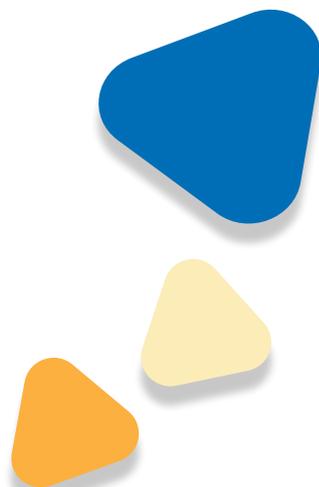




# **CLOSING THE GAP**

What is needed to end  
**Voluntary Contributions?**

**The Society of St. Vincent de Paul**  
**May 2023**





# CLOSING THE GAP

## What is needed to end **Voluntary Contributions?**

Response and recommendations to  
*“The role of voluntary contributions  
in post-primary schools in Ireland”*  
report by Grant Thornton



“

It is just one  
of the many hidden expenses  
of “free educational”  
system.

”

Parent

“

Voluntary contributions are a  
symptom of the underfunding  
of the education system. We use  
the payment to cover the cost of  
running the school on a  
day-to-day basis.

”

School Principal

Full report by Grant Thornton available here:  
<http://svp.ie/GTVCREport>

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# FOREWARD

## from SVP National President

Education has long been a passion of mine and is key to breaking the cycle of poverty. By investing in education, we help people reach their full potential.

Unfortunately, we know school can be a daily struggle for students from low-income families, especially if they don't have everything they need to learn or if they feel different from their peers.

For struggling parents, the preparation for the new school year is a huge source of stress, in particular the anxiety associated with the prospect of requests for contributions or other expenses for extra-curricular activities.

This timely research carried out by Grant Thornton on our behalf, starkly illustrates the pressures parents are under and the wide-ranging impacts requests for contributions can have on families.

Many parents who took part in the research spoke about the stress caused by requests for contributions, the need to cut back on essential spending, going into debt and feeling ashamed for struggling to meet the costs of education for their children. This mirrors what we see when working with families who seek our help every year.

At the same time, interviews with school principals shows the pressures schools are under to meet running costs and how the funding gap leads to requests for contributions from parents.

If we are to be successful in ending voluntary contributions, we need to ensure school funding is adequate.



This year we have seen positive policy changes and investment that will make a real difference in the lives of children and young people. The provision of free schoolbooks at primary level and the extension of hot school meals is very welcome and are issues we have campaigned on for many years. This research and our recommendations are an opportunity to build on this progress.

We can end voluntary contributions by investing in our education system through adequate capitation and free schoolbooks at secondary school. This must be part of a wider effort from educational leadership to ensure education policy and practice is inclusive and meeting the needs and rights of students from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Rose McGowan



# VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



**1,447**

Parents completed our  
online parents' survey

**6**

Case studies  
with schools

**86%**

reported that the post primary school which their child  
attends requests a voluntary contribution

**80%**

stated that voluntary contributions were not clearly  
communicated as being optional

**€140**

average voluntary  
contribution per child  
across all school types

**€30-  
€550**

voluntary contribution  
range from low to high  
per child

**81%**

stated that they incur additional costs for  
school activities / clubs

**61%**

stated that they incur additional costs for classroom/  
resources, such as photocopy/printing fees and materials

**87%**

stated that they have had to cut back or delay spending  
in order to pay for the voluntary contribution charge



# Introduction

At the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) we believe that by investing in education, every child and young person can reach their full potential. However, we know from our work in communities that education funding falls short of what is required to promote participation of all children and reduce costs to families at back-to-school time.

SVP annually gives on average €4.5 million to €5million to families and people who are struggling to meet the financial demands of education from early years right through to further and higher education. Approximately half of that support goes to pupils attending primary and post primary education. Families and services including SVP support those families and students with their educational needs enabling them in the best attempt to create equality, in their educational lives, to those of their peers.

