weight : Wiltshire Healthy Schools](#)

[Breakfast Clubs : Wiltshire Healthy Schools](#)

[Home : Wiltshire Healthy Schools](#)

[School Plates | Campaign | ProVeg UK](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england/school-food-in-england>

<https://www.gov.uk/school-meals-healthy-eating-standards>

<https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/schools/benefits/school-food-standards> (Food for life parents pack)

All major supermarkets have programmes that will allow schools access to food so they can distribute it to their most vulnerable families. See also:

<https://fareshare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sainsburys-Food-Donation-Programme-Comms-Pack-2.pdf>

<https://www.neighbourly.com/Aldi>

Magic Breakfast: providing healthy breakfast food and expert support to help identify and reach those pupils at risk of hunger.

[Magic Breakfast](#)

Greggs Breakfast Clubs: support with funding school breakfast clubs, encouraging the use of parent volunteers.

[About the Scheme | Greggs Foundation](#)

Mental Health

Home : Wiltshire Healthy Schools

Emotional wellbeing and mental health : Wiltshire Healthy Schools

Working with parents : Wiltshire Healthy Schools

Mental Health Home : Wiltshire Healthy Schools

On Your Mind – We can help

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/getting-started/secondary/>

<https://www.bouncetogether.co.uk/education/wellbeing-in-schools>

<https://www.skillsforschools.org.uk>

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/wellbeing-activities-being-kind-to-yourself/>

5 ways to wellbeing: <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

School Wellbeing: a range of resources on different topics
Home school wellbeing

Oxfam's Global Citizenship Curriculum: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620105/edu-global-citizenship-schools-guide-091115-en.pdf?sequence=11&isAllowed=y>

Affordable Schools: Food and Nutrition at Ashton Keynes CE Primary School

Ashton Keynes CE Primary School is a successful school in North Wiltshire; on the border with neighbouring Gloucestershire. Although Ashton Keynes is an affluent village, many children live outside of the village and there are hidden areas of deprivation within this catchment and beyond. The school has around 8% of their pupils claiming Pupil Premium but know there are many more families who may sit just outside the threshold for this grant, who are experiencing the negative impact of the rise in cost of living. Ashton Keynes was already a poverty aware school but the 'Affordable Schools' strategy has allowed them to reshape their approach; particularly around food and nutrition.

As part of their 'Affordable Schools' implementation, the Ashton Keynes team engaged in some key activities:

- Identify need beyond those children in receipt of pupil premium
- Survey stakeholders
- Review current approaches then develop a robust, inclusive strategy for food and nutrition in Ashton Keynes.

This process has resulted in the school team being able to take concrete steps to ensuring no child and no family go hungry, and the school's 'affordable' approach to food and nutrition is universal and equitable. The team has undertaken:

- Wide communication of the affordable approach so that the whole school community understand about our drive to become an affordable school
- Wide communication of the affordable approach so that the whole school community understand about our drive to become an affordable school
- The writing of a food and nutrition policy which includes affordability [PERSONAL / SOCIAL / HEALTH EDUCATION / CITIZENSHIP \(akps.org.uk\)](#)
- A review of the school's curriculum offer and teaching about food and nutrition
- Wider engagement with families to support affordable food and nutrition at home
- To ensure their website clearly provides information about affordable schools and any links to support available
- The setting up page of their school website to inform and support [Affordable Schools \(akps.org.uk\)](#).

Ashton Keynes CE Primary School
Continues over...

Affordable Schools: Food and Nutrition at
Ashton Keynes CE Primary School

Impact

Already, the impact has been significant:

'It feels so rewarding to be helping children and families via a strategy rather than firefighting and dealing with the daily needs. Building it into the curriculum and ethos of the school makes us all aware, mindful and ensure it is actioned.'

SLT

Most importantly, Ashton Keynes are making a difference to their children and families

"This is the best day, I thought I would be good in the kitchen but now I know I am and I can make things for myself".

Ashton Keynes Pupil

"I never thought my child would cook and actually make something edible! It has helped us at home as he likes to help but has become a much less fussy eater"

Parent

Together, Ashton Keynes are steadily ensuring that access to good food and nutrition is a universal provision for all families.



