

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery
DATE	17 September 2019
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Review of the Use of Pupil Equity Funding
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/19/312
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Caroline Johnstone
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Education Operational Committee of 6th November 2018 requested further information on full year Pupil Equity Fund spending. This report aims to provide the assurance requested by Elected Members.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

- 2.1 note the contents of this report; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Officer Integrated Children and Family Services to incorporate Pupil Equity Fund spending and a review of the impact of spending in all future National Improvement Framework Committee Reports.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 The Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026 includes specific indicators and targets relating to the performance of disadvantaged children and young people.

- 3.1.2 Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan 2018/19 includes *“Reduce the attainment related poverty gap between the most and least disadvantaged children in line with virtual comparator performance by 2021”* as one of the expected outcomes.
- 3.1.3 The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched by the First Minister in February 2015. As part of the Attainment Scotland Fund, the Scottish Government has allocated additional funding directly to schools, targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) was initially made available from April 2017, it will continue until the end of this current Parliament with the Deputy First Minister leading discussions to seek cross party agreement on a sustainable model for subsequent years.
- 3.1.4 In 2018-19, for each child in a publicly funded primary or secondary who is eligible and registered for free school meals, schools are allocated £1,200. Aberdeen City Council schools were allocated £2,745,600 in 2018-19; Appendix 1 provides a summary of the allocation by school.
- 3.1.5 Schools must adhere to national and local guidance as they decide how to invest their PEF allocation and the stipulations of the grant must be adhered to, some of which are that:
- Head teachers must have access to the full amount of the allocated PEF.
 - PEF funding must enable schools to deliver activities, interventions or resources which are clearly additional to those which are already planned.
 - Head teachers must work in partnership with each other, and their local authority, to agree the use of 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.
 - Parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be involved in the planning process.
 - Funding must be provided for targeted support for children and young people affected by poverty to achieve their full potential. Although PEF is allocated on the basis of free school meal eligibility, head teachers can use their professional judgement to bring additional children into targeted interventions.
 - Schools must have plans in place at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding.
- 3.1.6 Head teachers were asked to develop PEF plans detailing how resources would be used to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to close the poverty related attainment gap. In developing these plans Head Teachers were asked to set out their rationale for the use of the funding, based on a clear contextual analysis which identifies the poverty related attainment gap in their schools and takes account of evidence of what is known to be effective at raising attainment for children affected by poverty. They were also asked to ensure collaboration with pupils, parents and carers, community partners and their Associated School Groups as they developed their plans.

3.1.7 In June 2019 the Scottish Government published the *Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: interim report (year 3)* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-interim-report-year-3/> The key themes from this report are consistent with those in the document.

3.2 Interventions

3.2.1 Schools have used the additional funding in a wide variety of different ways to support learners. Examples of how PEF funding was used are listed at Appendix 1, however the list is not exhaustive and plans for each individual school will be available on school websites.

3.2.2 Many schools have used funding to recruit additional staffing or provide existing staff with additional time for development opportunities. This reflects research-based evidence that dedicated time from skilled staff can achieve the most significant impact for pupils. Schools have also recognised the importance of Career Long Professional Learning and funding has been used to provide additional training opportunities, in some cases across Associated School Groups.

3.2.3 Some schools have appointed dedicated positions to develop new whole-school approaches and oversee the implementation, monitoring, tracking and evaluation of PEF funded interventions in their schools.

3.2.3 Across Aberdeen City schools, funded interventions have reflected a strong focus on numeracy and literacy, including the adoption and development of a broad range of specific approaches and resources. Most schools have also funded specific interventions around health and wellbeing. Nurture, resilience, mental health and emotional wellbeing have been a common focus, as have areas such as family engagement and outdoor learning.

3.2.4 There is a clear correlation between the number and scope of supported interventions within each school and the level of funding received. Those schools with higher allocations support the largest and widest scope of funded interventions while those with lower allocations have tended to use this to extend existing initiatives and provide additional staff training or time.

3.2.5 A number of city schools have developed or changed their approaches and interventions over the period of funding, particularly in response to staffing challenges and availability of resource.

