

Education, Children and Families Committee

10:00 am, Tuesday, 7 December, 2021

School Excursions – Equity (Update)

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note that all children and young people are strongly encouraged and actively supported to attend high quality school residential visits.
 - 1.1.2 Note that a diverse and appropriate range of funding resources are in place and being used by schools.
 - 1.1.3 Note that Head Teachers call upon the Education, Children and Families Committee to poverty proof the school day.
 - 1.1.4 Note the actions within the report to assist in making this commitment a reality.

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School Excursions – Equity (Update)

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that every child can participate equally in school experiences and that no child is excluded from these as a result of inability to meet school costs, including school residential visits.
- 2.2 This report is a response to the Education, Children and Families Committee August 2021 meeting regarding a potential central fund for school residential visits (8.1): *'to request a report back to October Committee to show how a central budget might be funded, how it would be targeted and how it would be distributed.'* Significant information has been collected from schools and then processed/reviewed to inform this report; thus requiring it to be presented at the December 2021 Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 School residential visits are highly valued and have significant outcomes (see August 2021 report – 8.1 below).
- 3.2 The cost of school excursions, including residential visits, are considered as 'Part of the Cost of the School Day'; addressed alongside other costs and assessed as part of a school's performance in achieving 'Equity for all Learners' (8.7 below, Education Scotland - How Good is Our School 4 – HGIS4).
- 3.3 Making Education Equal for All Edinburgh's Pupil Equity Framework provides Council guidance regarding maximising attendance (Appendix 9.2).
- 3.4 Based on evidence presented in the August 2021 report (8.1 below), many schools are using different funding sources and spending significant time successfully reducing the cost of excursions for young people from low incomes families, including residential visits, and maximising attendance. They are also successful in removing or reducing non-financial barriers to attendance. This is always ongoing work to avoid complacency.
- 3.5 Funding sources used to maximise attendance on residential visits include parent/carer contributions; direct national funding such as Pupil Equity Funding (PEF); other eligible Council funding for targeted pupils; eligible external grants some of which are specifically advertised to support school residential visits for certain groups of pupils; and fundraising (in line with 1 in 5 Project guidance). The Council's 2021/22

PEF guidance, designed to close the poverty related attainment gap, expects all spends to be linked to priority criteria, which includes 'Reducing the Cost of the School Day' and the 'Cost of Wider Achievement Opportunities'. This enables schools to allocate PEF to residential offsite visits, thus ensuring this funding is used to reduce/remove barriers.

- 3.6 Additional background information, attendance data, existing good practice and the next steps for improvement and development can be found in the August 2021 report (8.1 below).
- 3.7 The Council is undertaking an incremental approach to reopening school residential/overnight visits. This started with camping in June 2021 and progressed in the Autumn Term to Benmore and Lagganlia residential visits. This stepped approach is allowing the Council and Health Protection Lothian to learn about the pandemic within a school residential context; enabling resources and processes to be created, trialled and embedded to minimise infection and financial risks.
- 3.7.1 Due to the overnight component, school residentials are considered a higher educational activity pandemic risk. A proportionate approach is therefore required to minimise transition risks and put in place appropriate capacity/resources to manage outbreaks whilst on a residential, including repatriation of pupils and staff.
- 3.7.2 The success of the Benmore and Lagganlia reopening, and development of robust resources have been recognised regionally and nationally. Council Officers are co-leading the development of national working groups to explore solutions and publish materials to support this Council and other local authorities/partners.
- 3.7.3 Council Officers are currently finalising recommendations for the next step, which is proposed to involve non-Council providers. These will be considered by Council senior leaders via the Service Resumption Group process in November/early December 2021 alongside the latest infection context and how financial risks are being mitigated (the Council, like other Councils, no longer has pandemic cancellation insurance for school residential visits). If approved, resources currently being developed by the national group can then be utilised for future visits.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Council Officers approached the request from Committee by focusing on evaluating a potential P7 school residential central fund option (as detailed in Appendix 9.1 below), and then dividing this into two parts; **Part 1: 2021/22 Academic Year** and **Part 2: Beyond 2021/22**. Examining a central fund beyond P7 to all year groups was judged by Council Officers to be cost-prohibitive, particularly when other funding sources exist e.g. PEF.
- 4.2 The potential cost of investing in a city-wide fund to provide financial support to pupils from low-income families attending a high-quality residential visit is explored

in Appendix 9.1. This presents different models for targeting funding; free school meals, SIMD 1-2 ('most deprived') and SIMD 1-4. Various percentage contributions are included.