SECURING POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships and relationships are central to securing whole school community success with strategies to promote engagement and improve outcomes.

Rationale

- A positive, family centred problem solving approach, driven by data, will improve outcomes: every family is different and should be provided with support which accurately and sensitively reflects their individual circumstances
- Building strong, trusting relationships that promote a feeling of belonging with individual families is fundamental to improving student engagement: parents and carers are treated equitably and can seek support from school without stigma or stereotyping
- Effective communication of school policy, practice and support is key to success. Parents may not be aware of the support that is in place to ensure families on a low income can get the help they need
- Actively demonstrating an understanding of the financial pressures being placed on families will help to strengthen relationships and improve engagement. (CPAG advises that parents appreciate: 'An open and proactive approach; A simple and matter of fact style in communication to parents and carers, which acknowledges that any family could fall into financial hardship at any time; Discretion, confidentiality, kindness and non-judgement when having conversations with families)
- We are mindful of the DfE Guidance for use of Pupil Premium Grant and understand that PP funding can be used for 'Communicating with and supporting parents' [Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Key policies to be reviewed

- Attendance
- Home/school agreement.

Once reviewed, include the statement 'This policy has been reviewed through the lens of affordability ensuring that the principles of an Affordable School are active and have a positive impact on reducing poverty related stigma.'

Questions to explore

- How do we communicate with our families?
- How effective is school communication (website, letters, personalised messages, parent meetings etc) to support parents and secure wider engagement?
- How do parents feel about coming into school and asking for help or talking about their circumstances? How do we know?
- Are there links between parental engagement and attendance in our school?
- What is our school's prevailing culture about parental engagement and is there any deficit language or behaviours we may need to address?
- What is the strength of our relationship with parents, and do we have a positive mindset about engaging even the hardest to reach?
- Are educational visit letters and related communications aware of pupil home situations in compliance with the Education Act 1996 in respect to charging for educational activities.

Common barriers

- Poverty and impact on attendance and punctuality (transport, mental health, peer relationships etc)
- Poor relationships between families and schools (e.g. legacy disagreements)
- Challenges with transportation (including cost)
- Chronic & acute illness, family responsibilities or home situation, trauma
- Anxiety and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
- Housing and food insecurity
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- View of schooling and value placed on education due to life experiences, current challenges, type of occupation
- Parents do not like coming into school: embarrassment, poverty related stigma, previous poor experiences
- Parents not aware of support which is available

- Stigma around poverty in the community and the school lacking a whole school 'universal' approach which avoids labelling
- Parents/carers may not be readily available, or more 'hard to reach' due to work schedules e.g. shift work or holding down multiple jobs
- Relationships with parents are under developed, particularly with the most vulnerable
- Engagement with health services – sight tests, hearing, dentist, immunisations.

Linked policies

- Accessibility
- Attendance
- Anti-bullying
- Exclusion
- Pupil Premium Statement
- SEND
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Behaviour in schools
- Health and Safety
- School protocol for meeting with parents.

Quick wins

- Communicate universally sharing financial information with all families, not just those who you think might need it. This universal promotion means parents don't have to ask for help and ensures information reaches the right people - even if you don't always know who that is
- Tailor communications, with careful use of language, to encourage more positive dialogue (e.g. personal text messages for families, targeted conversations, simple, clear and matter of fact, opportunities for parents to question to develop understanding)



- Whenever possible, communicate through a mix of methods (letters, emails, texts, in person...) as wide ranging, visible and open communication opens the door to conversations and encourages any parents to come forward if they need to
- Timing of communications is important so try to communicate information at your earliest opportunity, especially around induction and transition points in the school year, beginning of each term and well ahead of any deadlines
- Be aware of language barriers and literacy issues
- Make the most of home visits as an opportunity to establish relationships, provide face to face communication around school support and services and identify vulnerabilities so the school can understand/intervene early
- Breakfast club/early bird opening
- Provide consistency at the start of the school day – for all students e.g. routines feel safe and this encourages better attendance
- Install a ‘welcome to school’ processes for students who struggle to make it e.g. meet and greet/arriving earlier to avoid crowds/pick-up from home/ breakfast club/use thrive as a transition activity
- Set up regular face to face meetings (informal and formal), using family link workers or by visiting the family home at the family’s convenience
- Set up champions for all vulnerable students e.g. use specialist practitioners, family support workers
- Describe initiatives like uniform sales as ‘green’ or ‘community-focused’ to help increase uptake (instead of focusing on the financial aspect)
- Talking directly about poverty or financial difficulties can sometimes worry parents and carers. Try using collective words like ‘us’ (for example: “we want our families to get the support they’re entitled to”)
- In any messages that involve costs (for example, in letters home about school trips), remind families where to go to get information regarding financial entitlements and support (e.g. your dedicated email address).

