

ACTION ON POVERTY: A Guide for Schools in North Yorkshire



Contents

Acknowledgements	3
1: Introduction	4
2: Childhood Poverty - facts and figures	5
Childhood poverty in North Yorkshire	5
Who is at risk of Childhood Poverty?	6
3: Action on Poverty – a school’s guide	7
How to use the guide and self-assessment tools	7
What does the guide include?	7
Suggested 6 steps method for getting started with the guide:	8
Theme 1: Whole School Approach	9
Theme 2: In-School and Home Learning Resources	11
Theme 3: Food	13
Theme 4: Uniform	15
Theme 5: Additional Opportunities	17
Theme 6: Support for Pupils and Families	21
Involving School Councils	24
Action Planning Tool.....	25
APPENDICES	28
Appendix A: Childhood Poverty	28
What is Child Poverty?	28
The Impact of Childhood Poverty	28
Appendix B: North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing© the School Day Project and Outputs.....	29
North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing© the School Day Project.....	29
North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing the School Day© Outputs	30

Acknowledgements

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This guide was produced by Phillippa Sellstrom, former Public Health Manager at North Yorkshire Council (NYC), with input from the following NYC colleagues: Helen Ingle, Public Health Manager; Dr Gill Kelly, Consultant in Public Health; Ruth Stacey, Healthy Schools Programme Manager; and Clare Barrowman, Senior Health and Wellbeing Adviser.

The draft guide was presented to school staff at the North Yorkshire Designated Safeguarding Leads Conference in September 2024, and feedback / suggestions from delegates were subsequently incorporated into the guide. Feedback has also been sought on the draft guide from other colleagues e.g. the FEAST team [What is FEAST - North Yorkshire Together](#)

The guide is a working document - we welcome ongoing feedback from schools and other settings that have used it, so that we can update and improve it.

We also wish to note that the model of Poverty Proofing© the School Day utilised within the development of this work is a copyright concept and methodology which belongs to Children North East. It cannot be used without explicit consent nor be used to develop any competing models. By completing the self-assessment process within this guide it is not possible to say that a school has been 'Poverty Proofed©' as this terminology refers to a process delivered by or under licence from Children North East.



1: Introduction

The time that children spend at school provides them with numerous opportunities to develop and grow, not only in terms of academic ability, but also in all aspects of their health and wellbeing including self-esteem, aspirations and mental health. For children who are growing up in poverty, they can face a range of barriers, negative experiences and stigma within the school environment. This can reduce their enjoyment of school and prevent them from accessing all the available opportunities, limiting the reaching of their full potential and best health and wellbeing.

4.3 million

children are growing up in poverty in the UK

9

children in an average classroom of 30 (30%) are living in poverty

In recognition of this position, North Yorkshire Council (NYC), in partnership with the charity Children North East (CNE), undertook a 12-month project to explore how the impact of poverty was affecting the school day of pupils in North Yorkshire and to identify practical actions that could be put into place to support pupils and families more effectively. This included completion of Poverty Proofing© the School Day Audits which were facilitated by CNE within four North Yorkshire schools. Alongside this, NYC have engaged with the Child Action Poverty Group and Doncaster Council Public Health Team to review and understand work they have undertaken around the impact of poverty within the school environment.

This guide is based on learning from the above steps to provide **an approach that schools can take to consider every part of school life that may place barriers in the way of children's participation and learning, pose income-related exclusion and stigma or put pressure on low-income families.** It includes assessment tools and examples of practical actions that schools can take to mitigate the impact of poverty within their school environment and improve the school experience for all pupils.



Graphic supplied by the **Child Poverty Action Group** who have produced a range of tools and materials for schools that can be found here <https://cpag.org.uk/what-we-do/project-work/cost-school-day/resources>

2: Childhood Poverty - facts and figures

Childhood poverty in North Yorkshire

The information below has been sourced from the [End Child Poverty Coalition](#) with the latest data set provided down to county level being published for 2021/22. High level data published for 2022/23 indicates an increase in child poverty figures.

Numbers and Percentage of Children Living in Poverty 2021/22

UK - 4.2 million children (29.2%)

England - 3.7 million children (30.8%)

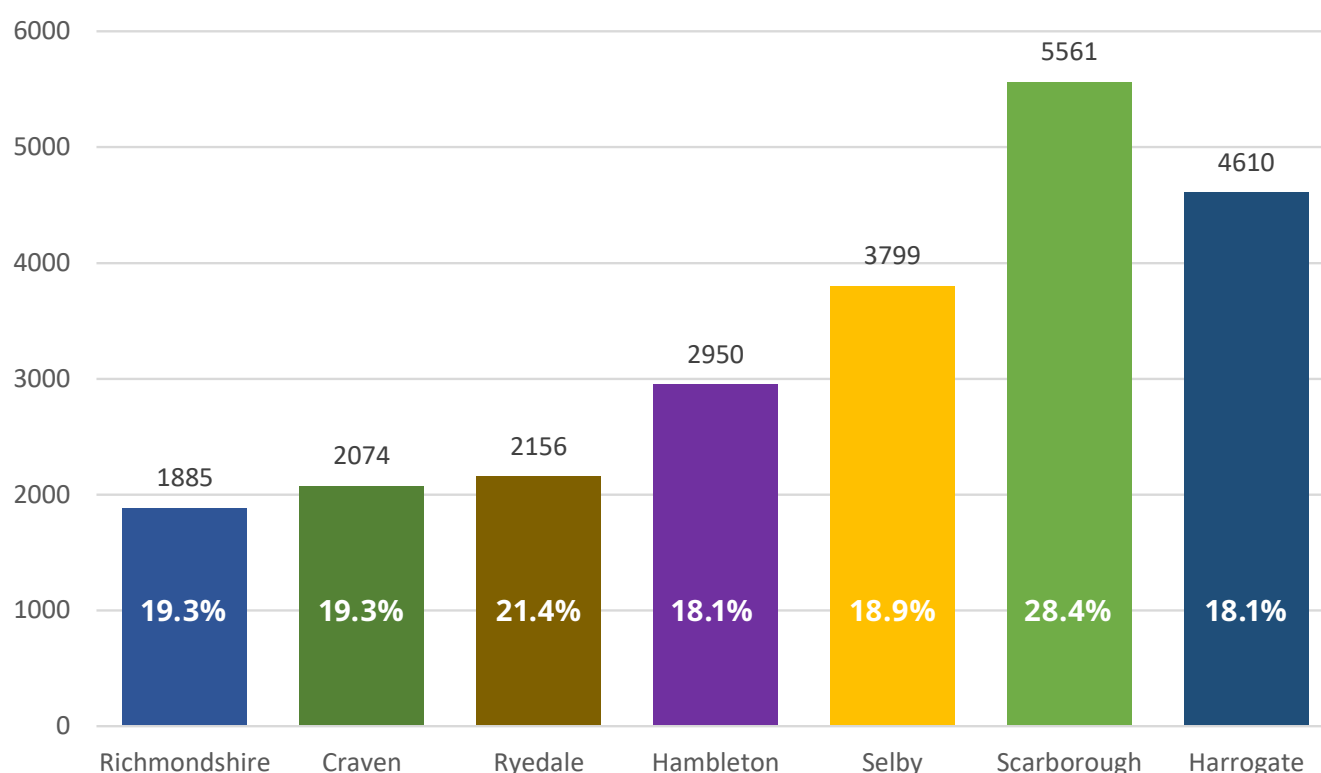
Yorkshire and Humber - 0.4 million children (31.3%)

