



Barnardos

Because childhood lasts a lifetime

BACK TO SCHOOL SURVEY 2020

SCHOOL
COSTS

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The Barnardos Back to School Survey 2020 – School Costs

Background

In total, 1,765 parents completed the Barnardos Back to School Survey in 2020. A total of 255 respondents also completed a separate Children and Young People’s Back to School Survey. The majority of parents who took the survey (1,204) had children in **primary school**, while the remaining 561 had children attending **secondary school**. There was a broad geographic spread – 61% of respondents are from Leinster, 25% from Munster, 8% from Connaught and 6% from Ulster – which is largely in line with the national population proportions.

School Costs

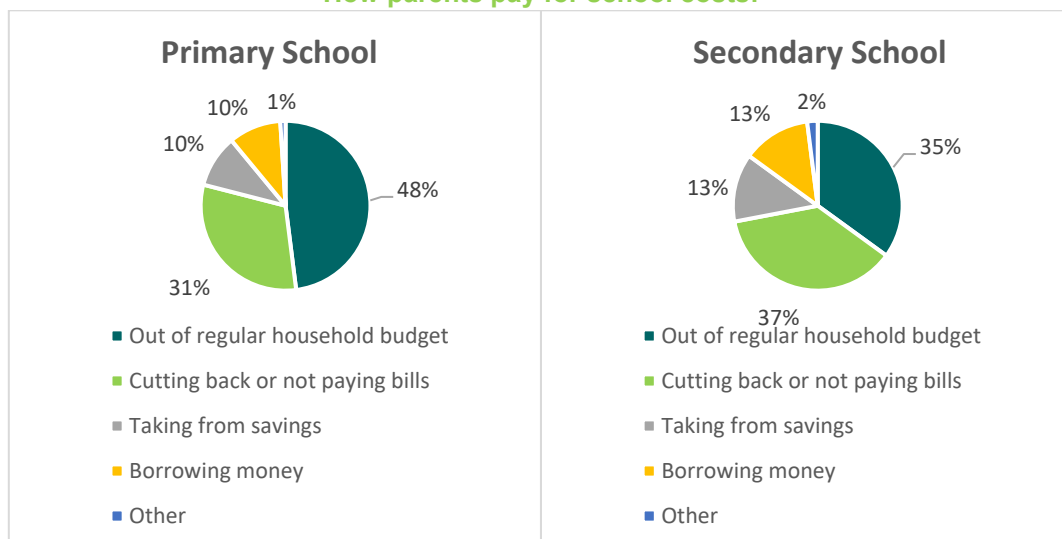
Average Basic School Costs

	Senior Infants Pupil	4th Class Pupil	1st Year Student
Uniform*	€120	€130	€235
School Books and stationery	€95	€115	€285
Classroom resources	€40	€40	€75
Voluntary contribution	€75	€80	€140
Total in 2020	€330	€365	€735
Total in 2019	€340	€380	€735

*Separate questions on clothing and footwear costs were combined to gather total uniform costs.

Impact on parents / families

How parents pay for school costs:



A significant proportion of parents are either cutting back on expenses or not paying bills or taking loans to cover their back to school costs – **41 per cent at primary level and 50 per cent at secondary**. Of those that had to borrow, 31% took a loan from a credit union or bank, 29% used credit cards, 27% borrowed from family or friends, and most worryingly, 13% borrowed from a money lender.

Parents of second level students are less able to afford their child's back to school costs, with just a third saying they can manage within their regular household budget compared to almost **a half of primary school parents**.

Uniforms

The overwhelming majority of children are still required to wear a crested / branded uniform to school, despite the availability of more affordable alternatives.

Primary school: 76 per cent of parents report having to purchase a crested uniform.

