

Barnardos School Costs Survey 2019

Background

In total, 1,402 parents completed the Barnardos School Costs Survey 2019. The majority of respondents (885) had children in **primary school**, while the remaining 517 respondents' children attend **secondary school**. There was a broad geographic spread – 65 % of respondents are from Leinster, 21 % from Munster, 10 % from Connaught and 4 % from Ulster – which was broadly in line with the national population proportions.

Average costs

The cost of sending a child to school remains substantial in 2019. As children move through the school system the costs increase.

Average Basic School Costs

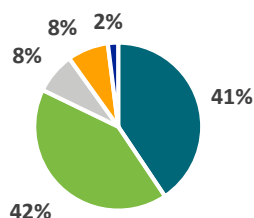
Average Costs	Senior Infants Pupil	4th Class Pupil	1st Year Student
Clothing	€100	€105	€200
Footwear	€45	€50	€70
School Books	€75	€90	€215
Stationery	€20	€30	€60
Classroom resources	€40	€35	€75
Voluntary contribution	€60	€70	€115
Total	€340	€380	€735
Total in 2018*	€360	€380	€745
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance	€150	€150	€275

*Stationery was not included in the total for 2018.

Impact on parents / families

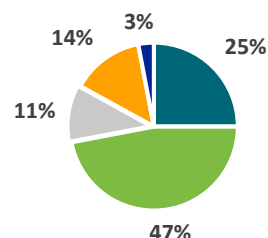
How parents pay for school costs:

Primary School



- Out of Regular household budget
- Cutting back or not paying bills
- Taking from savings
- Borrowing money
- Other

Secondary School



- Out of Regular household budget
- Cutting back or not paying bills
- Taking from savings
- Borrowing money
- Other

A large proportion of parents are cutting back or not paying bills in order to meet the costs of returning to school – 42% of **primary school** parents and 47% of **secondary school**. But more worryingly a number are going into debt: 8 per cent of primary school parents and 14 per cent of secondary school parents are forced to borrow money to cover school costs.

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: 75 per cent of parents report having to purchase a crested uniform.

Secondary school: 95 per cent of parents report having to purchase a crested uniform.

Majority of parents (63% of primary and 50% secondary) reported that uniform costs hadn't changed since last year, 32% and 43% respectively said they had increased.

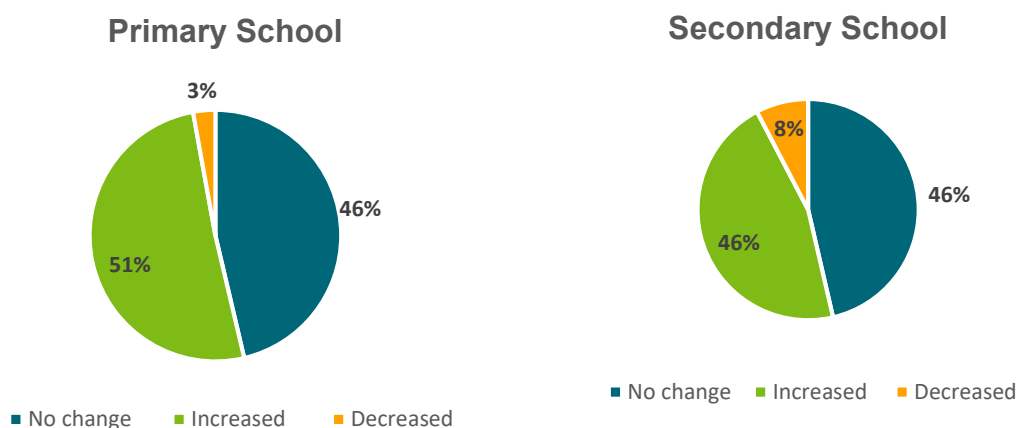
Average cost of **secondary school** uniform is €170, average cost of footwear is €80.

Average cost of **primary school** uniform is €110 and the average cost of footwear is €50.

School books

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

Change in School Books Costs



Average cost of books in **primary school** is €85.

Average cost of books in **secondary school** is €190.

Parents of primary school children are extremely frustrated with the frequent use of **workbooks**.

School book rental schemes

The availability of school book rental schemes remains inconsistent.

