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# Raising Attainment Strategy 2020-2023

## Pupil Equity Fund

# 2020/21

Achieving Excellence and Equity

Education & Children's Services

## **PUPIL EQUITY FUND (PEF)**

The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), forms part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme, which was launched in February 2015 and is currently in its sixth year. PEF is allocated directly from the Scottish Government to schools and is specifically targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. A total of £147m has been committed to this funding as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme for session 2021-2022. This includes an additional £20 million PEF premium which is being issued as a 15% uplift to previous allocations to schools. This premium recognises the new and additional challenges faced by schools, children and young people as a result of COVID-19.

PEF is allocated to schools on the basis of the estimated number of registered free school meals in P1 to S3, with £1200 allocated for each child and young person. It must be used to provide targeted support for children and young people (and their families if appropriate) affected by poverty, to achieve their full potential.

Headteachers have full access to PEF and meet regularly with their Finance Officer to review spending. Although funding is allocated on the basis of eligibility described above, Headteachers are permitted to use their discretion in making decisions about which children and young people would benefit most from any particular intervention or approach, whilst keeping a clear focus on delivering equity.

### **Guidance and Planning**

The Scottish Attainment Challenge Equity Audit was carried out by the Scottish Government in January 2021 to further schools understanding of the impact the Covid pandemic and school closures had on children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings within the audit has helped inform local authority and school plans.

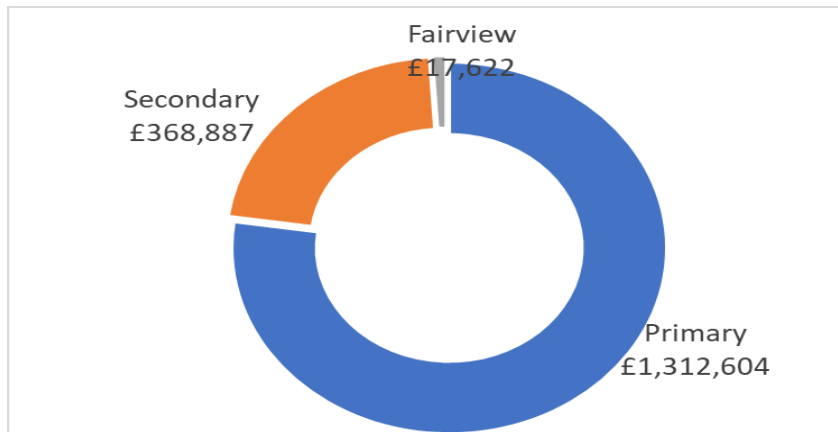
Revised Local PEF Guidance was issued to all schools in June 2020. This aligned closely with the Scottish Government's updated PEF National Guidance. In recognition of the financial and other resource implications of maintaining critical provision for children and families at this time, guidance on Attainment Scotland Funding, including PEF, was relaxed in order that local authorities and Headteachers could support the education and care of children and young people during the response to the Covid pandemic. Decisions made by schools, however, were to remain consistent with the principle of equity in education. Headteachers work in partnership with other schools and the local authority whilst planning improvements.

There is a continued expectation that funding will focus particularly on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and support the school's priorities in raising attainment. All schools develop a School Improvement Plan, indicating PEF priorities, and outlining planning for universal and targeted approaches.

## PEF Allocations

A total of £1,699,113 was allocated to schools in Perth and Kinross in session 2020/2021. £1,312,604 was allocated to primary schools, £368,887 to secondary schools and £17,622 to Fairview School (Figure 1). This was increased to £2,037,808 in session 2021/2022.

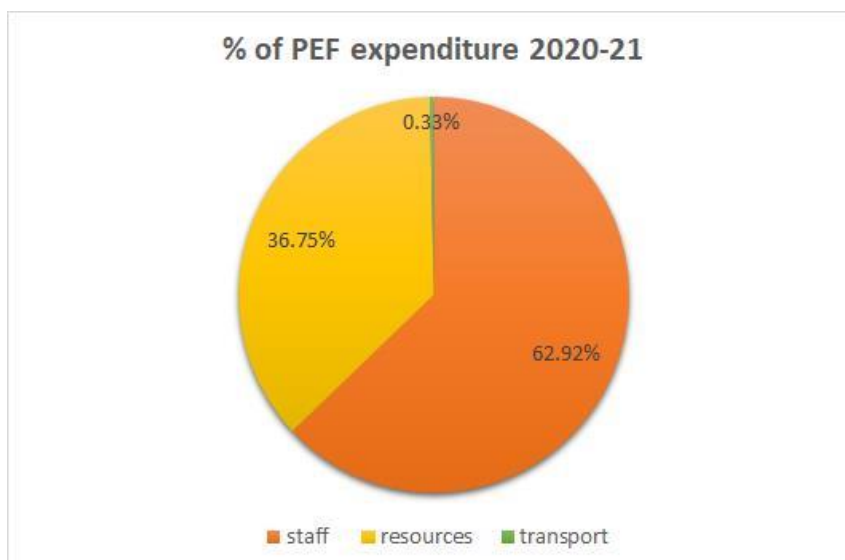
**Figure 1: 2020/21 PEF Allocation by Sector**



