



# Poverty Awareness Policy

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**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Chairperson schools governing body, on behalf of the  
Governing Body**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher**

**Distribution: Staff, governors, pupils, parents/carers and  
Interested parties.**

## **Introduction**

Ysgol Ty Coch Special School is a Rights Respecting School. As a Rights Respecting School, we aim to embed children's human rights in our ethos and school culture. We base our practice on the principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. Working within these principles not only empowers our children and young people, but also leads to enhanced learning, improved standards and better relationships.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history. This policy relates to Articles 2,3,6,24,27 and 31 of the UNCRC.

**Article 2 :** The right to non-discrimination

**Article 3:** All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.

**Article 6:** The right to survival and development.

**Article 24:** The right to the best health possible, this includes the right to adequate nutritious food and clean water

**Article 27:** The right to an adequate standard of living that is good enough to meet a child's physical and social needs and support their development.

Governments must help families that need support with these things.

**Article 31:** The right to leisure, play, art and cultural activities.

At Ysgol Ty Coch we regard that all children have an equitable experience in their school life and supporting pupils from low-income families to secure that experience is a vital part of the school ethos.

In Wales, education of free, which supports the UNCRC whereby all children have a right to education. Support and consideration is given at Ysgol Ty Coch to minimising any additional costs which may be incurred through school as part of enhancing their education.

## **Aims**

- To help each student achieve the maximum benefit of school, through accessing a wide range of education experiences and the promotion of positive social and emotional experiences
- To create a positive, caring atmosphere
- To provide a safe and secure environment, free from violence, bullying and any form of harassment or discrimination
- To support all pupils so that there are no barriers to learning and that low-income does not impact equitable experiences
- To provide support for children and staff
- To ensure fairness of treatment for all and equality
- To encourage a positive relationship with parents and carers to develop a shared approach to understanding how best to support our pupils

## **Understanding Poverty**

The key factor of child poverty is the percentage of children living in households which are below 60% of the median UK household income (After Housing Costs). The income of a family enables households to meet their everyday needs and if it is insufficient, then families will struggle. The most recent statistics show that 4.3 million children are growing up in poverty in the UK. The cost of raising a child until the age of 18 has increased to over £166,000 for a couple and £220,000 for a lone parent. The rising cost of living in recent years has impacted on this further.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales states that 30% of children in Wales are living in poverty and 26% of children in working households live in poverty.

The Welsh Government (WG) has outlined its initiatives for reducing child poverty in Wales in January 2024.

WG vision is for a Wales:

*That enables children and young people to access their rights, have good wellbeing and fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances).*

The vision supports that regardless of a child or young person's financial circumstances they have the same opportunities, they can access the same services and they have the same access to their rights as their peers.

- Objective 1: to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families.
- Objective 2: to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential.
- Objective 3: to support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across the Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes.
- Objective 4: to ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them and to challenge the stigma of poverty.
- Objective 5: to ensure that effective cross-government working at the national level enables strong collaboration at the regional and local level.

The impact on children and young people, if poverty is not recognised, understood and addressed, is that it can negatively affect the day to day living and affect self-esteem and wellbeing .

**Objective 1: to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families.**

The school promotes the Schools Essential Grant and Free School Meals help households with the cost of the school day. (Appendix 1). The family engagement officers in the school will also help to support with this and further information can be found from reception.

The Schools Essential Grant applies to pupils who families are on lower income and qualify for certain benefits. There is financial support through this grant for pupils from reception to Year 11. The financial support available is:

- £125 per learner

- £200 for learners entering year 7 (to help with increased costs associated with starting secondary school)
- All looked after children qualify for the grant, whether they receive free school meals or not

The family engagement officers in the school will also help to support with this and further information can be found from reception.

Uniform at the school can be purchased through the school at reduced costs or is available in local supermarkets. Uniform clothing colours are standard and easily available for purchase. Branded items or badges are not compulsory. Good quality second-hand school uniform stalls are available during parents' evenings and at family events. School uniform, although encouraged, is non-compulsory due to the sensory needs of our pupils.

**Education Maintenance Allowance** (EMA) is available to support pupils, giving eligible pupils in sixth form, aged 16-19 years, £40 per week. Packs are available from reception and will also be sent home with the pupils for those eligible.