The recent introduction of free primary school books by the Department of Education shows



*We don't eat meals every day with the children we might have a biscuit late with some tea but make them proper dinner. We don't have heat either. But nobody knows. I feel like a failure.*

Parent



understanding of the impact of costs to parents and families; *“By providing our primary school children with free schoolbooks, we are enhancing their educational experience, not just in the classroom but reaching out into the family home.”*<sup>1</sup> Its guidance goes on to tell us *“it ensures equity of opportunity in education”*.

This initiative is a positive step forward and our goal is to see an education system which is sufficiently funded so that all children and young people can participate on an equal footing and where voluntary contributions and school fundraising are no longer required.

# Background

To better inform policy development on the issue of parent contributions, SVP commissioned Grant Thornton to engage with parents and schools and provide evidence that would help us answer the question: *“What is needed to end voluntary contributions in Ireland?”*

SVP wanted to understand the driving factors behind the voluntary contribution charge to parents and the impact this is having on their families' finances.

The research engaged with school to understand where and when the gap between their income and expenditure



was filled with voluntary contributions or parent charges. We also wanted to know if there were any further influences and reasons for the request of the voluntary contribution funding from parents.

To answer these questions, Grant Thornton collected survey responses from almost 1,500 parents, conducted a school survey and in-depth case studies with six schools.

The research shows us a fuller picture of the impact of voluntary contribution charges on parents and the impact this payment has on schools.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education (2023) Free Primary Schoolbooks Scheme in Primary Schools and Special Schools <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/933a9-free-primary-schoolbooks-scheme/>

In recent years, the Department of Education has made clear directives to schools regarding the voluntary contribution charge.<sup>2</sup> Requests for contributions are permissible but they must not be mandatory. *“A school cannot request mandatory fees or payments from existing pupils or from those seeking admission to the school.”*

However, we also know that schools are underfunded. During the period of austerity, the capitation grant, which covers the basic running costs for schools, was cut from €345 to €309. In 2020, the mainstream rate was increased to €316 but has not been restored to 2010 levels, nor has the rate kept pace with inflation.<sup>3</sup> This research sought to understand the impact of this from the perspectives of schools and the reason why so many schools are forced to use parent contributions or fundraise to try to meet day to day operational costs.

This research delivers a deeper understanding of the financial challenges that parents and families are facing and the impact it has on their children. It has created further understanding where and why schools seek the voluntary contribution payment and point to the policy and practice changes that are needed to end them. It also demonstrates the importance of how we need to understand the mental and emotional toll placed on those who have to make the impossible decisions of forgoing necessities to pay the school charges and the toll placed on parents and their children when the charge isn't paid.



***The school feels that the system of voluntary contributions puts an unnecessary administrative burden on schools, is unfair on families that cannot afford it and creates an unhealthy pressure on genuine parents who want to support their schools. Some of these parents may not have the financial means to contribute but make sacrifices to do so.***

School Principal



***I am a single parent on disability allowance and getting my sons books, uniform, copies etc. was and is a huge struggle so it's going to take more weeks of scrimping to gather up the voluntary contribution. My son is going into fifth year and the expense has broke me mentally and financially as it is.***

Parent



In responding to this research SVP are delivering six recommendations to be taken with the aim of eradicating financial hardship and poverty for parents and families as a consequence and, for some, an addition to sending their child to post primary education.



## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

# What this research teaches us

### The funding gap for schools

The research shows the average voluntary contribution/school charge per pupil is €140. This gives us some indication of the gap between school expenditure and the income for schools and therefore the amount they seek from parents to plug the gap. There is a wide range of the charge amounts, from a low of €30 to a high of €550 per pupil.

Based on the parents' survey, 1,271 (86%) of responses from parents reported that the post primary school which their child attends request a voluntary contribution. Although 14% of parents reported that they did not receive a voluntary contributions charge, the research shows voluntary contributions are a large part of our education system.

<sup>2</sup> Financial Support Service Unit 2018, 'School Charges, Voluntary Contributions and Fundraising' Financial Guideline 2017/2018 – 04 [https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/09/04-17-Financial-Guideline-School-Charges\\_Voluntary-Contributions\\_Fundraising-1.pdf](https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/09/04-17-Financial-Guideline-School-Charges_Voluntary-Contributions_Fundraising-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Education (2020) Circular 0052/2020 [https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular\\_0065\\_2010\\_Capitation\\_Funding.pdf](https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular_0065_2010_Capitation_Funding.pdf)



This research conducted six in depth interviews with school leaders, with an open discussion and questions regarding schools' financial situations and voluntary contributions funding they sought. Post primary schools have faced a difficult few years delivering education during the covid pandemic and the continued rise in the cost of energy and transport and the challenges they face in meeting the rise in students from Ukraine, staffing schools added to that with the reduction of the capitation grant.