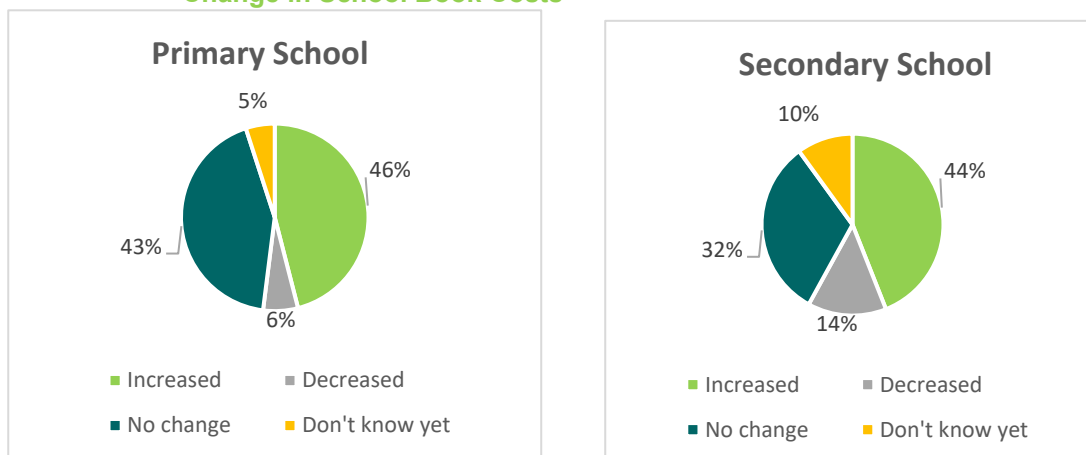
Secondary school: 96 per cent of parents report having to purchase a crested uniform.

Majority of parents (56% of primary and 42% secondary) reported that uniform costs hadn't changed since last year, 35% and 42% respectively said they had increased. The average cost of a **primary school** uniform is €135 and the average cost of a **secondary school** uniform is €215.

School books

Majority of parents reported an increase in the cost of school books:

Change in School Book Costs



Average cost of books in **primary school** is €110. Average cost of books in **secondary school** is €225.

School book rental schemes

The availability of school book rental schemes remains inconsistent.

76% of pupils in **primary school** have access to a school book rental scheme.

42% of **secondary school** pupils have a book rental scheme available in their school.

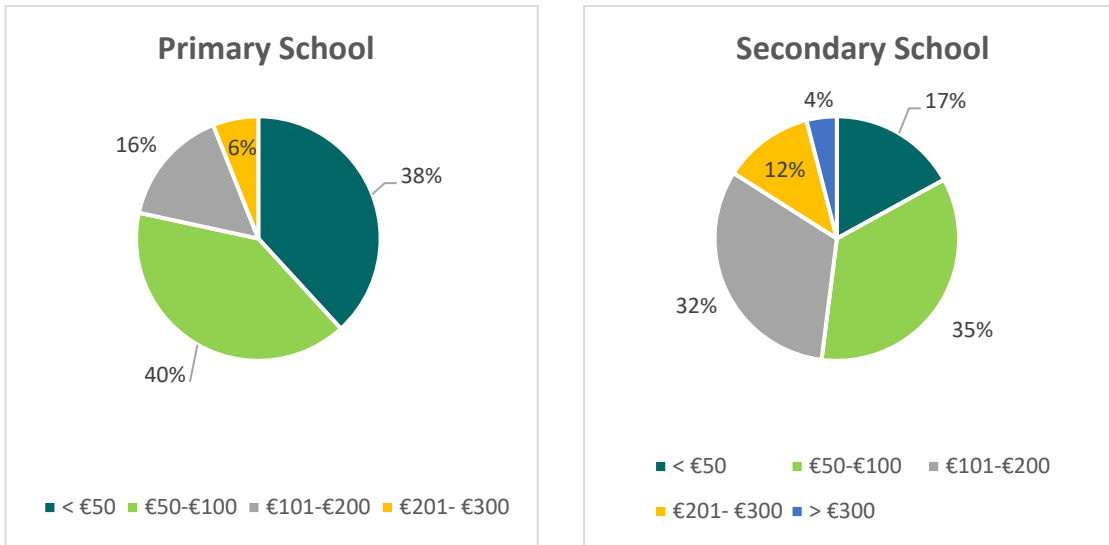
On average parents of **primary school** pupils pay €50 to their school book rental scheme, while parents of **secondary school** pupils pay €115.

