

Pupil Equity Funding – National Operational Guidance – 2020¹

COVID-19 information

Covid-19 has put us all in an unprecedented, challenging situation. The Deputy First Minister recognised in his statement to Parliament on 19 March that every aspect of our national life has been affected by this crisis. In recognition of the financial and other resource implications of maintaining critical provision for children and families at this time, the Deputy First Minister set out that he was content to relax current guidance on Attainment Scotland Funding, including Pupil Equity Funding, in order that LAs and headteachers can support the education and care of children and young people during the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Separate guidance has been issued to LAs on wider Attainment Scotland Funding.

This flexibility must remain consistent with the principle of equity in education. Any decisions that alter the planned use of Pupil Equity Funding should be made in partnership with the relevant headteachers. In making changes to plans, local authorities and headteachers should be mindful that long-standing plans may be in place for much of this funding and that a significant portion of it will be assigned to salaried staff or to meeting contractual costs for other services. Existing reporting arrangements remain in place and these will be kept under review and adjusted where necessary to take into account the potential impact of school closures. Education Scotland Attainment Advisers will remain available to advise local authorities and headteachers where necessary.

What is it?

Pupil Equity Funding is additional funding allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The Scottish Government has committed to this funding as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme from 2017/18. The Pupil Equity Funding forms part of the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund which will be invested over the current Parliamentary term. Pupil Equity Funding will continue until 2021/22.

This national guidance is intended to help schools plan how they will most effectively invest their Pupil Equity Funding allocation to improve the educational outcomes of children affected by poverty. Local authorities may issue complementary guidance about how the funding will operate locally.

Key Principles

- Headteachers must have access to the full amount of the allocated Pupil Equity Funding.
- Pupil Equity Funding must enable schools to deliver activities, interventions or resources which are clearly additional to those which were already planned.
- Headteachers should work in partnership with each other, and their local authority, to agree the use of the funding. Schools must take account of the statutory responsibilities of the authority to deliver educational improvement, secure Best Value, and the authority's role as employer. Local Guidance will set out more detail on how this will operate.
- The operation of the Pupil Equity Funding should articulate closely to existing planning and reporting procedures e.g. through – School Improvement Planning

1. Text additional to the 2019 National Operational Guidance is highlighted.

and Standards and Quality reports. This should provide clarity to stakeholders on how Pupil Equity Funding is being used.

- Parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be involved in the planning process.
- Funding must provide targeted support for children and young people (and their families if appropriate) affected by poverty to achieve their full potential. Although the Pupil Equity Funding is allocated on the basis of free school meal eligibility, headteachers can use their professional judgement to bring additional children in to the targeted interventions and approaches.
- Headteachers must develop a clear rationale for use of the funding, based on a robust contextual analysis, including relevant data which identifies the poverty-related attainment gap in their schools and plans must be grounded in evidence of what is known to be effective at raising attainment for children affected by poverty.
- Schools must have plans in place at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding. These plans should outline clear outcomes to be achieved and how progress towards these, and the impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap, will be measured. If, as a result of this ongoing monitoring, the plans are not achieving the results intended, these plans should be amended. Plans for sustainability should be considered as part of this.

How much is it?

Publicly funded primary, secondary and special schools will receive £1,200 in 2020/21 and 2021/22 for each child in Primary 1 to S3, or equivalent, who is registered for free school meals under national eligibility criteria. The allocations are fixed across two years. In order to facilitate this, 2.1% of the proposed 2020-21 PEF allocation has been applied to allocations for 2021-22.

How is it allocated?

Pupil Equity Funding is allocated to schools on the basis of the estimated number of children and young people in P1-S3 registered for free school meals under the [national eligibility criteria](#).

The 2020/21 and 2021/22 funding allocation has been calculated using the most recently available Healthy Living Survey and Pupil Census data and is based on:

- The estimated number of P1-P3 pupils who would be registered for free school meals using the national eligibility criteria. This will be done by taking the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals in primary schools in 2014 and then applying those to the 2018 school rolls for P1 to P3.
- The estimated number of P4-P7 and S1-3 pupils who are registered for free school meals.
- The estimated number of special school pupils in the P1-S3 age range registered for free school meals.

The approach to estimating free school meal registrations will be kept under review as the Government seeks to improve the quality of data for identifying children living in households affected by poverty.

Funding for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be paid by the Government to local authorities by means of a ring-fenced grant which will clearly indicate the amounts that should be allocated directly to each school. Local authorities will confirm arrangements for draw down at school level.

How can it be used?

Although the funding is allocated to schools on the basis of free school meal eligibility, headteachers have discretion to make decisions about which children and young people would benefit most from any particular intervention or approach, whilst keeping a clear focus on delivering equity. Funding should not be used in ways that stigmatises children and young people or their parents. Interventions that impact on transitions between school stages – for example between nursery and primary or between broad general education and senior phase – can also be considered.