3.2.6 The range of interventions in session 2018/19 increased as compared to the previous session and there was a significant increase in accessing support from local authority, third sector and other organisations to deliver specific programmes to targeted pupils. These included:

- Family Learning Team
- Youth Work
- Barnardo's
- Aberdeen Football Club
- Aberlour

Appendix 2 contains a full list of providers available to schools.

Analysis of the interventions offered indicates that they were all focused around literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

3.3 Measuring Outcomes and Impact

3.3.1 In 2018-19, a range of events was organised to ensure high quality use of PEF with clearly identified outcomes and measures. The Education Scotland Attainment Adviser offered training to all headteachers and assisted with identifying key national personnel to support this. The Attainment Adviser delivered bespoke sessions to school PEF leads.

3.3.2 The quality improvement team monitored spend and impact through quality assurance term 1 and 3 visits. The majority of schools had plans based on the needs of the pupils with clearly identified outcomes and measures. Most schools had clear tracking and monitoring procedures to capture impact in place.

3.3.3 Aberdeen City Council schools used a range of measures to provide evidence of success in terms of improving attainment including standardised tests, Scottish National Standardised Assessments, Curriculum for Excellence attainment, class and school assessments and data from online literacy and numeracy programmes. At individual establishment level head teachers reported improvements in the following:

- Attainment in reading and mathematics as measured by standardised test scores.
- Numeracy and literacy progress as measured through Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- Reading age of pupils, reading comprehension skills, spelling and attainment in writing.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Pupil motivation, engagement, confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupil participation in extra-curricular opportunities.

3.3.4 Some schools which have used the additional funding to build on and develop existing approaches to addressing the impact of poverty on pupil attainment have recognised the limitations of free school meals as an indicator of pupil need and used additional criteria in focusing targeted interventions at their most vulnerable pupils.

3.4 Reported impact of funded interventions

- 3.4.1 Schools across the city have begun to gather a range of evidence on the perceived impact of funded interventions since PEF became available to schools in April 2017, however it will take more time to develop robust evidence of closing the poverty-related attainment gap. As indicated at 2.2, this will continue to be monitored and reported to Members as part of future NIF reports.
- 3.4.2 As already mentioned at 3.2.4, the majority of schools have implemented a range of interventions using PEF funding, some of these are very targeted at specific pupils, others support the wider school population. Many pupils, particularly in schools with high allocations of PEF funding, are accessing more than one intervention and it is therefore difficult to accurately identify which specific intervention has led to assessed improvements. In some cases, it is likely there has been a cumulative beneficial effect of several targeted interventions. Although this makes accurate evaluation and reporting more difficult, ultimately, of course, the result is positive for children and young people.
- 3.4.3 Almost all schools report encouraging early evidence of improvements around mental health and wellbeing, resilience, emotional wellbeing and pupil engagement. As well as reference to specific data such as pupil attendance, schools report positive changes in areas such as improved pupil confidence in their own abilities and increased engagement in learning.
- 3.4.4 The majority of schools are beginning to note improvements in attainment in literacy and numeracy for pupils targeted for specific interventions. In some schools this has led to a reduction in the poverty related attainment gap, as the rate of improvement for targeted pupils has outstripped others. This is particularly noticeable in the primary schools which also benefit from Scottish Attainment Challenge funding.
- 3.4.5 Across the city there is evidence of the wider impacts associated with the additional funding. There has been an increase in collaborative working, both within and across schools and teachers planning and working together has contributed to the development of a more positive and collegiate ethos underpinned by the sharing of practice across individual schools and across Associated School Groups. In some cases, for example, this has included pooling of resources and collaborative working to source professional learning opportunities for staff on specific priorities e.g. The Visible Learning Approach. Appendix 5
- 3.4.6 In some schools targeted interventions have required a change of approach and development of new skills for staff. Many schools have taken the opportunity offered by the additional funding to develop whole-school approaches, for example embedding approaches to nurture and increasing pupil resilience across the curriculum as well as whole-school approaches to numeracy and literacy.