Digging deeper

- Develop the school website to include a prominent space for a wide range of information relating to cost of living, financial support and signposting to organisations and services (e.g. Wiltshire cost of living, emergency essentials addressing issues such as bed poverty, washing machine etc)

- Refer families to affordable food providers, money advisers and other relevant outside agencies who can support them if they are struggling financially
- Use school website to signpost parents and carers to services and training
- Understand attendance issues as a symptom or barometer of health and wellbeing and have a shared understanding that commitment to the 'Affordable Schools' approach will lead to improved relationships and communication, a stronger school community and, in turn, attendance
- Any school improvement strategy to address attendance needs to understand the data and challenges, secure school systems, roles and responsibilities, take a whole school approach, target support for the whole family rather than just the individual student, work on a case by case basis for 'stuck' cases, ensure regular monitoring and feedback
- Establish a Parent Council; parents sometimes feel more comfortable talking to other parents and this will be an effective way to discuss 'Affordable Schools' and establish a network of contacts
- Build strong relationships with families and make every effort made to build trust and engagement here
- Evaluate communication systems and processes to ensure easy access for all
- Support parents/carers with making a free school meal application including providing ICT facilities for online applications and frequently promote to families
- Run specific training for staff around parental engagement e.g. use EEF guidance (see resources)
- Offer Parental training around routine and behaviour linked to the school's evidence based approaches
- Support parents with information, guidance and strategies for attendance with targeted support for individuals, as appropriate (e.g. social stories to provide information and pre-teaching which enable students and parents to be more aware)
- Set up regular parent workshops for a variety of purposes, possibly repeating each year so the community are used to this kind of connection and support (e.g. preparing your child for a residential visit or reading with your child)
- Support parents with careers advice and guidance by signposting to relevant services

Resources

Wiltshire Council 'Supporting you through the rising cost of living'

Community Directory [Interactive Community Directory - Wiltshire Council](#)

Council tax, benefits and financial support [Council tax, benefits and financial support - Wiltshire Council](#)

Energy costs advice and guidance [Energy costs advice and guidance - Wiltshire Council](#)

Housing information and support [Housing information and support - Wiltshire Council](#)

Mental Health support [Mental Health support - Wiltshire Council](#)

Local Practical Help [Local practical help - Wiltshire Council](#)

Supporting businesses [Supporting businesses through the rising cost of living - Wiltshire Council](#)

Warm spaces [Wiltshire Council warm spaces - Wiltshire Council](#)

Grants overview [Cost of Living Support \(wiltshiremoney.org.uk\)](#)

Work Wiltshire case studies:

<https://workwiltshire.co.uk/case-studies-3/>

Wiltshire Council Parenting Support

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parenting-support>



Parent Champions

Asking parents who already have a good relationship with the school to 'spread the word' among other families can be helpful in engaging parents who might not have a positive relationship with school staff, or are less likely to attend events or read a newsletter or other promotional material. Coram Family and Childcare 'parent champions' are parent volunteers who might be able to assist (see below).

[Setting up a Parent Champions scheme : Family and Childcare Trust](#)

[Working with parents : Wiltshire Healthy Schools](#)

Family and Community Learning

Wiltshire Family and Community Learning team have a wealth of resources and training opportunities to support parent engagement and access to services

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/family-learning>

Turn 2 Us: has an online grant search tool where you can find charities that offer non repayable grants to help individuals on low incomes

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk>

Gingerbread: Provide information to help single parents support themselves and their family.