All of the schools consulted expressed concern about the level of funding they receive. These concerns included the reliance on voluntary contributions for the provision of essential resources such as books, classroom materials, school journals, stationary, printing and lockers.

**“ Voluntary contributions are a symptom of the underfunding of the education system. We use the payment to cover the cost of running the school on a day-to-day basis.**

School Principal

DEIS schools face a unique disadvantage as it is more difficult to gather the same level of financial resources from parents or community members to make up the shortfall.

Outside of running costs, schools highlighted that voluntary contributions are viewed as a key enabler of autonomy for schools to pursue activities and programmes that are not funded by Departmental grants. Request for voluntary contributions tended to be higher in urban areas suggesting greater cost of living pressures in these areas.

Some schools stated in their interviews that they have not increased the amount they charged in many years, one school have not raised the charge in 15 years, or raised the charge in line with inflation and some shared there is a reluctance to

raise the fee. This raises the question how long can schools sustain the gap of inflation and when will the increases happen and to what rate?

**“ The school is very reluctant to increase the fee; however, heat and lights bills –which were already huge cost areas before the Ukraine conflict – are a cause of concern.**

School Principal

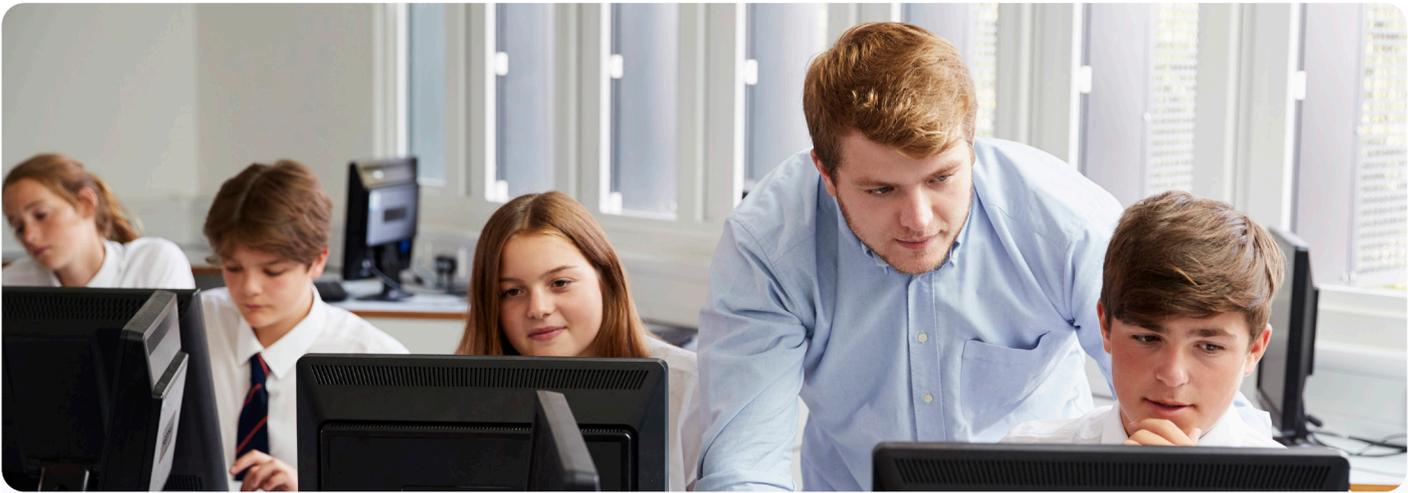
The research shows that Voluntary Contribution funding received for schools goes towards a multitude of costs over the years to pay for day to day running costs.

One school shared that **“up to 40% of the voluntary contribution was allocated to light, heat and secretarial costs”** while another said that the anti-social behaviour in their community had entered the school environment and they had to put mechanisms and funding in place to deal with these issues.