3.4.7 The majority of city schools have considered sustainability as part of their planning work, and this has led to a focus on building staff skills and capacity, sharing and embedding of practice, and improving use of data in planning and evaluation. However, it is recognised that the availability of additional resource has been key to achieving positive impacts, particularly for the most disadvantaged pupils.

3.5 Challenges

3.5.1 Schools across the city have reported considerable challenges in implementing agreed plans and in spending PEF allocations within the given timescale. This resulted in a reported underspend at the end of the financial year 2018/19 (March 2019) of £1.2m. The most recent report from finance colleagues details PEF spend up to the end of the school year, 5th July 2019. This indicates a 2018/19 PEF carry forward remaining of £670,459 across all schools. With commitments and items still to be paid amounting to approximately £220,000, the final PEF carry forward for 2018/19 is around £450,459.

3.5.2 Feedback from Head Teachers indicates that delays in invoices from partners being received and/or processed has contributed to schools appearing underspent in relation to PEF and a number of schools have reported miscoding of staff or other resources which has taken considerable time to resolve. Scottish Government guidance on unspent PEF funding states, “Where schools are unable to spend their full allocation during the financial year, any underspent grant may be carried forward to the next financial year though it would be expected that it would normally be spent within the school year.”

3.5.3 Many schools have planned interventions to run across the school year i.e. from August to July, and have budgeted accordingly, rather than allocating funding within the timescales of the financial year. In some cases, funds have been committed, but then plans have changed or been cancelled for the reasons expanded below.

3.5.4 Staff recruitment has been a significant challenge for almost all schools, with particular difficulties experienced in recruiting teachers. In a number of schools, teacher shortages have meant that teachers who had been identified for specific PEF funded activities have had to be redirected to core teaching duties. The service is working closely with People and Organisation to establish a responsive means of mitigating the effects of such staffing challenges.

3.5.5 Many schools report that the tight timescale around notification of the 2017/18 PEF allocation limited planning time available and that limited staffing resources impacted on initial planning and implementation of interventions. As a result, almost all schools had a substantial carry-forward from 2017/18 added to their allocation for the following year. While planning for 2018/19 benefited from longer timescales, there is general consensus that the provision of funding on an annual basis may limit the scope for longer-term planning.

- 3.5.6 Some schools report that partners who had been identified to provide services have also experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and this has resulted in plans having to change at short notice.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report provides a summary of improvements made as a result of additional funding from the Scottish Government, to support schools in closing the poverty related attainment gap. Aberdeen City Council schools were allocated £2.7 million in 2018-19. More robust monitoring arrangements have been put in place for PEF, which ensure that the local authority and Head Teachers have regular oversight of school level expenditure. PEF expenditure is separated from core school budgets, with a different financial code, ensuring spending is not included within the overall school budget and can be easily tracked and monitored.

- 4.2 Based on the 2018/19 financial year end the actual expenditure for the year was £2,392,081. However, the total spend in 2018/19, including the £1.619m carry forward from 2017/18 was £3.272m. Financial records at 31/3/19 indicated a carry forward to 2019/20 of £1.2 million. Schools reported difficulties in recruiting staff and partners being unable to deliver commissioned services, alongside late invoices and miscoding of staffing and other costs as contributing to this underspend. Monitoring and discussion with schools indicates that the majority of this grant was spent prior to the start of the new school year in August 2019. Head Teachers are aware that PEF money is supposed to be spent within the financial year, though it can be carried forward to the end of the school year and beyond under exceptional circumstances. New procedures to monitor PEF spend throughout the year have now been introduced.

- 4.3 Aberdeen City Council schools have been allocated £2.9 million for 2019/20; Appendix 3 provides details of individual establishment allocations. Head teachers are aware that the additional funding is limited to the end of this Parliament and recognise the need to consider ways in which they can sustain future improvements for all children and young people. Schools and Associated School Groups are working towards achieving this by providing training and Career Long Professional Learning opportunities to develop staff, engaging parents to support their children's learning, purchasing and developing additional resources and by making changes in approaches to teaching and learning.