<https://www.gingerbread.org.uk>

Family Action: Provide practical, emotional and financial support to those who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation across the country

<https://www.family-action.org.uk>

North Wiltshire:

<https://www.therisetrust.org/services/youth-activities/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/supporting-parents>

Support for families during holidays

FUEL is a free holiday activity and food project that offers participants the opportunity to take part in a range of fun activities during school holiday periods

[Resources](#) | [Page](#) | [SLA Online \(sla-online.co.uk\)](#)

Entitled To: benefit calculator to make sure families are getting the support they are entitled to [Benefits Calculator - entitledto - independent](#) | [accurate](#) | [reliable](#)

Family Fund Services

The programme provides items that meet children's most basic needs such as a bed to sleep in, a cooker to give them a hot meal, clothing (in a crisis) and other items and services that are critical to children's wellbeing.

[BBC Children in Need Emergency Essentials Programme - Family Fund Business Services \(familyfundservices.co.uk\)](#)

Attendance

DfE publication on improving school attendance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

[EBSA: Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) | Right Choice wiltshire.gov.uk](#)

[Education Welfare Resource Page on Right Choice Resources](#) | [Page](#) | [SLA Online \(sla-online.co.uk\)](#)

[Attendance Works: https://www.attendanceworks.org](#)

[EEF: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/attendance-interventions-rapid-evidence-assessment](#)

[Case study: https://researchschool.org.uk/durrington/news/an-evidence-informed-approach-to-improving-attendance](#)

[SEND newsletter - Local Offer \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Affordable Schools: Attendance and parental engagement at Pembroke Park Primary School

Pembroke Park is a primary and nurse school serving one of the most deprived wards in England. 34% of their pupils are in receipt of Pupil Premium; with many more families sitting just outside of the threshold for Pupil Premium but who equally experience challenges related to the rise in cost of living.

The school was really keen to implement the 'Affordable Schools' strategy. The school team understood that looking through the lens of affordability and, specifically, the negative impact of poverty related stigma, would help them secure better relationships with all their families and hopefully improve attendance. Prior to starting the implementation, surveys showed that 55% of parents and carers would recommend the school. Furthermore, whole school attendance was 92.4% with persistent absence at 27.2%.

To begin the implementation, the school team completed the following tasks:

- Formed a team around 'Affordable Schools'
- Surveyed all staff, parents, governors and pupils around the barriers of affordability and day to day school life
- Shared the Affordable Schools context with staff.

This allowed the school to identify attendance and parental engagement as a key barrier.

Looking at this area through the lens of affordability, the school was then able to take meaningful steps to how they approached this perennial issue:

- Ensuring communications to parents and carers was as varied as possible: newsletters, social media, Teachers2Parents app, emails, texts to identify best form of communication and moving to one platform (Dojo)
- Introducing weekly Pastoral DASH meetings to monitor vulnerable pupils
- Allocating 3 hours per week HLTA time to the implementation to ensure individual needs are identified and pupil-centred solutions offered or created
- Meetings booked just after drop-off or just before collection times.

Affordable Schools: Attendance and parental engagement at **Pembroke Park Primary School**

Impact

These, along with many more activities and quick wins, has had a remarkable impact. Now, 87% of parents and carers would recommend the school, and whole school attendance is 94.3% with persistent absence at 14.4%.

Most importantly, the impact is voiced by the parents and children themselves:

“I love coming to school. It is my safe place.”

“Breakfast club helps me feel calm and I know I can always come back for a snack if I need it.”

Pupils

“Initially I was shut off, like you don’t talk about your problems to school. But I am so glad they kept going because I now trust that they are here to help and they have really supported me through some difficult things in my life.”

“The school doesn’t just make a difference to children but to the whole family. They go above and beyond to do all they can.”

Parents

Pembroke Park Primary School has unlocked the key to improving attendance and developing relationships between school and parents: listening to the challenges and looking through the lens of Affordability rather than basing actions on assumptions.

For further information, guidance materials and resources, please visit the **Affordable Schools Toolkit** on Wiltshire Right Choice.

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Affordable Schools

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