Opportunities to learn life skills are factored into the curriculum with authentic, purposeful learning regarding paying for items, budgeting and making cost efficient meals.

### Primary Pupils Breakfasts and Lunchtime Meals

All pupils in the school of primary age have free breakfast and pupils of this age, from September 2024, will also access a free hot meal at lunchtime.

### Lunchtime Meals

Rhondda Cynon Taf are required to provide a free school lunch for eligible pupils who are in receipt of Free School Meals Allowance. All children, who are eligible, receive a free hot school meal on the site of the school at Tonteg or Buarth Y Capel. At our satellite provision at Colege Y Cymoed in Nantagrw, pupils receive a card which enables them to choose their lunch at the cafeteria. This card has a daily allowance where each pupil can choose a 'meal of the day'. This enables individuals to have a healthy, hot meal and choose what they would like to eat.

## Period Products

There are free period products placed in bathrooms.

## **Objective 2: to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential**

Access to high quality play experiences is critical for the social, emotional and physical development of all children. Children growing up in poverty can face barriers to accessing play opportunities. In the school, emphasis has been placed on the importance of play and the promotion of it. The development and investment in the playgrounds in recent years has promoted this, in addition to the enhancement in the sensory garden and the promotion of forest schools and outdoor learning on both sites.

The school has access to the Speech and Language Team (SALT) and uses private providers to enhance the offer. Professional Learning for staff is focusing on improving communication skills which will lead to increased opportunities to promote communication. The school is also committed to improving the physical lives of pupils through physical literacy, being a MOVE Centre of Excellence and purchasing additional Physiotherapy through the schools budgets.

The school runs a summer school which provides opportunities for food and fun. The Welsh Government's School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), is a schools-based programme which provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions during the summer holidays. Pupils can apply to be considered for a place in the holiday club.

## **Pupil Development Grant**

The Welsh Government provides funding in the form of the Pupil Development Grant, (PDG), for the school to support pupils from low-income families. Approximately 36% of pupils in Ysgol Ty Coch are eligible for free school meals.

The PDG is available to all children and young people in receipt of free school meals (eFSM), those in local authority care and eligible learners in Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) settings.

The amount for the Early Years PDG is £700 per pupil for 3–5-year-olds and £1,150 for pupils in Years 1-11.

The school is committed to closely working with local authorities, health and social care sectors, and voluntary and community organisations, in order to secure the best support and provision for pupils and families.

The PDG is used to reduce the barriers which children and young people face. The school plans carefully the use of the grant, it is used to improve high standards and aspirations for all, focussing particularly on community focused schools, high quality teaching and learning, relationships, health and wellbeing and Curriculum for Wales. It is a central part to the school's development plan and is published on the website. In 2024, this will known as forming part of the Equity grant.

All pupils in the school leave with recognised qualifications through OCR Life and Living Skills at Entry 1- Entry 3. Some pupils will leave with Essential Skills Wales Application of Number or Communication at Entry 1 or Entry 2.

The new ALN Code of Practice ensures that all learners receive appropriate targets and that the additional learning provision is focused on their individual needs.

Careers and Work-Related Experiences is embedded in the curriculum, with opportunities in the different departments to promote different opportunities and experiences. There are also work experience opportunities in the sixth form, some of these may be inhouse, through social enterprise or through working with outside providers.

**Objective 3: to support child and family wellbeing and make sure that work across the Welsh Government delivers for children living in poverty, including those with protected characteristics, so that they can enjoy their rights and have better outcomes**

The WG Programme for Government is founded on the distinctively Welsh values of community, equality and social justice.

The school is developing its work as a Community Focused School, engaging families through strong partnerships; responding to the needs of the community and collaborating

effectively with other services. This is shown through effective partnering with Speech and Language services, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and close working relationships with Disabled Children's Team, Adult Services and Learning Disability Teams in Health. Clinics are regularly held in the school with pediatricians, which helps the pupils to be calm and, in an environment, where they are relaxed. The school works closely with other health teams such as the asthma nurses, epilepsy and diabetic nurses, in addition to dietetics to ensure the needs of each young person is put first.