4.3 Part 1 2021/22

- 4.3.1 A questionnaire was sent to schools to assess how P7 pupils are predicted to be funded during this academic year (including those schools who have already undertaken a visit). Schools used their professional judgement to submit best fit predictions.
- 4.3.2 Most schools report they expect to cater for P7 school residential visits via existing funding options (83.6% of submitted returns or 61 out of 73 schools). This includes visits already undertaken.
- 4.3.3 Council Officers are or will be working with those schools who reported to potentially needing to utilise alternative funding sources other than those already being used/explored (16.4% or 12 schools).
- 4.3.4 Schools continue to report accessing a diverse range of funding sources to accompany parent/carer contributions. These include PEF; eligible Council budgets; Parent Councils; Parent-Teacher Associations; external grants some of which specifically state they accept applications for school residential visits; donations from individuals and organisations; and fundraising (within 1 in 5 project guidance). Some questionnaire responses indicate that pupils benefit from being involved in fundraising. For example; *'fundraising teaches our pupils a great deal and they are very positive about taking part and know why...it teaches them about society and how it pulls together to support each other'*. It is acknowledged that many grant applications are not guaranteed at this point, although schools' judgements are based on grant providers' advice/guidance and past experiences.
- 4.3.5 An additional 9 schools reported outwith of the online survey they have not currently finalised plans for a 2021/22 residential (a valid option within the questionnaire). SOLU is working with these schools to ensure all P7s have an option for a school residential this year (nearly all schools already contacted). The remaining schools are finalising their return.
- 4.3.6 The Council has approved a 2021/22 budget for its Benmore and Lagganlia Outdoor Centres. This provides significant additional financial support for booking guarantees, additional enhanced cleaning and potential repatriation costs. This is supplying vital reassurance for families and school staff, thus helping to maximise attendance. Work is underway regarding the 2022/23 budget.

4.4 Monitoring and maximising current school residential visits – 2021/22 (progress check)

- 4.4.1 The Sport and Outdoor Learning Unit (SOLU) continues to monitor attendance at the Council's Benmore and Lagganlia Outdoor Centres (via the data collection tool detailed in the August 2021 Report – 8.1 below). Current attendance for

2021/22 remains high; 93.9% (absence due to Covid-19 absences removed / 92.1% if included). This means that 559 Edinburgh pupils have attended a Benmore or Lagganlia school residential to date.

- 4.4.2 This high attendance figure for Benmore and Lagganlia represents significant work by schools and SOLU, including different funding solutions; flexible payment timelines; robust pandemic processes; and reassuring families and staff via information sessions and financial guarantees. No school has reported via the data collection tool that a pupil was unable to attend due to financial reasons. The risk of 'masking' financial reasons by families is acknowledged and is generally mitigated by schools through maintaining excellent relationships and communications with families so that attendance is maximised. This work is always ongoing, and the data collection tool created by SOLU is an important way schools and the Council can monitor attendance to inform guidance, provision, training and resources.

4.5 Beyond 2021/22

- 4.5.1 The data from Part 1 has been used by Council Officers to indicate a similar approach by schools beyond 2021/22.
- 4.5.2 Council Officers are aware of some speculation linked to a national school residential entitlement.
- 4.5.3 SOLU is developing a school outdoor learning evaluation toolkit. This will include resources for reviewing excursions within the context of safety, education effectiveness, equity, equality and environmental sustainability (using city-wide guiding principles). This will be ready for February 2022 in preparation for the 2022/23 academic year.