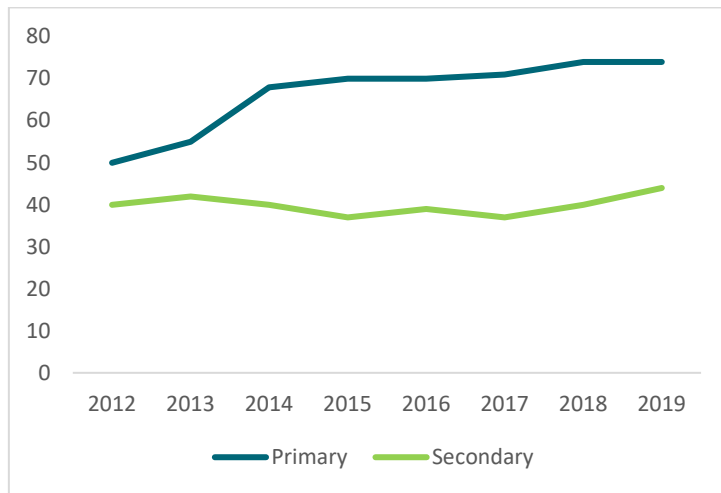
74% of pupils in **primary school** have access to a school book rental scheme.

44% of **secondary school** pupils have a book rental scheme available in their school.

On average parents of **primary school** pupils pay €55 to their school book rental scheme, while parents of **secondary school** pupils pay €100.

An analysis of trend data from Barnardos annual school costs survey since 2012 indicates that access to book rental schemes for primary school has grown (from 50% in 2012 to 74% in 2019) but remained fairly stagnant in secondary schools (40% in 2012 to 44% in 2019).

Availability of school book rental schemes 2012 - 2019



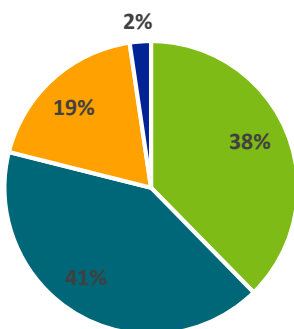
Voluntary Contribution

Primary: 67 per cent of parents are asked for a ‘voluntary contribution’.

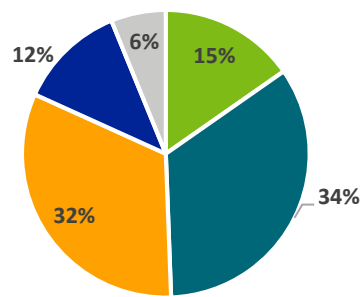
Secondary: 69 per cent of parents are asked for ‘voluntary contribution’.

Cost of Voluntary Contribution Payments

Primary School



Secondary School



Legend for Primary School: <€50 (green), €50-€100 (teal), €101-€200 (orange), >€200 (blue)

Legend for Secondary School: <€50 (green), €50-€100 (teal), €101-€200 (orange), €201-€300 (blue), >€300 (grey)

Digital

14% of **primary school** parents reported their child needed a tablet or laptop for school.

32% of **secondary school** parents reported their child needed a tablet or laptop for school. An increase from 2018 when 25 per cent of secondary school parents indicated their children were using digital devices.

Classroom Resources

65% of **primary school** parents pay classroom resources fees to cover photocopying / art supplies etc. (down from 76% in 2018). The average amount sought is €35.

78% of **secondary school** parents pay classroom resources fees to cover photocopying / art supplies etc. (down from 84% of parents in 2018). The average amount sought is €80.

Registration Fees

14% of **primary school** parents responded that they were required to pay a registration fee. The average fee was €70.

44% of **secondary school** parents were required to pay a registration fee. The average fee was €120.

Recommendations:

By investing in our education system and tackling school costs we can ensure that all children start off with the same resources, which will increase their ability to reach their full potential.

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 to invest an extra €103.2 million annually to make it a reality for all children. This can be phased in over a three year period beginning with investing the €20 million to provide free school books for all in Budget 2020.
- Commit to investing €126.9 million 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 regarding school uniform policy to take tangible measures to reduce the costs on parents.
- Restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance back to the 2010 level by increasing the primary and secondary school rates by €25 per child in Budget 2020 to €175 and €300 respectively.
- Equalise the income thresholds for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance for one and two parent families.
- Increase capitation fees by 10% in order to begin to offset the need for voluntary contributions and return the rates to 2010 levels.
- Fully implement the recommendations from the recent report of Joint Committee on Education and Skills in relation to school costs.