North Yorkshire - 23,035 children (21%)



The chart below highlights the significant differences between geographical areas within North Yorkshire, with rates of child poverty ranging between 18.1% and 28.4%.

Child Poverty Estimates 2021/22



Who is at risk of Childhood Poverty?

Every family can experience unexpected changes to circumstances such as job loss, illness or family separation leading to reduced income and potential poverty. However, there are a number of key groups that are particularly vulnerable:

42% of families with 3 or more children live in poverty

44% of children living in lone-parent families live in poverty

Children growing up in households where there are no members in full-time employment

31% of people with disabilities live in poverty (this is 12% higher than for people without disabilities)

48% of children from BME groups live in poverty, compared with 25% in white British families



3: Action on Poverty – A Guide for Schools

How to use the guide and self-assessment tools

Why do we need an 'Action on Poverty Guide for Schools'?

For some pupils who live in households facing financial insecurity they will be eligible for support such as free school meals or universal credit, but this is not the case for all families. With this in mind, addressing the impact of poverty within the school environment needs to be approached with a recognition that poverty is complex and many families face financial challenges. Therefore, any changes implemented should consider pupils not only eligible for support but all who are under financial strain.

What does the guide include?

The guide below is set out in six key themes:

[Theme 1. Whole School Approach](#)

[Theme 2. In-School and Home Learning Resources](#)

[Theme 3. Food](#)

[Theme 4. Uniform](#)

[Theme 5. Additional Opportunities](#)

[Theme 6. Support for Pupils and Families](#)



Each theme has a **self-assessment tool*** and a list of **top tips** and suggestions of **practical actions** that can be taken. The guide also includes an **action plan template*** and advice on implementing change as this needs careful planning and time. Not all families or pupils may agree with or understand the reasoning for change. It is important to note that the position within each school and the challenges that families may face are unique and therefore **we encourage engagement with pupils and their families throughout the process.**

The ideas in the guide are suggestions – each school will have to ascertain what feels right for their school. Some of them are common sense but we have tried to collate lots of different ideas and we hope that you will find them helpful.

*Separate versions of these documents are available that schools can easily complete.

Please tell us what you think!

This first version of the guide was finalised in April 2025. Our aim is to get feedback from schools on the guide, so that we can update and improve it over time. So please let us know what you think and if/how you have used it, and if you have any suggestions. You can send these to: dph@northyorks.gov.uk (please mention that the email is about the Action on Poverty – A Guide for Schools document).

Suggested 6 steps method for getting started with the guide:

- 1.** Identify staff in the school who can act as the 'Poverty in Schools Champion/s'.
- 2.** Share the guide with staff and ask them to read through it and / or have a meeting to introduce the staff to it and highlight the key points and planned approach to implementation.
- 3.** Agree which theme to start with (what is the priority for your school? Which theme needs the most work/change?).
- 4.** Complete the self-assessment tool for that theme and identify priority areas for action.
- 5.** Use the action plan template to collate actions for each of the different themes – so you have it all in one document.
- 6.** Monitor progress against action and changes, and review feedback from staff, pupils and parents/carers. Share your feedback on the guide with dph@northyorks.gov.uk (please mention it's about the poverty guide for schools). Please include any ideas/tips of your own, that could be included in future updates of the guide. Thank you!



Theme 1: Whole School Approach

This theme includes questions for the senior leadership to consider if they are being inclusive in all elements of school policy and practice with a 'no-shame' approach for low-income families. This includes the reward and sanctions system for issues such as attendance, behaviour, uniform and homework and whether this approach disadvantages pupils from poorer backgrounds, impacting on their experiences of the school day.

Self-Assessment Tool

School Approach - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Staff are aware of the potential impacts of child poverty on pupils and families e.g. national and local statistics, health and social consequences					
Staff are aware of school and local support for families and pupils experiencing financial hardship					
There are families in school who struggle to afford essential items					
There are families in school who struggle to afford school resources					
The school has an effective policy and approach to help address child poverty in school					
Systems for attendance, behaviour and reward do not unfairly disadvantage pupils on a low income					
Pupils have the opportunity to discuss issues around poverty and how it affects them					
Parents/Carers have the opportunity to give opinions and share their experiences around poverty/financial pressures					
Families on low incomes are represented within the Parent Teachers Association					
All children in school, regardless of financial background are able to attend and engage with all aspects of the school day					
Priority Area(s) for Action:					

Top tips



- Identify a lead and form a working group. Involve staff, pupils and families. By including everyone, it is more likely you will identify the right areas for action and find solutions that work for all. This group can help to raise awareness throughout the school community and get people involved.
- Ensure pupil and family voice underpins the work; they have invaluable insight.
- Ensure to communicate across the whole school team and to families that this work is being undertaken. A useful framing for this work is 'No child left behind'. Be clear that you want input from staff, pupils and families; by including everyone, it gives confidence that the school really is committed to the work. It will also mean families are more likely to come forward with problems and ask for help.
- Start by identifying all the current positive practice that is already within the school and thinking about how this can be built on, agree some quick-win targets to gain some momentum, set reasonable timescales for changes and set regular review points for your plan.
- When making changes that will have financial implications, ensure to find out how this will impact on families e.g. consultations around changes to school uniform.