## Expenditure for session 2020/21

In line with guidance, funding was allocated by schools for a range of purposes as identified through their self-evaluation processes. This expenditure focuses on two main areas of staffing and resources. The breakdown of this allocation for session 2020/21 is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: % Breakdown of PEF expenditure for 2020/21**



## Targeted use of PEF in session 2020/21

Evidence on how funding has been used and what impact this has had has been gathered by Education Services officers through analysis of school improvement plans, self-evaluation materials and standards and quality reports along with regular quality assurance discussions and visits with schools.

Schools concentrated on a range of approaches to enhance the universal provision and targeted interventions for children and young people, to support their reconnection with learning in school and address any gaps, for example:

- Several schools used a range of targeted literacy and numeracy interventions to support children's learning. In literacy specific programmes such as Hornet, Toe-by-toe, Word Aware, Talk Boost, POLAAR and Synthetic Phonics and in numeracy Power of One and Power of Two, Maths Circles and Numicon were implemented.
- A range of evidence-based interventions such as Wave Three, High Five and Precision Teaching are becoming well embedded in practice and schools have upskilled support staff to take forward planned interventions with the support of the Educational Psychology Team through regular on-line training opportunities.
- A number of schools have focused on the universal provision for all children within the classroom and ensuring that any barriers to learning have been reduced. This includes purchasing specific equipment and considering the learning environment and sensory needs of children and young people. They have invested in universal approaches including developing sensory rooms, outdoor learning resources, digital tools, literacy and numeracy curricular materials and play-based learning resources.
- Health and Wellbeing interventions and approaches ranged from the implementation of the Emotion Works programme to Mindspace counselling, Bounceback and emotional regulation resources. The success of these programmes will be built upon in session 2021-2022 along with the CIRCLE resource to ensure that all learners benefit from inclusive environments.
- There were successful examples of support for families during periods of remote learning with access to learning materials, including digital software.

Schools plan to continue supporting parents in the use of digital tools to enable them to support their children's learning at home.

Next steps include schools sharing the success of PEF interventions and highlighting best practice and use of the Closing the Gap Planning Tool to track the impact of planned interventions.

In 2020/21, PEF plans focused particularly on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing with a particular emphasis on the impact of COVID-19 where this was evident.

PEF plans included over two-thirds of targeted support focused on writing and listening and talking interventions, with approximately half of planned interventions focusing on reading, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

For example, a primary school invested in an attendance support worker to ensure children experienced a positive return to school. Pupil Equity Funding was also used to employ an outdoor learning tutor as well as an Active School's apprentice to support children's physical wellbeing and development of gross motor skills. This supported children to have positive experiences and gave them access to wider achievements.

During the periods of lockdown, remote learning and the return to school buildings, there remained a focus on maintaining strong relationships with families and PEF was used to support this work.

Schools outlined the targeted groups of children who required support, particularly those children and young people affected by poverty. Half of the planned interventions included a focus on early years vocabulary and over half included the investment in additional staff.

#### **Case Study: Primary School example of effective use of PEF to raise attainment in literacy**

In Letham Primary School, PEF funding was utilised successfully to target the raising of attainment in the Early Years in the core areas of literacy, building on good progress already in place.

The school has a high proportion of children in Acorn 4 (39%) and Acorn 5 (48%). Children entering Primary One had not completed a full year of in-person nursery education and it was identified that children within this group would benefit from additional literacy support. Assessments highlighted that nearly 40% of children had not met all of their Developmental Milestones whilst in nursery.

The strategy implemented included the purchase of high-quality resources and the appointment of an acting Principal Teacher. PEF funding was used to support children in the Early Years, particularly focusing on groups of children within the primary one stage.

The Principal Teacher's remit included providing strategic leadership, supporting high quality learning and teaching in the early years and taking a clear focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Through careful planning, the following strategic approach was implemented:

- Attainment data including Acorn data, was carefully scrutinised and the team collaborated to identify the children who would most benefit from targeted support.