The school works closely with OT and with wheelchair services so that the young person has the most suitable equipment for their needs.

There is a full time nurse on Tonteg site to support pupils health needs.

The community nursing team liaise with the school regularly to deliver immunisations to pupils on both sites, ensuring pupils are in a calmer, more familiar environment to receive the much-needed vaccinations.

There are two family engagement officers who work closely with families, reaching out and ensuring that positive partnerships with families are developed. Where it has been identified, bespoke support and services offered. The school has run workshops for families including Maths on Toast, Social Media and Relationships, Sexuality Education. The school runs monthly Forest Schools sessions for pupils, parents and siblings on a weekend. This enables the school to support pupils and thier families.

The school works closely with Young Engagement (YEPS) in the local authority and will signpost young people to accessing the facilities which YEPS provide outside of school, e.g. youth clubs or visits.

### **School Trips**

Costs for additional school activities such as school trip are kept to a minimum. Most activities are free of charge or subsidised through grants accessed such as International schools grants. In some instances, pupils are asked for a voluntary donation towards the cost of a trip.

School trips linked to the curriculum are not chargeable. Welsh Government guidance on charging states that families of any child in receipt of free school meals, should not be charged for educational school trips.

The school supports extra-curricular trips and reducing costs by providing:

- free packed lunches for all those who are eligible.
- Minibus transport to school trips so no extra transport costs are incurred
- visiting theatre companies, to ensure that theatre experiences can be enjoyed by all pupils without costs.

The school occasionally requests for 'voluntary contributions' for trips which enhance the provision, but this is not a requirement of the curriculum. All pupils/ families are supported with sensitivity and discretion, so no child goes without.

- Fundraising initiatives or 'fun' days, pupils are encouraged to take part if they are suitable for that young person, donations are voluntary, and do not affect the taking part in the event.
- Where school trips have a cost, the school seeks to find activities which are affordable and accessible to all pupils, sufficient notice is given and the option of paying in instalments is planned.
- There are opportunities to access funds / grants which can contribute or pay for school trips, amongst the families of learners entitled to free school meals (and looked after children).
- Events such as prom are celebrated but kept to a minimum, costs are kept low, donations are voluntary, staff in school support with hair and make-up if desired and pupils can wear whichever outfit they feel comfortable in.

### Transport costs

The school has three minibuses and two nine-seater vehicles. These are used to provide free of charge transport to educational experiences. Where pupils take part in travel training, then the use of free bus cards are encouraged to be applied for, this then enables the young person to receive travel training. Many pupils have a "plus one" on their travel cards, which also allows a parent or carer to travel for free.

**Objective 4: challenge the stigma of poverty and ensure children, young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect by the people and services who interact with and support them**

It is important in the school that young people are given a voice and have the platform for their voice to be heard. The school plans for this through promoting the school council, the development of the school Parliament and the individual pupil voice. Systems such as E-trans, switches, and the use of eye gaze, enables the reducing of barriers to having their voice heard.

The school has achieved Silver Rights Respecting School Award and is on the journey to achieving Gold.

The school has the understanding of Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) embedded within its ethos, provision and curriculum. The whole school has had training on TIS in 2021 and there is at least one TIS trained staff to diploma level in each department of the school, currently thirteen people are trained to diploma level.

Staff receive annual training on PACE- Playfulness, Acceptance Curiosity and Empathy which supports and models treating our pupils and young people with kindness and respect, empathy. Staff also receive training annually on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and how they can affect pupils and young people; identifying strategies to minimize the effects which ACEs have on young people's lives. ACEs are stressful or traumatic events that occur in childhood. They can have a lifelong impact on health and behaviour. There are many ACEs that children can experience and include:

- domestic violence
- parental abandonment through separation or divorce
- a parent with a mental health condition
- being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional)
- being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional)
- having a member of the household in prison
- growing up in a household in which there are adults experiencing issues with alcohol and drug use

If children have experienced 4 or more ACEs then they are more likely to experience reduced physical and mental health and reduced life outcomes. The impact of ACEs can be

reduced through having a key relationship with a trusted adult through childhood, developing the ability to feel safe and secure. The impact of Poverty and ACEs together can be more magnified so it is essential that pupils with ACEs and who experience poverty are well supported, in order to reduce the life- long effects.