Practical actions and resources

- [Child poverty | CPAG](#) - provides facts and figures about poverty and who is affected in the UK.
- [The CPAG Cost of the School Day Toolkit](#) contains details of activities and surveys to gather the input of children and young people (pg.49), school staff (pg.61), parents and carers (pg.62).
- [The CPAG Cost of the School Day Toolkit](#) contains tools to map out estimated costings of key aspects of school life including uniform, travel, learning, school trips, eating at school, school clubs/activities, fun events, home learning etc. See pages 53 to 60.
- The Cost of the School Day Lesson Plan – [a case study from St John Ogilvie High School](#), South Lanarkshire provides resources to facilitate a classroom session around costs associated with a day at school (pg. 25).
- Complete a costings audit, mapping out all the points across the year in which families will face costs. A diary tool to support this work can be found here: [Cost of the School Day Calendar 2024/25](#).
- Review systems for collection of payments e.g. school dinner money and trips. Consider how late payments are dealt with. Does this identify children? Does it prompt a discussion about support?
- Review the current reward and sanctions system for items such as attendance, behaviour, uniform and homework. Does it provide flexibility for pupils who may be facing additional challenges? E.g. attendance can be affected by lack of travel money or embarrassment about not having the right uniform/kit; challenging behaviour may be due to inability to complete homework due to lack of internet access.
- Review how families are travelling to school. Is the cost a challenge for some pupils? Consider the free [Modeshift Starts School Scheme](#) which supports schools to develop active and sustainable travel plans.
- Fighting against poverty – [case studies of school actions](#)
- There is only so much we can do – [a report on child poverty in schools in England](#)

Theme 2: In-School and Home Learning Resources

This theme focusses on aspects relating to learning equipment and resources, thinking about what pupils may need, both within the school day and at home, ranging from basic items such as pencils and pens to subject-specific items. Most learning tasks have little or no cost, but digital access or costs for homework projects may prove challenging for some families.

Self-Assessment Tool

In-School and Home Learning Resources - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All pupils have access to the resources they need for in-school learning e.g. pencils, pens, calculators					
All pupils have access to the resources they need for at home learning e.g. computer and internet (schools could ask parents to confidentially inform them if they will struggle to provide these at home or if they would prefer their child to access the internet at school)					
Cost and resources are considered when setting homework tasks e.g. cost of an art project					
School has a system in place to identify and support pupils who may need help in sourcing learning resources					
School policy/approach/ sanctions/reward around not having equipment or homework does not disadvantage some pupils					
Information about support with resources is shared with pupils and families, e.g. if schools can loan resources/equipment					
Costs associated with studying specific subjects are affordable for all pupils e.g. cost of cooking ingredients may deter signing up to home economics					

Priority Area(s) for Action:

Top tips



- Develop a school resources and loaning policy, and ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and what can be provided. This should cover resources needed for all aspects of school learning in and out of school.
- Ensure all pupils and families are aware of what the school can provide or loan and promote it regularly.
- Find out about local support available for digital access such as free computer clubs or recycled IT equipment.
- Ensure that pupils can access loaned equipment or resources in a confidential and discrete manner.

Practical actions and resources

- Map out home-based learning activities to think about spreading them out more evenly across the school term. Are there specific home tasks or activities that could put additional financial pressure on families such as craft projects, and how often are these set? Have you considered the cost implications? Could there be an alternative task?
- Offer lunch and afterschool homework sessions in which resources for homework can be accessed for free e.g. computer and internet access, and arts and crafts materials.
- Develop a resources station or pick-up point that pupils can access first thing before class to avoid the embarrassment of not having items. This will also enable identification of pupils who may be struggling and provide opportunity to offer support.
- Consider bulk buying equipment such as pens and pencil cases which can be sold at low price or given out at the start of each term.
- GCSE subject choice: are there additional costs of studying specific subjects, and does this affect pupils' subject choices? E.g. cookery ingredients, textile materials and sporting equipment. Ensure that conversations around costs for specific subjects, and support with these, take place when pupils are selecting their GCSE choices. Where possible, remove charges for Food Technology, Design and Technology, Art, PE and Geography field trips.



Theme 3: Food

In this theme we explore how pupils access food over the course of the school day including breakfast, break time, lunchtime and out of school trips and how the Free School Meals offer is managed.



Self-Assessment Tool

Food - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All pupils can access nutritious food throughout the school day i.e. breakfast, lunch, snack time					
Families do not face any additional food costs when accessing extra-curricular activities					
Eligible families are supported to apply for Free School Meals (FSM) or automatically enrolled					
Pupils who are on FSM can not be identified by other pupils e.g. a note on visible register/class lists, or packaging of free packed lunch on trips					
Families who are struggling to pay school meals costs are supported or signposted to help					
School food costs are clear to parents/ carers and are reasonable (primary)					
School food costs are clear to pupils (secondary) e.g. meal deal costs are clear					
Families are provided with information about local food support and low-cost meal ideas					

Priority Area(s) for Action:

