



EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE: 4 DECEMBER 2018

## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUPIL EQUITY FUND IN COMHAIRLE SCHOOLS – PROGRESS UPDATE**

Report by Director of Education, Skills and Children's Services

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Comhairle about progress made with the implementation of Pupil Equity Fund in schools and the evidence of impact to-date.

### **COMPETENCE**

- 1.1 There are no legal, financial or other constraints to the recommendation being implemented.

### **SUMMARY**

- 2.1 As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the Scottish Government announced in 2016 that it was establishing the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) as a part of the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund. The funding is intended to be available on an annual basis for the duration of the current parliament (2016-2021) and the first release of funds was made in the 2017-18 school session to the value of £120m nationally.
- 2.2 The aim of PEF is to provide equity in Scottish education through the funding of targeted interventions to close the poverty-related attainment gap: the difference in attainment outcomes between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people, a defining priority of the National Improvement Framework.
- 2.3 The allocation of Pupil Equity Fund to Comhairle schools in 2017-18 totalled £274,800 and then £290,880 in the 2018-19 school session. Head teachers from 22 of the 24 Comhairle schools chose to pool their PEF resources and work as a collaborative. Two schools chose to work individually. Schools that worked in the collaborative planned to use PEF for the employment of apprentices and this project was supported with additional funding from Education & Children's Services on top of the core PEF funding.
- 2.4 Comhairle schools have been using the Pupil Equity Fund to deliver a range of different interventions to support disadvantaged learners and work to close the poverty-related attainment gap. As well as reporting on progress through their annual Standards & Quality Reports, schools track the impact of PEF through the application of five key measures: attainment, attendance, inclusion, participation and engagement.
- 2.5 Data provided by schools for the 2017-18 session, indicate positive impact within all five key measures and particular interventions, such as the Summer Club have proven to be particularly impactful for those who participated.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the progress made with the implementation of Pupil Equity Funding**

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Pupil Equity Fund: How will it work?

Pupil Equity Fund: National Operational Guidance 2018



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## BACKGROUND

### PUPIL EQUITY FUND BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government established Pupil Equity Fund as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and to support the achievement of the four priorities of the National Improvement Framework:
- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
  - Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
  - Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
  - Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people
- 4.2 Pupil Equity Funding is expected to be available for the duration of the current parliament, up to 2021, and the 2018-19 school session represents the second year of delivery. It should be noted that the funding is allocated by financial year rather than academic year.
- 4.3 The amount of Pupil Equity Funding a school receives is determined by a government formula based on known free school meal (FSM) eligibility in P1-S3 and allocates £1200 per notionally eligible child in the school. The funding is provided directly to head teachers to spend at their discretion with the requirement that they work in partnership with each other and their council.
- 4.4 It is a requirement of the funding that it provide additionality in schools and not replace any existing services or provision. Schools are to plan for its use in School Improvement Plans and report on their spend via their annual Standards & Quality Reports. These documents are sampled nationally by the Scottish Government by accessing them through school websites and the current programme of school inspections will include an evaluation of PEF delivery and impact.

### DELIVERING PUPIL EQUITY FUND IN COMHAIRLE SCHOOLS

- 5.1 The allocation of Pupil Equity Fund to Comhairle schools in 2017-18 totalled £274,800 and, in 2018-19, that rose to £290,880 due to a combination of changes to FSM eligibility across schools and an additional top-up of £12,480 from the Scottish Government to off-set the subsequent reduction in funds that affected some schools in year two.
- 5.2 Upon receiving notice of Pupil Equity Fund, headteachers of Comhairle schools were invited to consider entering into a collaborative partnership to plan and deliver their PEF projects. The headteachers of 22 schools chose to work in this collaborative and two chose to proceed on their own but with the continued support of the Comhairle. One of our schools, Tolsta, was not eligible for funding but continues to work within the collaborative to close the attainment gap in the school.

<b>PEF Collaborative</b>	Back, Balivanich, Bernera, Breasclete, Castlebay, Daliburgh, Eoligarry, lochdar, Laxdale, Leverhulme, Lionacleit, Lionel, Pairc, Sgoil an Rubha, Sgoil an Taobh Siar, Sgoil nan Loch, Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, Shawbost, Stornoway Primary, Tolsta, Tong, Uig
<b>PEF Individual</b>	Nicolson Institute, Sir E Scott School

- 5.3 Headteachers worked together with department officers to evaluate poverty factors affecting our communities and analyse attainment data. This allowed them to identify learners where there was a definable gap between their attainment performance and their cognitive potential. This information, taken together, allowed identification of learners who had a poverty-related attainment gap. In addition, advice was issued by government that pupils in receipt of free school meals must be included.