Voluntary Contribution

Primary: 65 per cent of parents are asked for a 'voluntary contribution'.

Secondary: 74 per cent of parents are asked for 'voluntary contribution'.

Cost of Voluntary Contribution Payments



Classroom Resources

66% of **primary school** parents pay classroom resources fees to cover photocopying / art supplies etc. (around the same as 2019 but down from 76% in 2018). The average amount sought is €40.

58% of **secondary school** parents pay classroom resources fees to cover photocopying / art supplies etc. (down from 78% in 2019 and 84% in 2018). The average amount sought is €65.

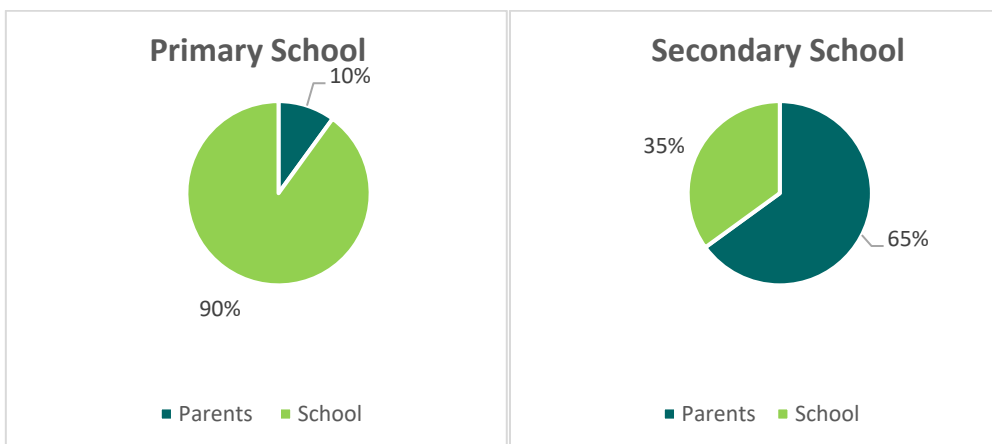
Registration Fees

15% of **primary school** parents are required to pay a registration fee. The average fee was €70. 42% of **secondary school** parents are required to pay a registration fee. The average fee was €130.

Digital Learning

23% of **primary school** parents reported their child needed a tablet or laptop for school, a big increase on 14% in 2019. 34% of **secondary school** parents reported their child needed a tablet or laptop for school.

Who provides laptops or tablets for use in school?



Recommendations:

Investing in education, especially at pre-primary and primary levels, unlocks a child's potential, offsets the impact of poverty and creates a level playing field. Every child should be supported to realise their right to education, enabling them to reach their full potential.

- Uphold a child's constitutional right to free primary education by committing in Budget 2021 to invest an extra €103.2 million annually to reduce the cost of books, voluntary contributions, classroom resources and transport for parents. This can be phased over the lifetime of the Government, beginning with expansion of the free school book programme in the 2021/2022 school year.
- Commit to investing €126.9m annually to make secondary education free for all children once free primary education has been achieved.
- Ensure school's Board of Managements' adherence to the Department of Education circular re school uniform policy to take tangible measures to reduce the cost for parents.
- Equalise the threshold for Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance for one and two parent families and restore the amount paid to 2010 levels.
- Fully implement the recommendations from the recent report of Joint Committee on Education and Skills in relation to school costs.
- To address the digital divide among school pupils at both primary and secondary levels, develop a grant scheme similar to that available in third level to assist parents to pay for the digital hardware and software required for their child's education.