Top tips



- Ensure that practice around pupils on free school meals is non-stigmatising i.e. are they identifiable in any way? Is there a check box against their name in the register shared on a class screen? Or paper bags for free packed lunches on trips?
- Make sure that pupils who are in arrears for school meal payments are still able to eat and know how to ask for help with this. Use the position of being in arrears to open a discussion with families, offer support and signpost.
- Make sure information about free school meals and support on how to apply is promoted clearly and in easy-to-read format. Provide a drop-in for questions and help with application. Or participate in an annual automatic enrolment process (this is provided for North Yorkshire schools using NYC's FSM enrolment portal).
- Share information with parents and carers about FEAST North Yorkshire's Holiday Activities and Food programme, designed by the Department for Education as a food poverty initiative to ensure those who rely on free school meals during term-time have access to food during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. <https://www.northyorkshiretogether.co.uk/feast>

Practical actions and resources

- Breakfast provision – see the [NYC Guide to providing Breakfast Clubs](#) which includes information about the importance of breakfast, finding funding and potential models.
- Connect with your local food bank to see if they can help with providing free breakfast or snack time items and explore options to access food parcels for families when needed.
- Ensure that details of any local food insecurity support are communicated regularly to families.
- Source some cheap lunch boxes to use for pupils receiving FSM on school trips.
- Provide information to families about ideas for healthy, low-cost nutritional family meals either via newsletters or weekly recipe ideas. Healthy, low-cost ideas for breakfast, lunch, packed lunches and dinner can be found on the [Healthier Families website](#). [Healthy-Lunchboxes-leaflet-primary-2024.pdf](#)
- Make sure that the costings of food items are made clear and simple to all pupils and they can see them before entering the food hall to enable those with limited funds to budget comfortably e.g. food prices are shared in the form time/room.



Theme 4: Uniform

In this theme we seek to understand the way in which school uniform and PE kits is supplied, how much they cost, and the expectations that the school has in regard to uniform and PE kits. It also considers how the school supports families with uniform costs.

Self-Assessment Tool

Uniform - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The school uniform is affordable and accessible for all families					
The school has consulted with pupils and families about the cost of uniform					
The non-uniform compliance, rewards and sanctions systems in place considers potential financial causes					
Spare shoes and uniform are usable and appealing/well maintained and can be accessed in a discrete manner					
Families know where they can get help to purchase uniform					
There is a second hand/preloved uniform scheme or details of the local provision is shared with families					

Priority Area(s) for Action:

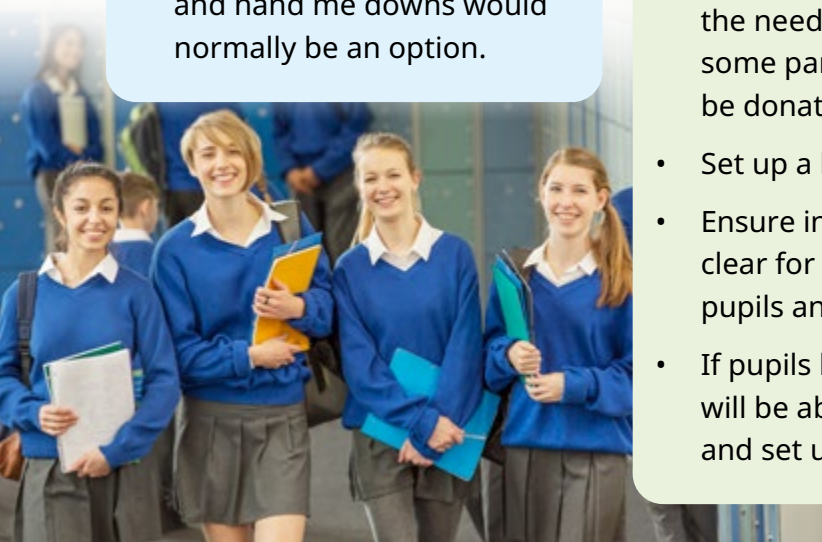
Top tips



- The School Uniform Bill brought into place in 2022 means affordability must be the top priority for schools when setting uniform policies. Guidance can be found here: [Affordable School Uniforms – a guide](#)
- Ensure that any spare clothing items or kits are clean and in good condition, so pupils do not feel uncomfortable using it.
- Ensure that all staff are mindful about the causes behind missing uniform items; these could be due to the cost of purchase or challenges with regular washing etc. and ensure that consequences are appropriate and trigger supportive conversations.
- If uniform changes are made, allow a period of grace, taking into consideration families with multiple children where costs may be significant and hand me downs would normally be an option.

Practical actions and resources

- Complete an exercise to review your uniform considering:
- Branding, how many uniform items require a logo/badge, and is this really needed? Could iron/sew-on badges be cheaper?
- Could you source a more affordable supplier or allow families to shop around for some items e.g. supermarket back-to-school ranges?
- Is the uniform policy regularly reviewed and does it include pupil and parent/carers engagement?
- Are all items really necessary e.g. a rugby top that is used a small number of times? Do you need a separate PE uniform or could pupils wear any shorts and tops?
- Consider guidance about PE kits here [“I forgot my Kit” Poverty Proofing@ School Sports](#)
- Set up a preloved uniform shop and encourage families to donate to this (some families report they would prefer to pay a small donation for uniform items rather than this be free). Include school shoes/trainers etc.
- Set up a ‘help yourself’ box of uniform in the school e.g. in the reception area or near the lost property.
- Set up a uniform savings scheme to help families budget for the cost of next year’s uniform.
- Explore the possibility of setting up a second-hand uniform section at a local charity shop, this removes the need for families to access it via school which some parents prefer. Lost property items can also be donated to the shop at the end of each term.
- Set up a blazer hire scheme.
- Ensure information on second-hand uniforms is clear for parents/carers of current and prospective pupils and published on the school’s website.
- If pupils have missing kit, consider how soon families will be able to pay to replace it due to the cost, and set up a loaning system to bridge the gap.



Theme 5: Additional Opportunities

This theme considers the curriculum beyond the academic, vocational and technical such as opportunities for artistic, musical, sporting and cultural activities. It explores hidden costs such as extra equipment and clothing to understand if there are any barriers for disadvantaged pupils. It seeks to understand how the school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils to take part in a wide, rich set of experiences which provides them with the cultural capital they need to succeed in and enjoy life.