- A team approach was introduced to weekly planning, which included carefully planning targeted interventions and fully utilising support staff time to best effect.
- Early Childhood Practitioner time was carefully planned to support delivery of active literacy hour activities and the delivery of the literacy resource 'Talkboost' to targeted groups of children.
- The delivery and evaluation of focussed teaching sessions were appropriately differentiated to maximise children's progress in learning.
- The team worked to further develop a structured approach to play based learning in primary one to ensure that all children and young people's needs were effectively met.

An evaluation took place at the end of the session to assess the impact of the work that had taken place. It was evident that the investment in resources and additional staff had resulted in primary one attainment showing a positive picture in literacy, with little negative impact seen on attainment caused by lockdown.

Assessment information in May indicated that the majority of children within the Primary One class achieved expected levels in all areas of Literacy.

### **Case Study: Secondary School example of effective use of PEF to support children and young people's study skills and health and wellbeing**

An effective example of after school support in St John's Academy was in relation to a homework hub which took place every Monday after school in the library.

Library staff supported the project which was supported by both primary and secondary teachers from within the school. This arrangement enabled children and young people from both primary and secondary stages to benefit from the support available and allowed this to become a whole school initiative.

Children and young people participated in a range of supported activities. For example, primary school pupils were given the time and space to complete their homework. Primary teachers were available to provide support where necessary.

Secondary pupils either used the support as an opportunity to benefit from class teachers helping ensure a quiet place to complete homework or help with specific 1-1 literacy or English support where needed as appropriate.

The teacher for physical education also attended planned sessions ensuring that there was a focus on health and wellbeing for children and young people.

Sessions were arranged at the end of school day and teaching time was partly funded by Pupil Equity Funding. The project proved to be popular with children and young people, particularly around the lead up to secondary assessment time.

To ensure that there was equity, and to enable all children to have the opportunity to participate in receiving support available, the headteacher arranged funding for Secondary pupils for free travel, via the local bus service. This ensured additional after school opportunities were not impeded by financial barriers.

Due to mitigations related to the pandemic, outdoor learning approaches were implemented with increased regularity and relevant learning resources were purchased to enhance learning experiences.

Other resources purchased to support children and young people included digital devices such as laptops and iPads, curriculum resources, classroom equipment and learning materials.

### **Case study: Use of PEF to enhance resources – Primary School example**

Inch View Primary School utilised Pupil Equity Funding to deliver Art Therapy to groups of identified children. Funding was allocated to provide additional hours for a teacher to lead the initiative and also to purchase art materials and resources.

During attainment tracking meetings, teachers identified a number of children across the school requiring additional support in relation to their wellbeing. Discussions centred around emotional wellbeing, self-regulation and attendance. Dialogue with children and young people and use of wellbeing webs provided additional evidence to support in targeting children and young people. Of the children and young people identified, 60% were in Acorn within 4 and 5.

Professional discussion identified art activities as an effective approach in supporting wellbeing in the school. This resulted in Art Therapy sessions being offered.

Throughout session 2020-2021, identified children engaged in Art Therapy sessions. Over the course of 6-8 weeks, small groups of children attended weekly sessions within the school. Groupings were fluid, changing over the year in response to engagement from children and feedback from practitioners. The overall aim of the Art therapy sessions was to support wellbeing and improve engagement in learning.

The sessions were carefully planned to suit the needs of individual children within the group, for example developing self-regulation techniques or social skills. The process involved:

- Identifying children and assessing their needs.
- Planning art sessions with learner input.

- Engaging in weekly art therapy experiences with ongoing feedback from children and practitioners.
- Adapting sessions in response to feedback to suit needs of the children.

Children's artwork was displayed in an open area within the school and celebrated, eg through the use of social media. In addition, one learner's work was selected to appear on Mill Street as part of the Big Art Project 2020 which was available for public viewing.

### **Impact**

Observations by practitioners and dialogue with children showed that the Art Therapy sessions had an encouraging effect on learner wellbeing and engagement. Examples of improvement include:

- Children attended the initial series of lessons with a focus on self-regulation and mindfulness techniques. This supported them to try new tasks, ask for support when required, to cope with change and being flexible.
- Children formed positive relationships with their peers in the small group setting which helped them during unstructured times like breaks and lunchtimes.
- Children in the upper stages made progress within their social groups and relationships with others. There was a notable increase in their confidence and ability to sustain friendships and manage conflicts.
- Children with English as a second language were supported to use art to express their thoughts and ideas. They were encouraged to engage in conversations within their group. Improvements in the levels of engagement were evident and this has increased confidence and the ability to communicate effectively with their peers.