The funding should be focused on activities and interventions that will lead to improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Leadership; learning & teaching; and families and communities are useful organisers to consider when determining interventions and approaches. In recognition of the aforementioned financial and other resource implications of maintaining critical provision for children and families at this time, the funding could be used to address digital exclusion for children and young people at home, particularly for children and young people in receipt of free school meals.

A framework, '[Interventions for Equity](#),' has been developed to support the planning and implementing of interventions and approaches to meet the needs of children and young people affected by poverty in order to close the attainment gap. The examples cited act as a stimulus for wider reflection of what would suit your local context and are by no means the only interventions that should be considered.

Headteachers can work at an individual school and local community level or collegiately in wider school clusters and beyond at local authority and regional improvement collaborative level to address common interests. Interventions and approaches should be considered within the context of the school improvement planning cycle and must be targeted towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Where appropriate, funding should articulate with existing Scottish Attainment Challenge School and Challenge Authority improvement plans.

Headteachers will need to be familiar with local policies and procedures – such as the Local Code of Corporate Governance, Local Schemes of Delegation, the Role of the Section 95 officer, the local Devolved School Management policy and local school planning cycle – the local operational guidance which they may issue alongside this national guidance should contain more information about these local policies as well as relevant key contacts in the local authority.

Equalities

Evidence shows that some children and young people from equalities groups can be disproportionately affected by deprivation and can therefore face significant additional barriers to learning. Education authorities have responsibilities to actively address inequality and the promotion of equity is a shared responsibility held by all staff, partners and stakeholders. In this context, headteachers should consider additional steps that might be required to close the educational attainment gap for pupils affected by poverty who may also experience disadvantage for other reasons. For example, disadvantage

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related to; a protected characteristic (disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation); a need for which they require additional support; being looked after; or having caring responsibilities.

Care experienced children and young people have been identified as a group who could benefit from additional resources and approximately £33 million from the Attainment Scotland Fund is being made available to local authorities from 2018/19 to 2020/21 (over the academic years). The [use of this funding](#) should be jointly agreed by the Chief Education Officer and Chief Social Work Officer and is intended to help authorities invest in approaches which improve educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people.

Partnerships

Parents and the local community are a valuable source of support and partnership. In many contexts, particularly in rural areas, schools may be able to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people by working with a range of bodies such as parent groups; parent councils; other local authority and public sector services; third sector organisations (including youth work, family learning organisations); other educational sectors; and/or centres of expertise. Understanding the needs of children and young people should help to identify appropriate areas for collaboration.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is an innovative and effective mechanism to engage with parents and pupils, in particular those who face barriers to participation. PB directly involves people in participating in budgeting decisions that will have a direct impact on improving their lives and it can engage people who would not normally participate with traditional forms of communication. Some examples of how schools have used PB are here:- <https://pbscotland.scot/>

Staffing

Where schools identify the need to recruit additional staff for an appropriate intervention or activity, they should work closely with the Local Authority (as the employer) to ensure that the job remits and specifications are clearly tied to the aims of the intervention or approach. Headteachers need to take full account of local HR policies and procedures and that staffing costs include not just salaries but also on-costs such as pensions, sick leave, maternity cover and also potentially recruitment costs. Local guidance should provide further clear details of these costs. Any teachers recruited through Pupil Equity Funding will be excluded from the authority's contribution to any national teacher numbers and / or ratio commitment, which means it is essential to fill core staffing posts first before recruiting additional teachers.

Procurement

Purchase of resources, equipment or services must comply with existing local authority procurement procedures. This will be particularly important when buying ICT resources (see below) or, for example, services from third sector partners. Schools should liaise with their relevant local authority finance partners to ensure compliance with procurement policies and legislation.

ICT

Pupil Equity Funding can be used to procure digital technologies, including hardware and software, when its allocation and use is particularly focused on supporting children and young people affected by poverty to achieve their full potential. *The Scottish Government provides access to a range of national procurement frameworks for the

purchase of digital technology products and devices, including a range of desktops, laptops and tablets. The frameworks offer a direct route to market and significant savings against RRP.

To prevent issues arising with compatibility and connectivity, schools seeking to purchase digital technology should do so in close consultation with the IT Department at their local authority.

We know that simply providing more technology does not result in improved outcomes for learners. Therefore, any deployment of technology in an educational setting should be undertaken in line with the objectives of the national Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy

Mitigate Impact of Poverty

Developed and run by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland, the Cost of the School Day project encourages and supports local authorities and school communities to take action to mitigate the impacts of poverty on children, and contributes to equity in education.

The aim of Cost of the School Day is to reduce the impact of poverty on children and young people's experience of learning. The project raises awareness of the cost barriers and financial pressures associated with fully participating at school, and the poverty-related stigma that some children may experience. Cost of the School Day resources and support are designed to help schools identify financial barriers to learning and areas for change through engagement with pupils, parents and school staff. This is used to develop a response, inform actions at a school and local authority level and promote good practice.