Self-Assessment Tool

Additional Opportunities - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The school endeavours to ensure that, wherever possible, cost is not a barrier for pupils to access additional opportunities and activities					
When planning activities, we consider hidden costs i.e. clothing/equipment					
We provide a good range of free or affordable trips, clubs and events for families					
We have a process in place to monitor participation in our trips, clubs and events to identify participation patterns due to income					
We consider the timing of activities to spread costs for families e.g. Christmas is a hotspot					
We have a mechanism in place through which families can discretely access support to help pay for trips, clubs and activities, which is advertised well (this may involve using pupil premium funding to subsidise costs)					
We consult with parents/carers about the cost of trips to understand affordability					
We have processes in place to help families spread the costs of school trips					
We provide affordable access to special equipment needed for trips or residential					
Fundraising activities are completed in a non-stigmatising and inclusive way					

Priority Area(s) for Action:

Top tips



- Provide a school year calendar containing details of clubs, trips, fun events and fundraising with approximate costings and details of support available. Schedule timely reminders of items so that families have time to budget and can work around paydays.
- Widely promote support available to fund activities and plan discreet ways for families and pupils to access it.
- Provide a range of free school clubs such as archery, cooking, dance, basketball, football, arts and crafts, and choir.
- Where possible, hold clubs at lunchtime to avoid travel costs for families having to do different school pick-up times, or pupils being unable to access free school transport.
- Identify and promote local free or low-cost activities to families.
- Make sure that families are aware of the North Yorkshire FEAST (Food, Entertainment, Arts, Sport, Together) programme. It offers a range of different things to do in the school holidays. All children and young people across North Yorkshire can get involved in a range of holiday activities, with free places and a free meal for eligible children and young people. FEAST partners with leading holiday playschemes, clubs and activity providers from across North Yorkshire offer a wide range of sessions for children of all ages from Reception to Year 11. <https://www.northyorkshiretogether.co.uk/feast>



Practical actions and resources

General

- Upskill staff and the PTA in bid-writing.
- Connect with local businesses to see if they can provide any sponsorship or funding.
- Set up a 'pay it forward' scheme for families who are able to pay for other families. This can be for school club places, school trips and entrance to events such as school fairs.

School Clubs

- Have a policy of school uniform or PE kit only for school clubs to avoid some pupils wearing the latest football kit or designer clothes.
- Approach local businesses to fund the purchase of school team kits to avoid costs to families e.g. football kits, netball kits etc.
- Explore joining national schemes that can offer cheaper or reduced cost products such as sportswear e.g. [InKind Direct](#)

Practical actions and resources

School Trips

- Ensure to run some trips that are totally free. This can be underpinned by a system of voluntary contributions for some trips, but inclusive of all children no matter the contribution. Make sure each child experiences one residential.
- Complete a mapping exercise to identify venues or activities that are walkable or accessible via local transport to keep travel costs down for some trips.
- Explore different models for transporting pupils to events and trips to reduce costs e.g. depending on the location and number of pupils attending, it may be cheaper to hire a set of taxis than a minibus. Is it possible for a group of schools to co-own a minibus? Or can you rent a minibus from another local school? It is important to ensure that models adhere to the necessary insurance and health and safety measures required.
- Make sure that letters about trips include details about financial support.
- Spending money – is this necessary on the trip? Can you put a limit on the amount pupils can take?
- Additional equipment – develop a shared equipment store with other local schools e.g. sleeping bags, walking boots etc.
- When suitable, wear school uniform on trips to avoid clothing pressures on families.
- Allow minimal downpayments for trips to reserve a place and then break total cost into more regular small payments spread across the year. Having a minimal reservation amount limits unfairness in any first come first served process.
- Avoid first come first served or large down payments for trips. This may be an instant barrier for some families as it would take a big chunk of monthly income.
- Avoid asking for deposits or significant payments at financial hotspots for families such as Christmas or the start of term, when they have just paid for new uniforms etc.



Practical actions and resources

Fun Events and Fundraising

- End-of-term teachers' gifts – put out a communication about end-of-term gifts asking that handmade or written notes are given instead. Run some sessions over lunchtime for children to come and make their cards.
- School fairs – is there a set entrance fee? Could you do a reduced cost family ticket which includes a drink and something to eat? Is there a mix of free and cost-based stalls/activities? Consider the timing of the fair; does it mean extra trips for families which could add additional travel costs to weekly budget pressures?
- Fundraising – is it possible for the PTA to apply for grants or approach local businesses to replace some fundraising activity? Can the school take part in community-based fundraising such as bag packing or carol singing to raise funds?
- If collecting monetary donations in class, have a drop box at the door so amounts can be given discretely.
- If collecting for local charities or food banks, have a central drop-off area rather than within individual classrooms as this takes the pressure off families with more than one child and avoids identification of those that can't donate.
- Book Fairs – include a book swap stall.
- Have a box of pre-loved outfits that children can use for things like Christmas jumper day, Non-Uniform Day, and world book day, and encourage families to donate to this.
- Non-Uniform Day – consider replacing this with odd-socks day or 'wear something green day'.
- World Book Day – consider replacing costumes with a 'wear a hat' or banner day in which pupils decorate a paper hat or banner that represents their favourite book (some schools have had a 'decorate a potato' day). This also ensures that the focus is on reading and not the best costume.
- Prom – set up a pre-loved prom dress/suit bank. This could be in partnership with other local schools or the local uniform bank. Connect with a local hair and beauty college to see if their pupils would be willing to provide some free services.
- School photographs – packages available via external photographers can be very expensive. In addition to this, if photos are handed out in form-time, it highlights those unable to purchase them. Arrange for collection from a central point at the end of the school day.
- Birthday celebrations – instead of allowing pupils to bring in cake or sweets to share, why not have a birthday badge within each classroom or a cardboard cake with candles?
- Are fun events and fundraising spread out across the year? How much notice is given to families to allow them to budget?



