

## **TEACHER PANEL**

### **EQUITY IN EDUCATION**

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper outlines the flexibilities now offered by the Scottish Government for education funding streams to support learning during this emergency response period.
2. Also summarised in the paper are a number of national surveys taking place in order to gauge how the coronavirus pandemic has affected parents and carers, and children and young people. Teacher Panel members are invited to share the results that are surfacing as they engage with these groups.

#### **Background**

3. Closing the poverty-related attainment gap is, and will remain, a defining mission of this government throughout and beyond this challenging period. Now more than ever there is a need for a strong focus on equity and excellence.
4. With the phased re-opening of schools from 11 August 2020, we are working with local authorities and the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) to ensure that learning in schools maintains a strong focus on excellence and equity for all, within the necessary constraints of the Covid-19 response.
5. We recognise the challenges that this unprecedented situation presents, in particular for children and families from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and that is why the Scottish Attainment Challenge will continue to support children from our most disadvantaged communities. Effective targeted use of the Attainment Scotland Fund, which supports the Scottish Attainment Challenge, will be key in mitigating against the risk of the poverty-related attainment gap widening.

#### **Attainment Scotland Fund**

6. Many schools and local authorities use substantial proportions of their Scottish Attainment Challenge funding to deliver targeted approaches that support disadvantaged learners to engage in learning, improve attainment, achievement, participation and wellbeing where they would otherwise not be able to do so. That is why we are continuing with our commitment to invest £182 million from the Attainment Scotland Fund in 2020/21.
7. On 1 May 2020 the Deputy First Minister confirmed that, for the first time, over £250 million in Pupil Equity Funding will be made available to schools over two years, 2020/21 and 2021/22. This will help to provide more certainty for headteachers and support targeted approaches during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and beyond.

8. Following this, DFM announced on 10 June 2020 that a further £50 million of Attainment Scotland Funding would be allocated in 2020/21 to the nine Challenge Authorities and 73 schools in the Schools' Programme to continue to provide targeted support for pupils from Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

### **Flexibility in the use of Attainment Scotland Funding**

9. In recognition of the challenges faced by local authorities and schools as a result of the pandemic, current guidance on Attainment Scotland Funding has been relaxed to enable them to support the education, health and wellbeing and care of children and young people during the response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Additional detail on how the parameters within this flexibility can be exercised was communicated to local authorities on 15 May 2020 and can be found on [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot). Further advice can also be found in the refreshed [2020 PEF Guidance](#).
10. This sets out that, in exercising this flexibility, the use of Attainment Scotland Funding must remain consistent with the principle of equity in education. Pupil Equity Funding and Schools' Programme funding allocations continue to be awarded directly to schools for headteachers to use at their discretion. The key principles of these funding streams remain in place. However, this flexibility does enable schools and local authorities to work together to identify opportunities to undertake collaborative approaches in response to the current crisis as long as headteachers continue to be directly involved in any decisions made about the deployment of this funding.
11. It is important that any adjustments to approaches remain within the parameters of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme and schools and local authorities are encouraged to continue to work with Education Scotland Attainment Advisors to develop their plans.

### **Examples of flexible use of funding**

12. There are already a number of examples of schools and local authorities deploying the additional funding flexibly to support disadvantaged learners. For example, through providing laptops and tablets to support digital learning at home, purchase and delivery of books and other learning material to children at home, providing transport to enable some learners to attend LA childcare hubs and supporting home-school link workers to maintain regular contact with children.
13. For August return, there are examples of schools and local authorities providing an enhanced degree of support and preparation for transition to a new setting or class for pupils with additional support needs, with aspects of support relating to a return to school being referenced in support plans where it is required.
14. During the period of blended learning, some are working with CLD and third sector partners to provide a programme of outdoor and cultural activities for vulnerable children on the days they are not in school.

15. In some Challenge Authorities, where the greatest deprivation exists, funding is being used to enhance the digital learning experience.
16. Over the summer holidays, some are continuing to operate some LA childcare hubs based on expected demand for places for vulnerable pupils or children of key workers
17. On return to school in August, where pupils entitled to Free School Meals will not be able to attend every day to get their meal, there are examples of schools providing an alternative which may be a pick-up meal or a financial payment equivalent to the meal allowance.
18. A key risk as a result of Covid-19 is that the poverty-related attainment gap widens as direct face-to-face school-based learning and teaching is reduced and the deployment of the Attainment Scotland Fund will be a key factor in mitigating this risk. Therefore this funding and the focus on supporting children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds remains as important as ever.

### **Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people**

19. There have been a number of national surveys taking place to gain the views of parents and carers, children and young people about how Covid-19 has affected them.
20. The Young Scot, Youthlink Scotland and Scottish Youth Parliament [LockdownLowdown](#) captured young people's views from across Scotland.
21. Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland has published (Wednesday 17 June 2020) its findings from two surveys, one for parents and carers, and one for children and young people.
22. Connect Scotland too has been undertaking a Term 4 lockdown survey of parents, with results due at the end of the month, June 2020.

### **Questions for discussion**

23. We are interested to hear what results are coming to the surface as you engage with children and parents, and carers and fellow teachers.