

Back to School Survey 2024

“ A basic need and right of children shouldn't be crippling families across the nation in order to care for their educational wellbeing.

— Secondary school parent

A total of **over 900 responses** were received. These responses represented the costs associated with **500 primary school pupils** and **410 secondary school students**.

Back to School Costs



Half of primary (51%) and 70% of secondary school parents stated they are worried about meeting costs this year. 13% of primary school parents and 21% of secondary school parents said they were very concerned. Only 30% of secondary school parents said that costs were manageable.

“ There is a constant worry of being able to keep up with the basic needs for my son to attend school.

— Primary school parent

Paying for Back to School Costs

“ Families are under severe pressure and something needs to change, me along with many other parents are tired of financial struggles with constant bills on top of trying to educate our children.

— Secondary school parent

One quarter of secondary (25%) and almost one in five (18%) primary school parents said they have to use savings in order to meet back to school costs. 21% of secondary and one in ten (12%) of primary school parents said they had to take a loan out or borrow from friends to meet school costs.

“ It means we cannot afford any luxuries. I need to cut back on weekly shopping so I have the money for the school.

— Secondary school parent

Uniforms

What parents spent on uniforms this year:



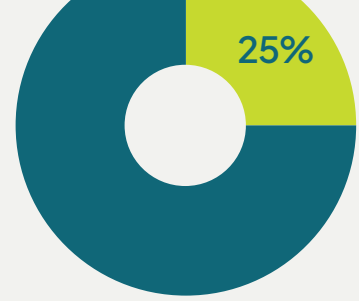
When asked if their school could do more to lower the cost of their child's uniform 73% of primary and 80% of secondary school parents said yes.

“ I would like to see non crested uniforms that do not cost a small fortune.

— Secondary school parent

BACK TO SCHOOL CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR ALLOWANCE

More than three quarters (76%) of parents who receive the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance reported it did not cover the costs of uniform and footwear.



“ Increase back to school - €160 is not enough for a primary school giving that the cost is €560 !! for everything.

— Primary school parent

Receive Do not receive

Schoolbooks and Classroom Resources

“ The free school books made a huge positive impact for me this last academic year and it was a very welcomed scheme. It made a very challenging time some what less challenging. I am very appreciative of it.

— Primary school parent



86% of primary and 70% of secondary school parents said they were asked to contribute towards classroom resources, where the average cost was €51 and €69 respectively for those who did.

Secondary school parents asked to contribute towards classroom resources.

YES 70%

NO 30%

Digital Tools

Overall parents spent

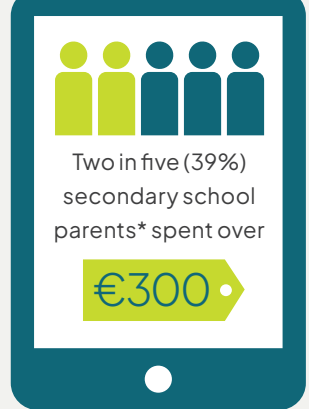


“ I could really do with help towards electronic devices that school has said we have to buy at a cost of €740.

— Secondary school parent

“ Any device should be allowed rather than being forced to purchase a school specific device.

— Secondary school parent



*Who have to purchase digital devices

Voluntary contributions

The range of contributions varied considerably, with some schools requesting €20 from parents while others looked for over €300.

Almost two-thirds of parents (64%) said that it did not feel voluntary.

Four in five secondary school parents (77%) and two thirds of primary school parents (68%) said that parents should not have to pay it.

Was a voluntary contribution requested?

Primary

78%

YES

Primary

€98

Secondary

80%

YES

Secondary

€124

Amount asked. Figures are on average.

“ Voluntary Contribution but they email to let you know that you still haven't paid it.

— Primary school parent

“ Pay the schools more directly so parents don't have to make up the shortfall.

— Secondary school parent

“ Honour their commitments, do not leave schools stranded and needing to rely on funding from the parents.

— Secondary school parent

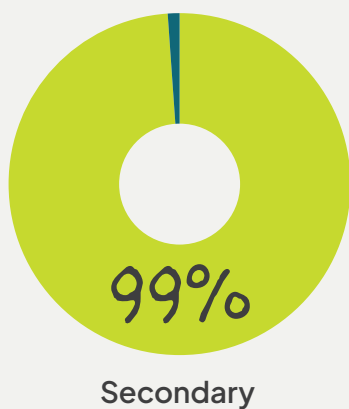
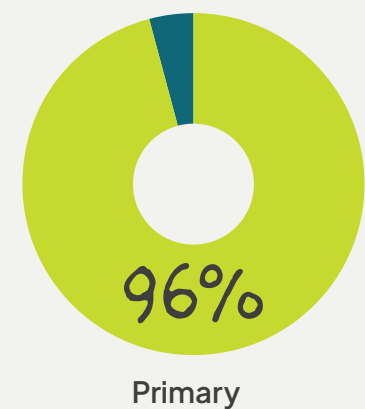
School Tours

One quarter (25%) of secondary school parents say they have to spend over €300 on school tours and trips.

“ I feel so guilty that I can't afford to send her on all the trips the others appear to go on easily so I feel she's missing out.

— Primary school parent

ASKED TO PAY ADDITIONAL SUMS FOR SCHOOL TOURS AND TRIPS



Recommendations



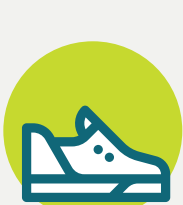
1. Establish a voluntary contribution code of practice for schools and increase capitation rates.



2. Extend the free schoolbooks scheme to all secondary school years.



3. The Department of Education must mandate all schools introduce an affordable uniform option.



4. Increase the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance by €100, as it was in Budget 2022 and Budget 2023, on a permanent basis.



5. Establishing a digital fund for low income parents to access tablets and laptops for their children where required.