Another school in a rural setting talked about the age and dilapidation of their buildings and the growing costs for travel (to and from schools and for school trips) which has had a crippling effect on their funding thus needing to go to parents for voluntary contributions.

Three schools described spending between €12,000 and €17,000 on lockers that are not funded by the Department. As a result, the schools decided to charge locker fees of €10 as part of their voluntary contribution to cover these costs.

This demonstrates that schools have many different challenges both unique to them and more systematic financial demands which can only be addressed when they are more deeply understood.



## Is it optional?

The Department of Education clearly states, *“Voluntary contributions may be sought from parents, provided it is made clear to parents that there is no compulsion to pay and that a child’s place in the school or continued enrolment is not dependant on a willingness to make a contribution.”*<sup>4</sup>

In total 1,447 parents completed the online parents survey, 80% of those respondents that receive a request stated that voluntary contributions were not clearly communicated as being optional.<sup>5</sup>

Several interviewed school principals noted they had policies in place to ensure no pupil is disadvantaged due to an inability to pay contributions or charges. However, all of the consulted schools do issue repeated reminders to parents who have not paid the VC charge. We believe the repeated contact is in of itself an indication that the payment is not optional.



***I challenged this payment last year as they were ringing me and sending notes home. I was told it was not voluntary. As a single parent I can barely afford to pay weekly essential bills. This just took two weeks food from my household.***

Parent



The survey showed there was the lack of transparency for use of the payment as almost half of the parents felt the schools did not specify how the voluntary contributions are spent. Added to this many schools use different titles and terms for the voluntary contribution charge. Some schools request voluntary contributions in conjunction with the fee for the book rental fee making it difficult for parents to see how the money is being spent.



***I have managed to pay the entire amount of the “student admin fee” which the previously voluntary contribution has been renamed.***

Parent



Case studies with school also highlighted this general issue around transparency with just one school consulting with parents on the requests and use of voluntary contributions. This school facilitated parent participation and inclusion in the development and delivery of the voluntary contribution policy and process that was actively inclusive. This included a policy of ensuring no pupil missed out on the experience if a parent was unable to pay a contribution. This school’s voluntary contribution funding was entirely ring-fenced for school outings which means that no pupil had a lesser opportunity and access to the experiences. This example illustrates that voluntary contributions can serve a purpose and not be exclusionary if they are designed and implemented with engagement and involvement of parents.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Education (2020) Circular letter 0052/2020 [https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular\\_0065\\_2010\\_Capitation\\_Funding.pdf](https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular_0065_2010_Capitation_Funding.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The research notes that the parents survey, which was captured through SVP social media channels, “was successful in reaching a broad cross-section of Irish society, with the sample representing practically geographic areas of Ireland and across various post-primary school types.” However, it is also acknowledged that parents who had negative experiences of requests for VC or who had multiple contact from schools may be more likely to self select into the survey to share their experiences.



# The impact on students

The most concerning finding from the parents' survey is a theme of students coming home from their school day only to tell their parent that they were named publicly due to non-payment of the voluntary contribution charge.

Practices of withholding lockers, journals, and other necessary items from pupils when there is non-payment adds to stigma. Examples of this are seen throughout the research, from SVP's perspective even one example of this is one too many.

This action requires little but a collective consciousness from school leadership and the Department of Education through clear guidelines, regulations and system wide training.

*“Had to be paid or child did not receive homework notebook. Teacher would ask where's your notebook, so all the class would know fees weren't paid. Very embarrassing for child.”*

Parent

# The impact on families

In SVP experience, cutting back or delaying other payments or activities in order to pay the voluntary contribution charge is common for many parents. We see many examples of the hopeless decision that parents are making by forgoing essential items and paying other bills to pay the voluntary contribution charge.

Most strikingly, 87% of survey respondents stated that they have had to cut back or delay spending on other areas of the family budget in order to pay for the voluntary contribution. Examples provided including food, energy and domestic bills, medical appointment and medication and social activities. Some of the testimonies from parents illustrates a stark picture of just what sacrifices parents are forced into as a result of these charges. This research showed us some examples of people borrowing money from family, credit union and other sources of loans, including approaching SVP for support.