The school supports pupils by offering:

- Motional assessments and programme for each child/ young person
- Taith y Meddywl referral approach which then offers a graduated response, accessing provisions such as ELSA, friendship groups, Ty Hwyl
- An outreach team who support pupils who are having difficulty accessing school through illness or anxiety.

A counsellor is available, during the week, to support the students. This is provided through the Eye to Eye Counselling service. The pupils are encouraged to talk through any issues with the counsellor. In addition to this, many staff in the school are trained to Agored Cymru Level 1 in Counselling Skills.

There are six LSAs trained as ELSA support assistants. Pupils who need additional emotional literacy support are identified. These may be students who are in danger of becoming intimidating or a victim of bullying. The ELSA works with these pupils individually or in a small group for a number of weeks. An ELSA programme is followed to assist progress.

The school works with Shine to promote good mental health.

Staff attend meetings such as CAMHS meetings to enable a holistic approach to supporting the young person.

The school is on a journey towards becoming a restorative school. Staff have been trained in the restorative approach and emphasis will be with regard to helping the pupils to build, maintain and repair relationships which have been damaged.

Staff on both sites are trained in Mental Health First Aid

**Objective 5: to ensure that effective cross -government working at the national level enables strong collaboration at the regional and local level**

The school works closely with families, with its partner agencies, the local authority and Welsh Government to collaborate and reduce the impact of child poverty. The children's right approach is central to this.

To enable a positive, whole-school approach towards tackling the impacts of poverty is evidenced through the school :

1. having a strong moral leadership from the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body, which models values and high expectations, thereby 'leading by example' by valuing health and well-being. The school ethos firmly puts high values and expectations at the core of its philosophy, this is demonstrated through RECIPE Respect, Empathy, Challenge, Integrity, Passion and Expectation.
2. embed a climate and culture where learners feel safe, secure and valued, promote the UNCRC and, in particular, seek and listen to the voice of the child or young person. Throughout all policies and activities the rights of the child are promoted and pupil voice is central.
3. have in place a secure understanding of the health and well-being of their learners and effective methods to monitor and evaluate this. This is evidence in targeted initiatives including planning for Community focused schools through a Trauma Informed Approach and ELSA, in addition to SLA for Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist and Eye to Eye Counselling
4. Working closely through the family engagement team, to recognise which pupils may be from low-income families, sensitively encouraging the applying for benefits and or grants if they are entitled to them
5. ensure effective communication and partnership working with parents/carers. The school maintains excellent links with parent/ carers through regular meetings and the family centre.
6. provide a curriculum that meets the needs of learners (both now and for their future), implemented with learning experiences that support and challenge learners about their health and well-being. In the school, this is shown through work embedded in the curriculum that progressively addresses relationships, positive behaviour and resilience.
7. establish and maintain strong and responsive care, support and guidance. This is evidenced through Trauma informed Approach, Restorative Approach, using PACE through the curriculum and minimising the effects of ACEs

8. create a curriculum which has exciting learning opportunities, using the school resources to develop authentic learning, which is charge free.
9. Having sensitive, discreet communication with families who are struggling with school meal debt, making the LA catering team aware and encouraging fair and open conversations regarding payment. We work closely with families to resolve the situation.
10. create an environment that promotes health and well-being (e.g. space to play and relax maximising the benefits of outdoor learning where possible, suitable toilet facilities, support healthy food and drink, ensure site security, etc.) this is promoted through outdoor space, the sensory garden, advice from onsite physiotherapist and occupational therapist
11. Promote holiday clubs of "Food and Fun" and free additional provision, which supports provision outside of the school day such as YEPS
12. support professional learning for all staff, tailored to meet their needs and responsibilities. ACES training, Children Looked After, Positive behaviour management, safeguarding and anti bullying, in addition to promoting tolerance and equality/ diversity training which is a priority in the school. These are planned for annually.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Equality
- School's strategic plan
- Teaching and Learning
- Curriculum
- Taith y Meddywl
- Relationship
- Anti-bullying
- Charging