Theme 6: Support for Pupils and Families

In this theme we consider how school-related costs can affect families and pupils including having a negative impact on mental health. It seeks to understand how a school can effectively support families and pupils, making sure they know who and where they can ask for help, and what local support is available alongside mental health support.

Support for Pupils and Families - place a mark in the box that represents to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Pupils and families know who they can talk to about financial issues at school. This has been considered to ensure it is non-stigmatising and can be accessed in a private way					
Information on how to access financial support at school is well promoted					
There are a number of ways for pupils to talk about poverty or financial issues and how it may be impacting them					
Mental health is talked about in school, and information is shared with children and families					
There are multiple ways for children and families to ask for help e.g. in person, email, worry monster etc.					
Families are provided with all the information they need about school in one easy to access place with digital and physical copies available					
Families are provided with information about how to access local support (e.g. debt management and benefit applications) including NYC cost-of-living support. https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/community-and-volunteering/cost-living-support					
School provides support for period poverty					
School provides information on bed poverty e.g. zarach.org					

Priority Area(s) for Action:

Top tips



- Develop a package of information about support for families:
- Details are added to the school website in a prominent position.
- Send out regular information via social media on relevant topics e.g. in winter highlight local warm spaces, or in summer tell families about free local activities. Plus top tips on maximising income.
- Make physical copies of information and give them out at key times e.g. start of the new school year and school induction days; this could be a Parent Handbook.
- Have a school notice board with details of support which can be easily viewed by parents/carers such as at the school gates.
- Ensure that all parents/carers know who they can speak to within school confidentially if they are facing any challenges and to get signposting support. If possible, have a weekly or monthly drop in.



Practical actions and resources

General

- Complete an asset mapping exercise to identify local community groups and initiatives that can support/enhance your work e.g. uniform and food banks and money advice.
- Details of local cost-of-living support can be found here: [NYC Cost of Living Support](#). This includes the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund which provides financial support to those unable to meet essential living costs, such as energy bills or food.
- The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) can also make awards in kind, such as supplying basic necessities or household goods such as a fridge. [Find out about the Local Assistance Fund](#).
- Signpost or support families to access income and debt management support; this can be provided free and confidentially by [North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre](#).
- Ensure that the offer of mental health support for both pupils and families is communicated to families, e.g. <https://thegoto.org.uk>
- Create methods through which pupils can let someone know if they are struggling with mental health including worries and anxiety. For secondary school this could be a specific email address or text service if they don't want to connect face to face. For primary school this could be in a format such as a worry box. The best ideas will come from the pupils themselves, so ask what would work for them.
- Ensure that pupils know who they can go to in school, making it obvious. Encourage children to pick a key person they trust, and consider safeguarding, relationships and checking-in. If the staff members that pupils should approach for help are the same people who issue detentions or deal with behaviour, consider the implications of this arrangement (secondary). Having posters about who pupils can go to for help with pictures of the individuals is helpful.
- Take an approach that minimises stigma around asking for financial support using phrases such as "We know that school costs add up really quickly..." "We know that a lot of people are struggling because of the cost-of-living crisis..." "Starting school is expensive for us all..." "There's lots of extra help out there for families, even if they're working..." "We want to make sure all our families are getting the support they're entitled to..." "It's an expensive time of year..."
- Period Poverty – free products can be accessed via [Department of Education scheme](#).
- Provide self-care packs containing personal hygiene items and positive mental health tips which can be requested for free by pupils.



Involving School Councils

Below we have provided some starting points for the designated member of staff to take to a school council meeting to discuss. These conversations with children may encourage further conversation and feedback for the school to consider. If there isn't a school council in place, the educational setting could consider creating one. A school council that includes pupils can act as a sounding board to offer insights and gather information to help the school make meaningful change in a range of areas. Often the answers to some of the trickiest challenges sit with those who are facing the challenge. Children will, with the right encouragement and support, be able to help develop solutions and suggest ways to remove financial barriers in your school.

Information about running an effective school council can be found here: <https://home.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk/>

Question	Response	Children/young people's ideas	Actions
Are there any items that pupils need for school that families may struggle to afford?			
How affordable is the school uniform?			
Do you know who to talk to if you are struggling with; mental health, paying for trips, food etc.?			
What would you change to make school more affordable for families?			



Action Planning Tool

After completing the self-assessment tools for each of the themes that you want to work on, you may wish to make a plan of action to help implement change. The action plan template below provides space to consider the elements you need to identify to make action happen. It is likely that each theme will have several rows of action. The action plan should be reviewed periodically across the year to ensure momentum and be updated to reflect changes in school. NB. A separate version of the action plan is available – this is a digital document that can be completed easily and shared with colleagues.

Theme	Issue identified	Desired outcome	Action steps	Lead(s)	Time frame	Resources	Potential blockers	Evidence of impact
Whole school approach								
In-school and home learning resources								
Food								
Uniform								
Additional opportunities								
Support for pupils and families								



Change Management

It is important when making any changes in school, to consider how they will land with the people affected by them. Below, we have included top tips for making changes relating to financial barriers in school, as well as some advice/tips from North Yorkshire schools that have engaged with Poverty Proofing©.

Change Management - advice from North Yorkshire schools

- **Parent/Carer Handbook** – create a parent/carers handbook containing all the information they could possibly need in one place: financial support, food, general worries, student support and a calendar of events for the academic year (including costs where possible). This will help to provide the details about any changes they need to know about going forward. When a change has been made that will impact them or their child, make sure that they are made aware via your most popular communication method, as they may not read the full handbook straight away!
- **Start with the quick wins** – look for the small things to remove costs for families, do them and communicate them well.
- **Be there and listen to the children** – ask questions and listen quietly to what the children in your school are saying. The knowledge about the barriers and solutions sits with them; we need to hear and action them.
- **Do not assume** – ask students what they think about key areas (utilising pupil voice).
- **Be mindful of when changes are being made** – e.g. don't change the policy around birthday celebrations mid-way through the year.