*“With the current rate of inflation, we have made every effort to keep costs contained for families, given other pressures on household budgets.”*

School Principal

A few parents shared they were not able to access health care as they prioritised their child's/children's school charges over their own and other family members medical requirements. Putting them in the position of worsening their health needs to meet the demand placed on them.

*“I have suffered stress and extreme anxiety. When I saw the school calling me at work for the money, I was so embarrassed. I was receiving calls every two weeks or so; constant pressure for the payment.”*

Parent

*“I'm a cancer patient and had to stop getting my medication to pay fees.”*

Parent

This research demonstrates the weight of the economic and mental burden and parents being forced into difficult situations when sending their child/children to post primary school. The burden has been felt by many parents and families in Ireland and this research gave them the opportunity to share their experiences in national research.

*“€100 is a big part of our monthly income; it left us the parents with just bread for three days we had food for the other children. They were unaware that we didn't have food to eat.”*

Parent

Interviews with schools shows an understanding of the potential impact and looked at ways to minimise the financial burdens on parents.

# Not just voluntary contributions



As well as the voluntary contribution charge 61% of survey respondents stated that they incur additional charges for classroom resources and materials such as photocopying/printing fees etc and 81% of survey respondents stated that they incur further additional costs for school activities/clubs.

may not be able to afford to pay the contributions, which can limit their children's access to extra-curricular activities and opportunities for personal and social development. The case studies with schools showed good practice on the potential to ringfence contributions from parents with greater financial means to support to participation of students from low income families.

The high cost of transition year was raised by a number of parents, reporting fees ranging from €320 to €470. Schools highlighted that even with these payments from parents, it often does not cover the full cost of TY. The current grant from the Department for transition year is €95 per student.

***“ It is an extra burden on top of all the other payments that have to be made to attend school. It has a negative impact on family finances. ”***  
Parent

Not only does this research demonstrate the cost of the voluntary contribution charge but parents are also facing other multiple charges in addition to the costs of meeting the school requirements such as the costs of uniforms, clothing, bags, stationary.

Schools also sought contributions to fund extracurricular activities. In many cases this creates difficulties for low-income families who

***“ On top of the voluntary contribution, there is a €350 fee for transition year. That's €600 before I buy a book. It has seriously put a dent in our family finances, so much so I had to borrow money from my family to buy uniforms and shoes. ”***  
Parent



## Why many pay

From what parents shared we can hear the motivator for parents to prioritise paying the voluntary contribution charge over essential items comes for many a place of fear and shame. While we know many schools are sensitive and cognisant of the needs of students from low-income families, there were too examples from parents across the country that their children were publicly called out when the voluntary contribution charge hadn't been paid.

Some parents had a positive or neutral view on voluntary contributions. A common theme among these responses is the understanding of the importance of supporting their child's school financially.

***“ Me and my husband just cut back on food for ourselves two meals, even though we have diabetes, just to pay because it's put on the blackboard who's paid and not, so other kids can see it which I think it's not fair. ”***  
Parent

***“ Its €40, its not going to break the bank. Electricity costs, grocery shopping is the problem not school fees. It's a small rural school everyone should contribute, join a parent's association or the board and you will understand the school finances, which in rural areas are very difficult. ”***  
Parent  
***“ I don't mind paying them as I think schools don't get enough funding however it is something I consciously budget for. ”***  
Parent

# SVP recommendations

SVP wishes to see a solution focused approach to the issue of voluntary contributions and all school charges, which delivers considered responses and requires clear direction from the Department of Education. We understand this is a complex system across different approaches and school categories, and there is not one simple solution. But as well as additional funding, there are some cost-free actions that can be taken immediately to improve student's educational experience and reduce the burden on families.

The voluntary contribution charge has become baked into schools' financial makeup, we understand that therein lies the challenge, but all education policy should actively be inclusive and in line with the right to education. This research and SVP's extensive experience on the ground working with families and schools we wish to share these six recommendations.