5.4 Within the PEF Collaborative schools, three key interventions were identified for the use of their pooled funding:

- Education Attainment workers who could support learners both in and out of school and across term-time and holiday periods
- Gaelic Language Assistants to support and strengthen Gaelic language acquisition
- Emerging Literacy Champions who could broaden and further embed this approach to early literacy being used across the Northern Alliance

Schools working individually devised plans based on similar principles dependent on the degree of funding they had. This has included investment in resources and training at Sir E Scott and the recruitment of a literacy/numeracy teacher and a support worker in the Nicolson Institute.

5.5 The PEF Collaborative schools, under the direct stewardship of headteachers, used their funding, with additional financial and consultancy support from the Comhairle, to recruit twelve attainment apprentices and six Gaelic Language apprentices to provide PEF interventions in their schools. This represented a significant investment in employment and training. The apprentices receive weekly training as well as working in schools and are able to follow academic pathways to SVQ and degree-level in the duration of their apprenticeship. Recruitment challenges meant that it took time to fill some of the PEF apprentice posts but we continue to work hard to make sure that posts are filled by new recruits upon turnover.

5.6 A mainstreaming plan is being implemented to secure both the employment and investment in skills of the apprentices beyond the lifetime of PEF funding; equipping schools with a skilled and experienced support workforce.

5.7 Headteachers collectively made decisions about the deployment of the apprentices based on the amount of funding they contributed to the collaborative. Schools then planned for the specific tasks and interventions within their School Improvement Plans and use RAFA improvement methodology to plan and track their projects in detail. As a result, the role of the Education Attainment and Gaelic Language Apprentices have been based on the bespoke needs of the learners in each school and they have undertaken a varied range of activities, including:

- Soft-start welcome/transition activities for learners reluctant to come in to school
- Breakfast clubs that provide a morning snack and welcome start to the school day to aid transition from home to school to classroom to learning
- A variety of different lunch-time and after-school clubs based on the interests of learners
- Establishment of new out-of-school activities or support to get learners to existing community activities to improve participation.
- Structured playtime activities to improve peer interaction at break times
- Homework support (individuals/groups/clubs)
- Attendance tracking and follow-up
- Specific targeted support in literacy and numeracy through approaches such as precision teaching
- PEF Summer Club in partnership with CLD providing daily activities and a lunch-time meal during summer holidays
- Drop-in cafés during and after school for parents to visit and receive support information
- Contributing to financial inclusion and poverty support awareness-raising events
- Organising recycled school uniform stands and swap-shops
- Supporting assessment and improvement in learner engagement in classroom activities.
- Making partnerships with community groups and local companies that can support their wider work, especially in the delivery of the Summer Clubs.

Schools and their apprentices continue to evolve and strengthen the role as they develop a deeper understanding of the needs of learners and what actions are most effective in closing the poverty-related attainment gap;