4.6 Conclusions and proposal

- 4.6.1 Based on the evidence collated and reviewed, it is proposed that a central fund is not the most suitable solution at this time when considered within the context of finite financial resources. The rationale is that existing funding sources beyond parent/carer contributions already exist, including PEF and external grants, and evidence indicates these are generally being used successfully by most schools to maximise attendance. Creating a central fund from existing Council resources would potentially duplicate these funding sources. It is acknowledged that some schools may require additional support by Council Officers in accessing all available funding sources. Officers would seek to use good practice from other schools in facilitating this. This proposal would be monitored and reviewed regularly.
- 4.6.2 SOLU is currently exploring the Community Benefits funding to provide an additional option for schools. The proposal will be submitted centrally for use across the City. A meeting is being organised with the relevant Council Officer and if feasible; an application is to be submitted shortly. SOLU will also liaise with Equity Board to set up a short-life working group to explore further options, including links with local business.

- 4.6.3 It should be noted that the Council already provides some centrally funded provision to support excursions, including Primary Curricular Swimming (5.1 full time equivalent swimming teachers), P7 Risk Factory visits, Active Schools extra-curricular activity programme (may include some excursions); and subsidised or free large events such as the P7 Epic Days (Summer 2021) and the P6 Outdoor Learning Challenge at Holyrood Park (pre-Covid and due to return).

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 SOLU will continue to deliver its strategic actions to maximise attendance. These will assist in updating policy, checking progress, ensuring accountability and identifying priority work.
- 5.2 SOLU will monitor attendance to ensure guidance and resources are used to maximise attendance in line with the Council's Making Education Equal for All Edinburgh's Pupil Equity Framework (Appendix 9.2).
- 5.3 Council officers will monitor potential discussions regarding national school residential entitlements and any corresponding funding guidance and resources.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 2021/22 questionnaire feedback from schools includes predictions based on professional judgements. There is a risk that some predictions may not match actual requirements (despite schools' excellent knowledge of their communities, accessing grant guidance/advice and using past experiences to support them). This includes an ever-changing pandemic context and not knowing the outcome of grant applications. Schools will be asked to monitor predictions, and Council officers will work with schools to mitigate risks.
- 6.2 Interventions and actions listed within the report include those annually funded by the Scottish Government, including Pupil Equity Funding and Scottish Attainment Challenge Schools Programme Funding.
- 6.3 Schools annually auditing their excursions programmes allow budgets to be allocated in advance, thus minimising financial risks.
- 6.4 The estimated costs of investing in a central fund are for illustrative purposes and are not allocated to any budget.
- 6.5 There is a potential financial risk if establishments do not comply with the Communities and Families Excursions Policy and COVID-19 Excursions Toolbox.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Sport and Outdoor Learning Team undertakes work by involving staff, volunteers, young people, families, and partners. This is via evaluation feedback; surveys; parent enquiries; discussions during training; updates to Council procedures; and meetings with colleagues from across the Council.
- 7.2 Views of parents/carers, families, and young people continue to be gathered by schools as part of the self-evaluation process assessing the impact of the interventions and supports delivered to children and young people experiencing poverty-related barriers.
- 7.3 Views and impact were and continue to be gathered from schools by the local authority in relation to the management of resources to support equity, specifically the use of Pupil Equity Funding and the content of the PEF Plan template.
- 7.4 The Communities and Families Excursions Policy provides guidance on equity and equality. Compliance with this guidance will minimise the risk of equity and equality issues.
- 7.5 A significant number of actions via SOLU and partners are specifically targeted at addressing inequality. Planned work was detailed in Appendix 9.15 of the August 2021 report (8.1 below).

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Previous Excursions – Equity Report. Education, Children and Families Committee, Tuesday, 24 August, 2021. [General link to meeting documents](#) and [link to report](#). [Link to minutes](#).
- 8.2 Previous Outdoor Learning Report. Education, Children and Families Committee, Tuesday, 10 December, 2019. [General link to meeting documents](#) and [link to Outdoor Learning report](#): <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s11782/7.10%20Outdoor%20Learning.pdf>. Also includes another report - 7.7: [Communities and Families Excursions Policy](#).
- 8.3 Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning – a planned and progressive approach: <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>.
- 8.4 Scottish Government guidance - Coronavirus (COVID-19): school visits and trips: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-school-visits-and-trips/>.
- 8.5 Educational value of Scotland's Outdoor Education Centres: <https://www.sapoe.org.uk/links/local-authority-outdoor-education-centres/>.
- 8.6 Coronavirus (COVID-19) - guidance to support the reintroduction of school residential visits v2 May 2021:

<https://www.goingoutthere.co.uk/appendix/coronavirus-covid-19-reopening-and-operation-of-outdoor-education-centres-and-reintroducing-visits-by-schools/>.

