

Pupil Equity Funding – National Operational Guidance – 2021¹

An additional £20 million Pupil Equity Fund premium will support education recovery efforts for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as part of the investment of over £200 million through the Attainment Scotland Fund in 2021 to 2022.

This is being issued as a 15% uplift to the previously published 2021 to 2022 PEF allocations for schools. This provides further resource to schools to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, recognising the new and additional challenges schools and their children and young people face as a result of COVID-19.

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 Advisors 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 Attainment Scotland Fund.

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.
- Parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be **meaningfully** 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 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.

¹ 1. Text additional to the 2020 National Operational Guidance is highlighted.

- The operation of the Pupil Equity Funding should articulate closely to existing planning and reporting procedures e.g. through – School Improvement Planning and Standards and Quality reports. This should provide clarity to stakeholders on how Pupil Equity Funding is being used.
- 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 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. **In addition to this, a £20 million Pupil Equity Fund premium is being introduced in 2021-22. This is being issued as a 15% uplift to the previously published 2021/22 PEF allocations for schools.**

The revised 2021/22 PEF Allocations may be found here: [Schools: Pupil attainment: closing the gap - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/schools-pupil-attainment-closing-the-gap-2021-22/pages/2.aspx)

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 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 through improving outcomes for learners impacted by poverty**. 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 **focussed on learners impacted by poverty, which** 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.

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.

Headteachers may also want to consider the mitigations and recommendations noted in the recent [Equity Audit](#) and [Closing the poverty related attainment gap: A report on progress 2016-2021](#) which were published recently.

Consideration should be given to how the school may want to work with community partners beyond education to deliver proposed outcomes. 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.

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.

Equalities

Evidence shows that some children and young people from **marginalised** 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**. **Educational authorities should consider how the interests, knowledge,**

identities and resources of underserved young people and communities (e.g. those from minority ethnic backgrounds or lone parent households) are being recognised and valued. The influence of unconscious bias should also be considered especially in relation to whose ideas are valued and how they influence PEF intervention planning.

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 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.

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.

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 remit 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. However, significant investment of almost £400m of new funding as part of education recovery in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is supporting a range of work to accelerate learning recovery. This has so far helped deliver over 70,000 devices and connectivity solutions to lift children and young people out of digital exclusion so please bear this in mind when considering using PEF for this purpose, as there may be other avenues to explore.

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 with clear plans in place at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding.

Mitigate Impact of Poverty

Taking action on the Cost of the School Day helps schools improve understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families affected by poverty and helps develop poverty aware policies and practices to reduce financial pressures and promote equity.

The Cost of the School Day project at Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland offers resources and support for schools and local authorities to

- Understand child poverty, financial barriers and poverty related stigma at school
- Involve pupils, parents and staff in identifying financial barriers to learning and participation and in developing solutions in local contexts
- Learn about and use good practice approaches to reducing costs, maximising incomes and supporting children and families on low incomes.

All Cost of the School Day information and resources can be found on the CPAG website <https://cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day>, including the Cost of the School Day Toolkit <https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/CoSD/toolkit>.

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

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, It can engage people who would not normally participate with traditional forms of communication.

Participatory budgeting is one way to support meaningful pupil voice by giving pupils a say in the decisions which affect them, but it is also a way to encourage active citizenship and positive participation in their local communities. It has been used to engage pupils, parents and the community while lowering the cost of the school day and incentivising attainment.

PB can help to;

- Build more confident and active young people as citizens.
- Provide a real experience of democracy in action.
- Strengthen pupil voice.
- Realise children's rights to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Offer a positive engagement experience and strengthen school culture by building positive relationships.
- Enable young people to build an awareness of wider community needs.

Examples of how PB has been used in schools in Scotland to date can be viewed on the [PB in Schools](#) page of the PB Scotland website.

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:

- [Scottish Attainment Challenge - Self-evaluation resource \(education.gov.scot\)](#) designed to assist schools and others bring about further improvement at this time of recovery.
- [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.
- YouthLink Scotland has a range of collaboration support and resources available as part of their national [Scottish Attainment Challenge programme](#). This includes [information for schools, evidence and examples of impact](#) and learning from the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund. They can also provide support to identify and work with youth work partners.
- 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 [and effective planning and evaluation](#).
- 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.
- There is a need to consider equalities when identifying root causes of attainment gaps - Data about poverty/SIMD should be looked at in conjunction with other key characteristics including, but not limited to, gender, race, disability, care experience, gypsy roma/traveller. This will require disaggregating data educational settings will already be collecting by these characteristics.
 - More guidance can be found for Primary schools and early learning and childcare here: <https://education.gov.scot/media/1hqfmayv/data-guide-primary-and-elc.pdf>
 - Secondary schools guidance is here: <https://education.gov.scot/media/ca3c2gki/data-guide-secondary.pdf>
- Research identifies **6 broad principles** which can be used to help schools and local authorities consider their use of PEF funding to recalibrate equity and help learners to bounce forward after COVID-19 school building closures. A paper being developed by Education Scotland will explore practical approaches to implementing these principles.
 - 1. Impact of COVID-19** - Children and young people learn less well when not in regular classes (Scottish Government, 2020; Grattan Institute, 2020). Evidence from Australia shows that the achievement gap widens at triple the rate in remote schooling (Grattan Institute, 2020).
 - 2. Prioritise re-engagement** - Most students will recover but disadvantaged students will need additional support to re-engage (Grattan Institute, 2020).
 - 3. Identify learners most impacted by COVID-19** - To effectively target support and impact upon those children and young people most affected by poverty and COVID-19, all educational establishments, local authorities and national agencies need to use data and research as an evidence base. Research highlights that learners most affected include: younger children (P1-3), those experiencing transitions, those with existing mental health and social difficulties and those with ASN.
 - 4. Intensify support in the short-term** - Intensified support is needed in the short-term (6 months) for learners most affected by COVID-19 and school closures. Focus should be on targeted supports for core literacy and numeracy, language development, social learning and concentration.
 - 5. High quality provision vital** - Provision needs to be more than just additional. It needs to be of the highest quality and evidence based. Factors which support this include: networked learning systems, appropriate training in interventions being delivered.

6. Have a long-term strategic vision and interventions to close the poverty related attainment gap - The poverty related attainment gap has been a factor of our society before the current pandemic. These issues continue to need prioritisation and the factors which have always underpinned poverty need further targeting and actions.

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.

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 explicitly report on the impact on outcomes for learners impacted by poverty within** 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, May 2021