Change management theme	Considerations	What to avoid
Clearly defined action plan that includes processes/ policies/ behaviours	Who should be involved? See the Action Plan templates for more information.	Lack of clarity regarding changing priorities.
Timeline of change	Regard changes as short/medium/long term to plan accordingly. The rewriting of an advertisement, for example, is a straightforward change. Other changes will take more planning and may require staff being briefed/ consulted with/provided with training over time before going ahead with a change. A few changes may require more reflection before broaching with the community.	Change without consulting with your team/community involved in your place.
Bringing people along with you: training/ conversations/ beliefs	Leading change from the front - being visible with actions and words. What follow-up/refresher training may be needed for all staff? How is Poverty Proofing© presented to new staff? What do staff say they need? Are all staff (especially senior management) speaking about change in the same way? Day-to-day conversations shape culture – regular reminders of why things are done the way they are. Empathy is arguably at the core of inclusion; how is that demonstrated with all stakeholders in the community?	Lack of consistency when actioning decisions that have been made. If making changes, consider what will happen if the issue rises/occurs again. Some users may find the transition confusing. This can be tricky for staff to deal with - what support do they have?
Pace/timing	Some changes will benefit from being made at the beginning of obvious cycles e.g. new academic year or a new calendar year. For example, if making changes to pricing, give a generous amount of time after informing public/ stakeholders/staff before making the change so that those who have paid the old price have time to learn and ask questions if they want to.	Making changes at a random time or without notice can be seen as bad practice. Consider the pace of change too - how many changes are being made at the same time? Which changes need staff to be on board with, in order to be successfully rolled out?
Communication: highlighting what is happening rather than what is no longer happening	When making changes, regularly highlight how events will now be run/ celebrated. Share feedback, photos, quotes on the new events/ routines so the community is aware.	Not acknowledging the changes that are being made or not explaining them.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Childhood Poverty

What is Child Poverty?

A child is considered to be growing up in poverty when they live in a household:

- with an income below 60% of the UK's median income for that year, known as relative poverty.
- with an income less than 60 per cent of the median income in 2010-11, known as absolute poverty.



However, poverty is about much more than a lack of money - it is a status that puts you at a disadvantage within life and is a significant cause of health inequalities, as described by Peter Townsend:

"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."

Peter Townsend, Sociologist, 1979

Reference: [CPAG | We are the trusted voice on child poverty](#)

The Impact of Childhood Poverty

All areas of a child's life are adversely affected by poverty – home, school, friendships, health and more, impacting on their ability to enjoy their childhoods and achieve aspirations. There are visible aspects of poverty in which children do not have what their friends have such as items of clothing, a warm home, adequate food access, having friends over for tea, access to a computer for homework, and being able to go on school trips. Alongside this are non-visible aspects of poverty such as the stigma and embarrassment felt by children and the worries and anxiety that living in a financially insecure home can bring.

The evidence base tells us that children living in more deprived areas or poverty are more likely to:

- Experience mental health problems e.g. anxiety, a low sense of wellbeing
- Have poor physical health e.g. low birth weight, greater risk of obesity, chronic conditions, asthma, long-term illness
- Underachieve at school and have employment difficulties in adult life
- Be disproportionately affected by anti-social and criminal activity
- Experience lower social mobility and social deprivation

Appendix B: North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing© the School Day Project and Outputs

North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing© the School Day Project

The Poverty Proofing© the School Day programme was created by and is owned by Children North East (CNE), a charity that initially started working in the North East to help tackle child poverty and to ensure that children can grow up healthy and happy. It provides a powerful tool for identifying the barriers children living in poverty face, to help them to engage fully with school life and its opportunities. Focused on listening to the voices and experiences of young people, it offers a pathway for schools to address often unseen inequalities within their activities. It helps them reduce stigma, break the link between educational attainment and financial background, and supports schools to explore the most effective way to spend Pupil Premium. Here is some feedback from a school which has undertaken the programme - *“One of the most impactful programmes we have ever been involved with. It is not a package, it is a process leading to a shift in ethos.”*



Further detail about what the programme offers can be found on the CNE website <https://children-ne.org.uk/how-we-can-help/poverty-proofing-services/>.

Children North East was commissioned by North Yorkshire Council in 2023 to deliver a bespoke Poverty Proofing© the School Day project. This included the undertaking of Poverty Proofing© abridged audits within four North Yorkshire Schools (2 primary and 2 secondary) and the delivery of online Poverty Awareness training offered to all schools across North Yorkshire. Thematic analysis of the four school audits was completed to identify current good practice and common challenges faced by pupils growing up in poverty within the schools, alongside potential solutions. In acknowledgement of the small sample size of this project and in recognition that all school environments are unique, the findings of the thematic analysis have been combined with learning from other similar national projects to produce this guide. Findings from the thematic analysis, examples of positive changes made by the four North Yorkshire Schools plus their audits and detail about the training can be found below.



North Yorkshire Poverty Proofing the School Day© Outputs

Thematic Analysis Findings – Current Good Practice

Food

- Breakfast clubs, with some providing free food for all pupils
- Free snack time food
- Food bank referrals and donations available at school
- Support to apply for Free School Meals
- Price list of school dinners shared in form time so students can budget

Uniform

- Pre-loved uniform bank
- Provision of free core uniform items such as ties
- Minimal branding on school uniform items allowing more flexibility on where to buy items e.g. plain polo shirt
- Provision of spare, clean uniform

School Trips and Clubs

- A variety of free trips are offered e.g. lakes trip, theatre trips and beach trips
- Payment for trips is facilitated by instalments over an appropriate timeline
- Subsidies provided for families on free school meals via pupil premium
- A good range of free activities – archery, cooking, basketball, arts and crafts, youth choir

Pupil and Family Support

- Good promotion of where to access support in school i.e. pastoral or safeguarding, including provision of a parents' handbook
- Weekly coffee morning at school
- Good information on school website about local support options
- Champions and classroom pass systems to support positive mental health
- Pupil assemblies and workshops on mental health
- Email contact for pupils wanting to access support without needing for it to be requested in-person