- 8.7 Education Scotland – How Good is Our School? – HGIOS 4:
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/HGIOS4>

9. Appendices

Appendix 9.1 Estimated Costs of Investing in a City-Wide Fund – ‘P7 residential excursion guarantee’ model.

Appendix 9.2 Making Education Equal for All - Edinburgh’s Pupil Equity Framework.

Appendix 9.1 Estimated Costs of Investing in a City-Wide Fund – ‘P7 residential excursion guarantee’ model (presented in August 2021 report – 8.1)

The table below details the potential annual costs of providing a central fund for supporting Primary 7 pupils using different criteria (Column A). Columns B to E show a full contribution, tapering off to a part-contribution which could then be further supported by PEF and funding sources.

Costs have been calculated based on a 4-night stay costing £350, including transport. This will support visits to Benmore and Lagganlia, thus allowing pupils to experience high quality provision for a sustained period; a dedicated instructor for the week – developing sustained relationships and maximising outcomes; and the opportunity to experience wild part of Scotland. Charges to Benmore and Lagganlia do vary throughout the year.

A	B	Annual cost		
		C	D	E
	Average number of pupils ¹	100% of residential visit	50% of residential visit	25% of residential visit
SIMD1-2 (most deprived)	813	£284,550	£142,275	£71,138
SIMD 1-4	1469	£514,150	£257,075	£128,538
Free School Meals	614	£214,900	£107,450	£53,726

¹Average calculated from ScotXed Pupil Census 2020 data P1-P7.

Appendix 9.2 Making Education Equal for All Edinburgh's Pupil Equity Framework

[Link to document](#)

Summary guidance from the framework:

Schools already adopt a range of measures to minimise costs and reduce pressure on family budgets. In addition 'Top Tips' for reducing school costs, developed from ideas and recommendations made as part of '1 in 5', have been distributed to all schools with an expectation that they should adopt some or all of the recommendations it contains, as well as develop their own approaches to minimise costs.

Minimise costs and reduce pressure on family budgets.

All children and young people should be able to meet the costs of school and have the resources they need to support their learning.

School Trips

Schools should:

- * Have a transparent policy for planning, funding and delivering school trips.
- * Ensure that during the planning of trips, costs are kept to a minimum.
- * Provide financial support or reduced fees for children living in low income households, including additional reductions for siblings.
- * Conduct an annual audit of potential or planned trips for the school year, and clarify the aims and purpose as well as the estimated costs for each. This information should be used to:
 - Review and develop a clear rationale and justification of costs for all trips.
 - Make modifications to school trips so that they are accessible to children from low-income households and are cost efficient.
 - Inform and consult parents at the start of the school year about plans for school trips to get their advice on how to: make them more affordable/accessible; identify parents who require financial support or reduced costs; and ensure that parents have time to plan finances accordingly (see also communication with parents).
 - Set out the steps that will be taken to ensure that all children can afford to go on trips and any alternative measures that will be in place to ensure the trip is equitable and accessible.
- * Allow parents the opportunity to pay for trips and other costs in affordable instalments. This must be given a long lead in time where required. Trips should not be offered on a 'first come first served' basis as this will favour pupils from families who are able to pay in advance.
- * Where trips require special clothing and equipment, e.g. school camps, this should be made available at no charge by the activity provider. If this is not possible, it should be made available to borrow or purchase at low cost from the school through exchanges and flash sales.
- * In addition, the local authority should investigate the potential to set up a central fund to provide financial support to children from low-income families and facilitate their inclusion in more expensive but hugely beneficial activities, such as residential stays at outdoor centres.