

## **Pupil Equity Fund**

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

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

The Pupil Equity Funding is additional funding from the Scottish Government which is to be allocated directly to schools to support targeted interventions designed to close the poverty related attainment gap by interrupting the cycle poverty. 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.

Pupil Equity Funding will be 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. In 2017/18 the funding allocation will be calculated using the most recently available Healthy Living Survey and Pupil Census data and will be 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 figures for 2014/15 and then applying those to the 2016 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 purpose of this report is to present the Pupil Equity Fund allocation for Midlothian schools which totals £2, 272, 800. A copy of the school level allocations for Midlothian is included in appendix 1.

#### **2. Background**

The school level allocations for the Pupil Equity fund were announced by the Scottish Government on 1 February 2017. A copy of the Scottish Government press release can be found at the following link: <http://news.gov.scot/news/pupil-equity-funding>

In addition, school level allocations in Scotland can be found at the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund/Schoolallocations>

At Cabinet on 11 October, a paper on the Delivery Plan for Scottish Education was presented. The Scottish Government's Delivery Plan for Scottish Education acknowledges it is still the case that where a child is from, where they live and their family circumstances still have a disproportionate impact on their chance of success. The delivery plan highlights that "despite some progress over the last decade, a pupil from the 20 per cent least deprived areas of Scotland is almost twice as likely as one from the 20 per cent most deprived areas to leave school with a qualification at SCQF 6 or better" (2016: 3). Each section of the delivery plan includes an overview of the ambition and a series of 86 actions in total that the Scottish Government will implement in order to deliver the overall ambition.

In Midlothian we welcome the commitment to a relentless focus on closing the attainment gap. The Single Midlothian Plan is committed to reducing inequalities and *Closing the gap* was the theme for education in Midlothian in 2015/16. In 2016/17 the theme for the Education Service is *Closing the Gap through Excellence and Equity* which is at the core of our ambition to create a world-class education system in Midlothian.

### **2.1 The launch of the Pupil Equity Fund**

Midlothian Council were delighted that the work of Lawfield Primary School and the Lawfield Community Project was recognised with Zina Richardson, Head Teacher of Lawfield Primary School, invited to present her work at a number of the national Pupil Equity Fund events.

The Lawfield Community Project is a total partnership approach between Midlothian Council, Play Therapy, Homelink, Children First and Surestart. The aim of this partnership is to support the school and to show case how the voluntary sector can help meet the needs in the community by working in partnership with education and other partners. 33% of pupils in this community are in SIMD 1 and 2 with 93% in SIMD deciles 4 or lower. A menu of interventions have been offered to children and families which includes using the reflective approach with families and with staff; visual art play, music therapy and story-telling; 1-1 support and a chill out space for children; the Dads inclusion project sleep advice; family support and befriending; systemic family counselling and transition support. Forty-three families have been referred with fifty-one children overall being included. A whole school approach to support has been offered. As well as delivering significant reductions in exclusions, this project has had many other positive benefits including increase attendance at parent's nights – up from 50% - 85%; reading attainment - almost all children have shown an increase in their reading ability but 27 of the 51 children so far have shown an increase of more than 12 months of reading ability.

## **3 Report Implications**

### **3.1 Resource**

The Pupil Equity Fund allocation for Midlothian schools which totals £2, 272, 800. A copy of the school level allocations is included in appendix 1.

The Education Service is currently developing detailed local guidance in order to supplement the draft national guidance which has been issued together with a range of support materials. In line with the national guidance, local guidance will promote the following core principles:

- Headteachers 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.
- 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 as closely to existing planning and reporting procedures as possible – e.g. through School Improvement Planning and Standards and Qualities 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, Headteachers can use their professional judgement to bring additional children in to the targeted interventions.
- Headteachers 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 2.

To support schools, all Head Teachers took part in a Midlothian event on 1 February where the Newbattle Learning Community presented an example of their work. In addition, a number of Midlothian Head Teachers and education officers attended the national event in Edinburgh on 2 March 2017. On 14 February Graeme Logan, Strategic Director of Education Scotland, presented to all secondary teachers in Midlothian at our annual conference.

Supporting our Head Teachers to draft their initial plans, all Midlothian Head Teachers will undertake a further workshop on 2 March entitled 'Measuring with Meaning'. This workshop is part of the leadership programme which is in place this year and the March session will focus on the formulation of the draft school level/learning community plans for the utilisation of the Pupil Equity Fund. Schools will be supported throughout the process of developing their plans by their School Group Manager with draft plans being submitted to the local authority by 31 March. All schools will also ensure that the Pupil Equity Fund is part of the their whole 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 welcome the relentless focus on closing the attainment gap in Education but we recognise that this requires a total Midlothian approach; although the delivery plan clearly states in the opening ambition statement that in order to close the attainment gap "our efforts must also extend beyond the classroom and across our communities and wider public services if we are to succeed in our ambition" (2016: 4). Therefore we caution against a narrow focus on the school level leavers without recognition of 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. As a result schools will be encouraged 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. It is anticipated that the following indicators will be utilised 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 thank the Head Teacher of Lawfield Primary School for her high quality presentations at the national events.
- To note that, as stated in the draft national guidance, the Headteacher 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. The arrangements for publication will be confirmed by your local authority.
- 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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#### **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 1 February 2017: <http://news.gov.scot/news/pupil-equity-funding>

School level allocations in Scotland can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment/pupilequityfund/Schoolallocations>

Education (Scotland) Act 2016:

[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp\\_20160008\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp_20160008_en.pdf)