- 4.4 There are no other specific financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **The Standards In Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000**

Education Authorities are under a duty to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of educational outcome experienced by pupils as a result of socio-economic disadvantage.

5.2 The National Improvement Framework

Education Authorities are also under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.

5.3 The local authority's legal obligations in respect of the above legislation have been taken into account and are fully met both by the work undertaken to date and in planned future actions in respect of PEF funding.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Risk of not effectively utilising PEF and SAC finance to address the equity and excellence agenda	M	Closely monitor and quality assure progress to take action where necessary.
Legal	Failure to deliver on legal duties detailed in 5.1 – 5.2	L	Actions and proposed actions satisfy these legal duties.
Employee	Risk of employees feeling overwhelmed by the many changes in education and expectations of additional funding.	L	Ensure pace and focus of improvement activity is manageable and appropriate. Ensure appropriate support mechanisms in place.
Customer	Potential for children or young people to be identified/stigmatised.	L	Adherence to data protection/GDPR reporting arrangements will ensure individuals cannot be identified.
Environment	Minimal – any impact on environment will be positive	L	Ensure careful planning of spend to promote positive outcomes

Technology	Minimal – additional funding may enable schools to enhance technology offer to pupils	L	Ensure careful planning of spend to promote positive outcomes
Reputational	Risk of not effectively utilising PEF and SAC finance to address the equity and excellence agenda	M	Closely monitor and quality assure progress to take action where necessary

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	Continued judicious use of PEF funding will ensure that children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are fully accessing education and more likely to achieve their potential and contribute to the economy.
Prosperous People	PEF initiatives and interventions will impact positively on all children and young people and are particularly targeted at those who are adversely affected by poverty. Specific links to: Stretch Outcome 4 – Children’s Mental Health Stretch Outcome 6 – Positive Destinations Stretch Outcome 7 – Child Friendly City
Prosperous Place	Key to all PEF interventions is reducing the poverty related attainment gap

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	Promotes an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that personalised support is available to them.

Organisational Design	Seeks to ensure the best use of resource in the system.
Governance	Overseen by Chief Officers and by the Education Operational Delivery Committee.
Workforce	Ensures that colleagues in schools have clarity around their roles and responsibilities and supports joined up working across departments and agencies.
Process Design	Revised monitoring arrangements ensure that any vulnerabilities in the system are quickly addressed.
Technology	Supports increased use of technology to improve outcomes for children and young people.
Partnerships and Alliances	Promotes and makes use of wider partnership support when appropriate.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	<i>Required - completed 07/08/19</i>
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>not required</i>
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	<i>Applicable</i>

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Pupil Equity Funding – National Operational Guidance – 2019 (attached)

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

- Appendix 1 Examples of how PEF funding has been used in Aberdeen City Council Schools 2018/19
- Appendix 2 PEF Guidance to Schools Aberdeen City Council 2018/19
- Appendix 3 PEF Allocations Aberdeen City Council Schools 2018/19
- Appendix 4 PEF Allocations Aberdeen City Council Schools 2019/20
- Appendix 5 What is Visible Learning?

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Examples of how PEF funding has been used in Aberdeen City Council Schools

Some examples are listed below, however the list is not exhaustive and plans for each individual school will be available on school websites. Interventions during Session 2018/19 included:

- Additional staff to provide focused support for individuals or groups of pupils in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Supplementary resources to support literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, including digital resources.
- Establishment of promoted posts with specific responsibility for PEF. This includes the monitoring and tracking of progress for pupils, ensuring that pupils receive the support they need and undertaking evaluations to ensure that interventions are effective.
- Further developing parental engagement, including working with Family Learning team colleagues.
- Targeted breakfast clubs, extra-curricular groups and homework clubs.
- Professional development for teachers to build on and improve pedagogical approaches in the classroom.
- Professional learning for staff, for example, in approaches to the teaching of mathematics, Talkboost and Early Talkboost.
- Support for pupils to attend extra-curricular activities such as music or sports events and residential trips.
- Commissioning of specific services from other local authority teams, third sector and other providers to address specific identified needs e.g. counselling, tailored support packages, family support