Other areas

- Resources such as pencils and pens are available for free or can be loaned
- All subject-specific resources provided i.e. technology, cookery, or provided discretely to pupils
- Charity donations – no set amount issued
- Attendance rewards - 100% attendance each week is rewarded, and bigger rewards are divided up to smaller rewards across the year. Improved attendance is also celebrated and rewarded

Thematic Analysis Findings – Main Barriers

Food

- Unclear menu pricing, resulting in some children not having enough money at the till
- Limits of FSM allowance meaning pupils can't afford a drink with their meal or snacking items

Pupil and Family Support

- Lack of non-verbal methods to communicate worries or ask for help i.e. email or worries box
- Lack of staff understanding of pupil mental health
- The same staff having pastoral and behavioural remits which conflict

Uniform

- Cost of school uniform can be very high if items must be branded or purchased from a specific retailer

School Trips and Clubs

- Some school trips are just too costly for some pupils
- First come first served principles for deposits to reserve a space on a trip relies on having the money straight away
- Hidden trip costs – renting of equipment, new clothing or footwear

Other areas

- Resources such as scientific calculators are costly
- Sanctions for not having the right equipment
- Unclear on who to ask for help at school if struggling with school-related costs
- Cost of charity or theme days e.g. World Book Day needing a costume



Themes from Parent/Carer Surveys

(Based on 158 responses across 4 North Yorkshire Schools)

57%

of families feel 'quite or very uncomfortable' approaching the school for help.

54%

of families stated that they have struggled with school related costs.

62%

of families think the schools give enough notice for payments.

28%

of families who filled in the survey had children entitled to Free School Meals.

70%

of families don't know whether school signposts.

29%

of families are aware of who to contact in school for help.

36%

of families stated that the school 'usually or always' provides good support for those experiencing financial difficulties.

57%

of families felt that the school has a 'good or better' understanding of financial issues that families face.

Examples of Changes Made by North Yorkshire Schools Post Poverty Proofing© Audit

Food

- Free breakfast bagels at breakfast club
- Provision of free breakfast before exams
- Removal of any identification of pupils on FSM i.e. displayed on register for all to see



Uniform

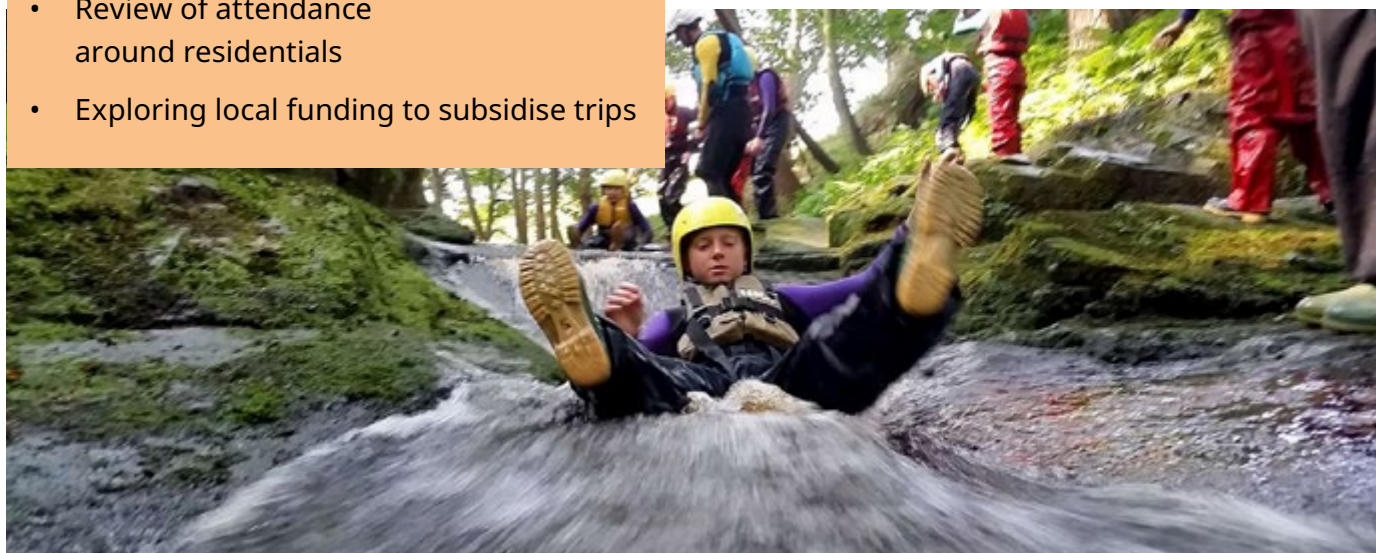
- Spare shoes provision – the school found out preferences and a selection of shoes were purchased as spares. The school then had year 10 boys modelling the spares within school to reduce stigma and encourage uptake of borrowing if pupils attend wearing wrong shoes

Other areas

- Bikeability training – sourcing free helmets and bikes to enhance accessibility
- Work experience, funded or provided (e.g. FSM, clothing, travel etc.)
- Staff have resources to loan or give to students where they attend missing key items that they need for lessons e.g. pens and calculators (secondary school)
- Charity and fundraising – improved communications around any amount or donation is valued

School Trips and Clubs

- Inclusion of details about financial help on letters
- Longer periods to pay for trips
- Schools' saving accounts set up to allow annual saving for trips, spreading the cost
- Review of attendance around residential
- Exploring local funding to subsidise trips



Poverty Awareness Training

(This training was only available during the project due to funding)

Poverty Awareness Training

- 10 one-hour webinars delivered, attended by 46 school staff members
- 100% of attendees would recommend the course to a colleague

Comments on the training included:

"This was a quick, concise course that covered all the essential information."

"Really useful, positive training, structured really well – deep and serious but done in a 'positive change' way that felt empowering."

"Useful for schools to think of the impact of nice things they do can have an impact on those in poverty."





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