## 1. Introduce and monitor a new regulation on voluntary and parent contributions

The circular from the Department of Education (0065/2010) regarding fees and voluntary contributions provides guidance to schools.<sup>6</sup> It states that Minister can withdraw funding to a school if it is found to be in breach of the requirements in relation to the charging of fees. However, the sentence on Voluntary Contribution lacks clarity and sufficient detail to ensure that the practice does not cause adverse impacts on students or a student's education, their wellbeing and family life.<sup>7</sup> Crucially, it is not clear on the process of monitoring or reporting on practices by schools seen to be in breach of this circular.

In line with the general scheme set out in the Education (Voluntary Contributions) Bill 2021,<sup>8</sup> SVP are recommending that a new regulation is introduced, and appropriate resources are provided within the Department of Education to monitor school compliance with the regulation. Based on the findings from this research, the regulation should clearly specify:

- In all communications (written, verbal, email, text message), it must be made explicit that all parental contributions (or those named fees) including those for photocopying, lockers, journals and other essentials classroom resources are entirely optional.
- All communications should be made between the school and the parent. No communications regarding requests or payment should ever be made to or include the student by any means.
- Repeat contact with parent (more than once) with requests for fees, contributions or charges is not permissible.
- Students should never be differentiated or denied access to school services or facilities (including lockers), or materials due to non-payment of contributions, charges or other fees that may hinder full participation in school.
- Schools must make clear how contributions will be used, and which aspects of school facilities or education materials will be purchased using the funds.
- Schools should involve parents in the development and planning of any payments it wishes to seek from them.

This circular should be time limited and reviewed in light of funding increases as recommended in point 2 and 3 below. A target and timeline should be set by the Department of Education to increase the overall level of funding to school to an adequate level, at which point regulations would be updated to include an outright ban on requests for parent contributions.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Education (2020) Circular letter 0052/2020 [https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular\\_0065\\_2010\\_Capitation\\_Funding.pdf](https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular_0065_2010_Capitation_Funding.pdf)  
<sup>7</sup> "Voluntary contributions may be sought from parents, provided it is made clear to parents that there is no compulsion to pay and that a child's place in the school or continued enrolment is not dependant on a willingness to make a contribution." Department of Education (2020) Circular letter 0052/2020 [https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular\\_0065\\_2010\\_Capitation\\_Funding.pdf](https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/Circular_0065_2010_Capitation_Funding.pdf)  
<sup>8</sup> Education (Voluntary Contributions) Bill 2021 <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/bill/2021/113/eng/initiated/b11321d.pdf>

## 2. Increase the capitation grant to ensure schools can meet running costs

For many years, SVP has called for an increase in the capitation grant in our pre-budget submission as we have seen the adverse impact underfunding has on students and families. This research provides further evidence on the need to increase funding to ensure schools have sufficient resources to cover running costs and create a supportive learning environment for all students.

As outlined earlier in this report, the capitation grant is paid per student at a rate of €316. In 2010 the rate was €345, to maintain the real 2010 value adjusted for inflation to 2023, the grant should be €422 or 33% higher. However, it must be noted that this is adjusting for general inflation but the capitation grant primarily covers heat and light where prices have risen by approximately 149% since 2010.<sup>9</sup> We acknowledge that Government has recognised the additional pressures schools are under due to rising prices and provided one off payments for the academic year 2022/2023. But this funding is time limited and with inflation moderating but not falling, costs for schools are likely to stay at this high level. Funding to schools must reflect and address this reality.

We recommend that the capitation grant is increased on a phased basis over a three-year period to return to 2010 levels in real terms. This must work in parallel to a financial assessment of the adequacy of the capitation grant as recommended in point 6 below.

## 3. Remove all financial barriers to participation

The research highlights that the requests for contributions from parents can cover a multitude of expenses, not just essential running costs. Taking a whole school approach, we provide additional recommendations that will ensure the equal participation of all students.

**Deliver free schoolbooks and associated learning resources:** The recent strategy for delivering free schoolbooks in primary schools has been celebrated and welcomed by SVP and our peers in the sector and parents. Applying this same model to post primary schools has the potential to reduce requests from parents for associated with workbooks, photocopying and journals.