Throughout session 2020/21, central teams of staff provided support to schools to implement targeted interventions. The Educational Psychology Service, Education Officers and the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor provided training, support and resources to schools and practitioners through a range of approaches including the Teacher Professional Learning Community SharePoint and the virtual Equity Network. This support allowed school leaders the opportunity to analyse their school data, identify gaps in learning for cohorts of children and young people and to plan suitable interventions to close gaps in learning. Practitioners were able to access key local and national resources and to share good practice across schools.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Impact**

There is a requirement for each local authority to monitor and evaluate the use of PEF in schools including reporting to the Scottish Government.



Within Education Services, all School Improvement Plans, Standards and Quality Reports and Self-Evaluation documentation is analysed to gather information relating to the use of and impact of PEF. Quality Improvement officers discuss PEF plans with schools as part of their quality assurance activity each year.

One of the main functions of the Perth and Kinross Raising Attainment Board is to focus on the poverty related attainment gap and to monitor the impact of PEF in addressing this.

An area to be further developed in session 2021-2022 is school's evaluations of the impact of planned universal and targeted interventions. Schools will use the Closing the Gap Tool, which will enable each intervention to be assessed and progress to be evaluated.

Further support will be provided centrally to help schools make the best use of PEF and the Attainment Advisor will continue to support schools to develop and implement their plans.

### **Summary of Impact of PEF**

Whilst there are early indications of the poverty-related attainment gap closing slightly in early primary, continued measurement is required to confirm established trends. Literacy and numeracy levels of Acorn 4 and 5 school leavers has improved over recent years. At Level 4, four fifths of ACORN 4 and 5 leavers achieve both these awards. At Level 5, progress has been steady with 54% achieving both literacy and numeracy at this level, compared to 44% in 2016.

To improve attainment particularly in literacy and numeracy, schools used key information from within their school data profiles to track individual and class progress over session 2020-2021. PEF was used to provide universal approaches particularly in curricular programmes in writing, reading and numeracy such as Read, Write Inc, Big Writing, Accelerated Reading and Numicon. Schools reported that embedding programmes into learning and teaching practice had contributed to the overall progress for identified learners.

To support with closing the gap in literacy and numeracy, several schools embedded evidence -based interventions into their practice, along with tried and tested programmes. For example, a large primary school reported that targeted literacy approaches had increased children's spelling ages by 60%. Additionally, 90% of children within their early year's classes knew all their initial sounds after focused work and children completing targeting reading support successfully re-joined their class reading groups. The schools reported an increase in learner participation, engagement and confidence.

Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing continued to be a core priority for all schools, especially in relation to the impact of the Covid pandemic on children and young people's emotional, physical and mental wellbeing.

Universal approaches included the implementation of programmes such as Emotion works, Circle and Bounceback. Schools focused on utilising their learning spaces to their full potential and investing in outdoor learning resources to help children and young people actively re-engage with learning.

There was a continued focus on the improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people. Schools invested in staff to support learner participation, for example a secondary school employed a Wider Achievement and Equity Officer using PEF, to support the development of wider achievement opportunities for all pupils and create systems for monitoring their participation. The school aimed to create an inclusive environment in which all young people found a pathway to success. The school actively encouraged pupils to engage with the world of work in all areas and interests. These happened at every age and stage of their school career from P1-S6, giving pupils a wide number of experiences. A key to success was the school's collaboration with partners which included local businesses, farms and estates.

### **Key actions for session 2021/22**

In order that the use of PEF continues to be monitored and evaluated, Education Services will ensure that there is:

- Continued promotion of and support to schools in the delivery of evidence-based interventions to target aspects of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Further development of the online Closing the Gap Planning Tool to support planning and tracking of individual pupil progress and monitoring of impact.
- Implementation of a programme of training in Improvement Methodology to support with measuring and evaluating impact of interventions.
- Regular reporting and analysis of progress to the Raising Attainment Board.
- Implementation of the strategic plan for Covid Recovery, which will include delivering and tracking evidence-based interventions and approaches which demonstrate clear impact on improving outcomes for learners.

### **CONCLUSION**

The report outlines the continuous activity and progress across ECS to tackle closing the poverty-related attainment gap through the use of Pupil Equity Funding.

The poverty related gap remains a key focus, and this has been further impacted by the Covid pandemic, affecting existing inequalities in income and poverty. The activities described, and the successes outlined, are part of a long-term and sustained endeavor to achieve equity in school education.