The CPAG website provides some useful resources and short films on how schools around Scotland are making cost of the school day changes, at <https://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day>. The Cost of the School Day Toolkit for schools can be found at <https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/CoSD/toolkit>.

Findings from an independent evaluation of Cost of the School Day can be found here <https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/CoSD/evaluation>

Support

There is a package of national and local support available to assist schools in planning how to use their Pupil Equity Funding. This includes:

- [An Intervention for Equity framework](#) of evidenced and proven educational interventions and strategies to help tackle the poverty related attainment gap. The framework can be used by all partners and should help to inform the decisions schools make. The structure and content will be dynamic and continues to evolve as an integral part of the National Improvement Hub, where a wide range of improvement, self-evaluation and research materials are available and where practice exemplars can be shared. Other research summaries and intervention examples will continue to be incorporated as these become available.
- The [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) Toolkit](#) provides an accessible summary of educational research designed to inform discussions on the most effective approaches to improving attainment, with a focus on 5-16 year olds and poverty disadvantage. It contains 35 teaching approaches and interventions,

each summarised in terms of their average impact on attainment, the strength of the evidence supporting them and their cost. It is useful for education leaders and practitioners to inform decision making on the use of Pupil Equity Funding, raising attainment and improving equity. Many of the strands now include challenge questions to help support professional discussions. The toolkit is intended to be used in conjunction with the range of interventions and approaches provided through the framework above to encourage and enhance professional dialogue taking full account of the local context.

- [Refreshed guidance](#) on working with the third sector is available to help support schools make the best use of funding with other partners. This resource sets out how schools can create purposeful partnerships with appropriate third sector organisations to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The third sector is particularly well placed to support improvements to health and wellbeing and to improve employability skills and school leaver destinations.
- Youth Link Scotland have published [a schools guide](#) which sits alongside other resources intended to inform decision making on the use of Pupil Equity Funding and approaches within wider school improvement planning for excellence and equity in education.
- Attainment Advisors who will be able to provide advice on a local and regional basis. Attainment Advisors can be integral to facilitating good communication between headteachers, helping to share best practice and provide guidance on interventions.
- Access to collaboration and communication tools on Glow including the Scottish Attainment Challenge community, Teams, Yammer, Sharepoint, and Blogs. These tools all ensure educators can have online discussions, ask questions, post responses, exchange ideas, access additional resource materials and share examples of practice across the Scottish Attainment Challenge, with the ability to host regular discussions and securely control visibility where required.
- Guidance on [School Improvement Planning](#) including Standards and Quality reporting from Education Scotland.
- Local authorities will also offer their own packages of support for schools to help them plan how to use the funding effectively.

Outcomes, impact and measurement

At a school level, it is essential that headteachers continue to make best use of the data they have access to locally to understand which children and young people would benefit from targeted support and to monitor and track learners' progress over time. Schools should articulate clearly defined outcomes to enable progress and impact to be measured. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to defining short, medium and long term outcomes to enable progress to be measured over time and to ensure that plans are resulting in improvements. Improving nationally the confidence and accuracy of teacher professional judgement of achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels is a key factor in measuring progress. Further guidance on assessment can be found in the Key messages for schools and the Benchmarks issued in 2017. Progress towards closing the attainment gap will continue to be reported in the annual national and local National Improvement Framework evidence reports.

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Accountability and reporting

The headteacher will be accountable to their local authority for the use of Pupil Equity Funding within their school. Some schools have highlighted how they have spent their PEF online in innovative and engaging ways through Twitter, Sway and other means. To ensure transparency, schools will be expected to incorporate details of their Pupil Equity Funding plans and of the impact into existing reporting processes to their Parent Council and Forum, including in their annual School Improvement Plans and Standards and Quality Reports. These plans and reports should be made publicly available so that parents can understand what is happening in their school. The arrangements for publication will be confirmed by your local authority.

School inspection and other review processes include a focus on how well schools use their Pupil Equity Funding. 'How Good Is Our School? 4' includes a quality indicator to support self-evaluation of the school's success in raising attainment and achievement and ways in which they can demonstrate improvements to equity for all learners. This aspect is evaluated, using the six point scale during school inspections. In addition, the operation, use and effectiveness of the Pupil Equity Funding at closing the poverty-related attainment gap at a local authority level will feed into other existing quality assurance processes, such as Audit Scotland's Shared Risk Assessment.

Unspent funds

Where schools are unable to spend their full allocation during the financial year, any underspent funds can be carried forward to the new financial year. We would expect that, other than in exceptional circumstances, it should be spent within the current academic year. Schools should liaise closely with their authority to agree arrangements for carrying forward the funding into the new financial year (and, in exceptional circumstances, into the new academic year). Pupil Equity Funding should be considered separately from other funding within the devolved school management budget.

**Scottish Government
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