

Pupil Equity Fund

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education, Education, Communities & Economy

1. Purpose of the Report

Pupil Equity Funding is additional funding from the Scottish Government's £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund, allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap. This funding is to be spent at the discretion of Head Teachers working in partnership with each other and their local authority. In 2017/18, Scotland's schools received a share of over £120 million, and in 2018/19 this has increased to over £122 million.

Every council area is benefitting from Pupil Equity Funding and over 96% of schools in Scotland have been allocated funding. Allocations are based on the number of pupils from P1 to S3 who are eligible and registered for free school meals, using the latest available data. In some instances this means schools may have faced significant reductions in their funding allocation in 2018/19. However, Ministers have decided to cap the reduction that any school will face, so that the 2018/19 funding allocation is no more than 10% less than 2017/18. In these cases, a top up has been added to the schools' allocations. 11 Midlothian schools have been subject to this top up.

National Operational Guidance has been published 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.

The purpose of this report is to present the Pupil Equity Fund allocation for Midlothian schools which totals £2,273,160.

2. Background

The school level allocations for the Pupil Equity Fund were announced by the Scottish Government on 29 January 2018. A copy of the Scottish Government press release, along with this year's allocations can be found at the following link:

www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund.

As with last year, in some cases, due to potentially disclosive information, the allocations on the published spreadsheet are redacted with a '*'. In addition, school level allocations in Scotland can be found at the following link:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund/Schoolallocations>

In Midlothian we welcome the commitment to a relentless focus on closing the attainment gap. The Single Midlothian Plan is committed to reducing inequalities. In the Education service, we continue to build on our ambition to create a world-class education system through equity and excellence, and we are relentless in our focus to interrupt the cycle of poverty at the same time as improving attainment overall.

2.1 Pupil Equity Fund Regional Event

Midlothian Council is delighted that the work of Newbattle Learning Community and their collaborative use of Pupil Equity Funding was recognised and celebrated at the recent South East Improvement Collaborative Event on 8 February 2018.

The aim of their work is; collaborative working to interrupt the cycle of poverty and make a difference to Newbattle families through their shared vision; Stronger Together; A great place to grow, live and learn.

Each school committed a percentage of their Pupil Equity Funding allocation to the Newbattle Community Project to upscale the Lawfield Community Project model, with a budget jointly committed to Newbattle Learning Community Project of £220,000 of the £810,000 allocated to the schools overall.

This has allowed for a Project Manager, Administrator and home school link practitioners to be recruited, cross community knowledge, understanding and support, increased awareness of each other's context and a greater consistency of approaches. Some of the main successes to date include:

- an additional 92 pupils claiming Free School Meals
- engagement with 145 children & young people and parents
- more than 400 children & young people and parents supported by Foodbanks during the Christmas holidays
- wellbeing meeting structure is now in place across all 9 of Primary settings, our early years settings and continue in Newbattle High School
- 87 pupils have been brought to Wellbeing meetings since October.

Graeme Logan (then Strategic Director of Education Scotland) recognised the significant and successful work of the Newbattle Learning Community during his keynote speech to Head Teachers and Education Service colleagues from across the collaborative.

3. Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The Pupil Equity Fund allocation for Midlothian schools totals £2,273,160. The Education Service has issued the detailed national guidance to schools in order to support schools to use their Pupil Equity Funding to best effect, identifying their 'gap' effectively and planning appropriate targeted interventions. This guidance continues to promote the following core principles:

- Head Teachers must have access to the full amount of the allocated Pupil Equity Funding.
- The Pupil Equity Funding must enable schools to deliver activities, interventions or resources which are clearly additional to those which were already planned.

- Head Teachers 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. Additional guidance from Finance and Procurement will follow, and will be detailed to Head Teachers through Leadership Learning Community Meetings.
- The operation of the Pupil Equity Funding should articulate as closely to existing planning and reporting procedures as possible – e.g. through School Improvement Planning and Standards and Quality Reports
- 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 affected by poverty to achieve their full potential. Although the Pupil Equity Funding is allocated on the basis of free school meal eligibility, Head Teachers can use their professional judgement to bring additional children in to the targeted interventions.
- Head Teachers must base their use of the funding on a clear contextual analysis 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.

A copy of the draft national guidance can be found in appendix 1.

To further support schools to plan for the use of their new allocations, the Leadership Learning Community Meeting on 29 March 2018, with a key leadership focus of 'Measuring with Meaning', will allow all Head Teachers to report back to colleagues and partners on the targeted interventions which have had the greatest impact within their contexts and sectors.

All schools will then incorporate their PEF plans into their school improvement plan.

The Head of Education will also ensure that the Pupil Equity Fund is reported on quarterly as part of the Education Service quarterly reporting. In addition, the impact of the Pupil Equity Fund will also be reported in the attainment reports which are presented to Council in December and May each year.

3.2 Risk

We continue to welcome the relentless focus on closing the attainment gap in Education but we recognise that this requires a total Midlothian approach. Therefore we continue to recognise the critical role that other services, including the Community Planning Partnerships and the third sector, play in supporting education to interrupt the cycle of poverty. Schools will continue to plan *in school* and *out of school* interventions across the three themes of learning and teaching; communities and families and leadership. In addition schools must have plans in place at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding. The following 5 key indicators will be used in order to evaluate impact: attendance, exclusions, literacy, numeracy, health and well-being, attainment measures across the broad general education, engagement and participation

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

The ambition of the Pupil Equity Fund is already clearly embedded in the Single Midlothian Plan – reducing inequalities. Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

GIRFEC 5: Our people will be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

To close the gap by improving ‘attainment versus deprivation’ and ‘attainment for all’ outcomes for children and young people.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This report aims to take preventative action in order to interrupt the cycle of poverty by closing the attainment versus deprivation gap and implementing key programmes and interventions which are designed to target support to children and young people from disadvantaged communities.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Schools, as part of their planning cycle, will involve communities and stakeholders.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The recommendations in this report should continue to promote equity of attainment for disadvantaged children and support the steps being taken towards narrowing the attainment gap by imposing duties on education authorities and the Scottish Ministers in relation to reducing pupils’ inequalities of educational outcome together with a duty to report on progress.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

There are no impacts arising directly from this report.

3.10 IT Issues

The national guidance contains further advice on IT stating that: the 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.

4 Recommendations

Cabinet are requested to approve the following:

- To note the Pupil Equity Fund allocation for Midlothian.
- To recognise the valuable work done by the Newbattle Learning Community for their high quality presentation at the national PEF event.
- To note that, as stated in the national guidance, the Head Teacher will be accountable to their local authority for the use of Pupil Equity Funding within their school. To ensure transparency, schools will be expected to incorporate details of their Pupil Equity Funding plans into existing reporting processes to their Parent Council and Forum, including in their School Improvement Plans and Standards and Quality Reports. These reports should be publicly available so that parents can understand what is happening in their school.
- To note that ongoing progress will be reported through the quarterly reporting cycle and the attainment reports which are presented to Council each year in May and December.

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Report Contact

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Supporting Papers for on-going reviews in Scottish Education:

The school level allocations for the Pupil Equity fund were announced by the Scottish Government on 29 January 2018:

www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund.

Operational Guidance from Scottish Government:

www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund.

Education (Scotland) Act 2016:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp_20160008_en.pdf