**Create a school inclusion and extra circular fund:** Provide a dedicated and resourced fund for in-school activities such as cultural trips, tours, music, drama, sport, including swimming lessons to promote the participation of students from low income and disadvantaged families. Similar to the Pupil Premium model in the UK, funding should be provided on a per capita basis using the student data used as part of the DEIS identification model. Funding can be utilised by schools for initiatives that promote the inclusion and participation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in activities in a non-stigmatising way.

**Provide additional funding for transition year:** When activities are a core part of the programme, costs should not be a prohibitive factor to participation in TY for low-income students and funding should be established to promote participation. Activities included in the TY programme are evaluated based on the educational, social, personal benefits against their costs. Schools should review what the cost of the activity or trip is and check whether everyone can access the opportunity. If not, what is the purpose of it and is there an alternative that every student can access?

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/CPMI6>

## 4. Poverty proof all policies within schools and across the education system

In order to ensure all post primary pupils, have equal access to education the Department of Education should develop a whole school poverty proofing training programme.

Thankfully we have an example of poverty proofing practices from a UK organisation 'Children North East'.<sup>10</sup> The approach begins through consultations with students, parents, staff and governors to understand the challenges students in poverty face. The trainers then complete a Poverty Proofing© audit and work with the leadership team to identify pathways to reducing the impact of poverty on students. Schools receive a thorough written report and action plan to inform impactful decision-making, and receive accreditation pending a follow-up review.<sup>11</sup>

The language and approach that schools take in communicating through policies and practices with parents and pupils needs to be actively inclusive. No pupil should be left behind, and to truly delivery inclusivity of all pupils in their education all communications need to start with the message that financial circumstances will not be a barrier to any young person.

SVP recommend a system wide poverty proofing training programme to involve all staff from the department of education and within schools.

Poverty proofing ensures that no pupil is locked out of educational opportunities and experiences due to their family's financial situation. Developing and delivering a poverty proofing programme is integral to the right to education.

## 5. Establish a procurement support services for schools

Creation of a procurement support service to facilitate and enable schools and their boards of management to combine their collective procurement and purchasing power through sharing of best practice examples across all school types of goods and services. Both parents and schools confirmed that insurance, lockers and school journals were very common items purchased by schools through the voluntary contributions received. This service could come under the remit of the Financial Support Service Unit (FSSU).

## 6. Provide better data and transparency on educational funding and expenditure

An independent review and analysis commissioned by the Department of Education and using data from the Financial Support Services Unit should be carried out on annual basis to assess the adequacy of funding for essential running costs. This should include an assessment on the total costs of all furniture and fittings, including lockers. Additional grants should be available to support the initial outlay of these items and replacement of worn-out furniture.

This analysis should provide transparent data on school's income and expenditure. There should be an obligation placed on schools and the Department to publish the total amount collected in contributions each year so the significance of level of underfunding can be fully understood. This will enable a greater understanding of the financial gaps schools are experiencing, brought about by their capitation grant funding, local environment, and school size.

<sup>10</sup> <https://children-ne.org.uk/advice/nine-things-you-can-do-to-start-poverty-proofing-your-school/>

<sup>11</sup> Children North East 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' <https://children-ne.org.uk/poverty-proofing-the-school-day/>

# OUR MISSION

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) charity is a Christian voluntary organisation, works with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. Inspired by our principal founder, Frederic Ozanam, and our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, SVP's mission is to respond to the call every Christian receives to bring the love of Christ to those in need: ***"I was hungry, and you gave me food"*** (Matthew 25). No work of charity is foreign to the Society.

**SVP's mission involves in a diverse range of activities characterised by:**



## **Support and Friendship**

Through person-to-person contact, we are committed to respecting the dignity of those we assist and fostering self-respect. We always assure confidentiality and endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship.



## **Promoting Self-sufficiency**

It is not enough to provide short term material support. Those we assist are also helped to achieve self-sufficiency in the longer term and the sense of self-worth this provides. When problems are beyond our competence, we enlist the support of specialised help.



## **Working for Social Justice**

We are committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland and, in solidarity with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, to advocate and work for the changes required to create a more just and caring society.



Society of St.Vincent de Paul



## Society of St Vincent de Paul

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