## PROGRESS AND IMPACT

- 6.1 Data available for tracking progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund is from 2017-18 reported in June 2018. Schools continue to gather data in the current session and will report again in June 2019 where the baseline data from 2018 will begin to evolve into trend data.
- 6.2 From a potential cohort of 2698 in P1 to S3, schools identified 361 learners to be in receipt of Pupil Equity Fund interventions. This represents 13.4% of the P1-S3 roll. The rate of identification in primary schools was 15.3% and, in secondary, it was 8.7%.
- 6.3 Background data was gathered as part of the tracking of the 361 learners identified for Pupil Equity Fund and indicated:
- 41.3% were female and 58.7% were male.
  - 22.4% were in Gaelic Medium Education and 77.6% in English Medium Education.
  - 67.9% had a pre-identified additional support need and a staged intervention level.
  - 5.8% were Looked-After/Accommodated Children (LAC)
- 6.4 To provide a framework for the tracking of the progress and impact of Pupil Equity Fund on learners, a 'Five Measures' tool was developed that was used by all 24 schools. The five measures were Attainment, Attendance, Inclusion, Participation and Engagement
- 6.5 **Attainment:** For the first year of PEF, Curriculum for Excellence achievement of a level data was used to create a baseline measure of the attainment gap across literacy and numeracy where a comparison was made between the levels being achieved by the whole cohort against those being achieved by PEF pupils.
- 6.6 Across literacy (Gaelic and English) and numeracy, PEF pupils performed consistently lower than their peers, with an average CFE attainment gap of 31%. The smallest gap, 11%, was in Gaidhlig talking and listening at the Early Level (P1) and the biggest gap, 55%, was in English writing at Early Level (P1). The CFE attainment gap was relatively consistent across literacy and numeracy. It is expected that the data would show a clear attainment gap as that is the reason why the pupils were selected.
- 6.7 The information from June 2018 provides baseline information and the equivalent data gathered in June 2019 will begin to allow us to track change and impact of interventions, although it should be noted that research indicates that it can take 3-5 years to fully realise the benefits of such interventions on attainment.
- 6.8 Informal data about the academic progress of PEF pupils in relation to their cognitive potential shows that teachers observed notable gains in progress across literacy and numeracy since the introduction of PEF interventions. This should gradually translate into improved results in teacher judgement of Curriculum for Excellence levels.
- 6.9 **Attendance:** Data was gathered on a termly basis for the 361 learners. It showed a decline of 2.3% across terms one to three, which is typical as the year progresses, but an increase of 1.2% in term four. This indicates that interventions were beginning to impact on attendance by the summer term. The overall attendance for PEF pupils for the year was 93.3% compared to the authority average for the same period of 95.0%.
- 6.10 Further analysis of attendance data for PEF pupils indicate that those in receipt of free school meals had an average attendance 2% lower than those who were not. It was also notable that English Medium PEF pupils had attendance 2.5% lower than those in Gaelic Medium Education.
- 9.11 The collation of the above data has allowed school staff to actively work to improve the attendance of learners across the year.
- 6.12 **Inclusion:** The rate of inclusion is measured inversely through the rate of exclusions from school experienced by PEF pupils. The rate of exclusion in Comhairle schools is very low and considerably less than national rates. A total of 13 exclusion days were recorded for PEF pupils, indicating an overall inclusion rate of 98.6%. The developing provision of PEF interventions across 2017-18 gradually provided support that decreased the rate of exclusion throughout the year.

- 6.13 **Participation:** The participation measure is defined as the participation in activities, clubs and achievements beyond the classroom into the wider life of the school and community and is measured using a universal five-point scale. PEF data shows that there was an observable positive shift towards higher levels of participation. The number of learners assessed and having high or extremely high participation rose by 13%. This evidences the positive impact that Education Attainment Apprentices are having on learner participation.
- 6.14 **Engagement:** Improving engagement in learning has a fundamental impact on raising attainment. For the PEF pupils, this was measured at several points across the year to track the impact of the interventions from teachers and apprentices. The data shows a significant swing towards higher engagement with an increase of 17% in children being assessed as having high engagement. A total of 53% of children were recorded as having increased engagement following intervention.
- 6.15 **PEF Summer Club:** One of the most significant interventions undertaken in year one of PEF was the establishment of the PEF Summer Club, which was delivered as a collaboration between apprentices and CLD staff. It offered a daily programme of activities across the Western Isles for our most vulnerable children that included the provision of a lunchtime meal. This club received a very positive response from children and parents and attendance was strong throughout the summer. Evaluations of the club indicated that learners ranked it 4.6 out of 5 for enjoyment and 90% said that they appreciated having lunch provided. Parents rated the Summer Club 4.8 out of 5 and were universally approving of the quality of activities and provision of lunches.

## THE FUTURE

- 7.1 School and their Pupil Equity Fund staff continue to develop and deliver their interventions this session and are using the 'Five Measures' tool to gather continuous information to track progress. They have reviewed their lists of pupils to ensure that they have taken account of changes of circumstances and rolls.
- 7.2 Training and access to qualifications will continue to be provided to apprentices and the mainstreaming plan referenced in para 5.6 will be progressed.
- 7.2 Plans are being developed for the provision of a Summer Club again for 2019 to build on the success of the 2018 club.