

EXTENDED SCHOOLS SUBSIDY FUNDING FOR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A guide to the 2008-09 pathfinder

“We need to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their parents do not miss out but have a chance to benefit from extra out-of-school tuition and after-school clubs... The £265m funding will enable all schools to offer those children two hours per week of group activities in term time, plus 30 hours of additional activities over the holidays.”

Secretary of State, 10 July 2007

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Introduction

In the Children's Plan, published in December 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) set out plans to make £265.5 million in funding available to schools between 2008 and 2011. This funding will help schools provide a comprehensive range of exciting, high quality extended services, and ensure that these are accessible to all children and young people, focusing on those disadvantaged by economic circumstances and children in care.

From September 2008, the Department will be running a pathfinder to explore how best it can support schools to meet this objective. The pathfinder, which will involve schools in 18 local authorities, will be supported by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and build on the excellent progress made to date in establishing sustainable and inclusive extended schools.

This document is intended to act as a guide to the pathfinder for schools and local authorities. It also provides some background on extended schools. It is not intended as definitive practice guidance for pathfinder schools and authorities, and should therefore be read alongside the training and support materials and update packs provided by the TDA.

Background

The Children's Plan clearly sets out the government's commitment to bringing about the system-wide transformation needed to deliver the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Every Child Matters calls for all children and young people to be given the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution, and
- achieve economic well-being.

Extended schools are at the heart of the delivery of these outcomes. By 2010, the government wants all schools to provide the core offer of extended services¹:

- childcare (in primary and special schools)
- a varied menu of activities including study support and play
- parenting support, including family learning
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services, and
- community access to facilities including adult and family learning, ICT and sports facilities.

Schools are not expected to provide these services alone, or necessarily to deliver them on site. Instead, they should work in partnership with local authorities, and with other schools and agencies, including voluntary and community organisations and, where appropriate, provide signposting to existing services.

In May 2008, over 10,500 schools were already delivering the full core offer, with many more offering some extended provision. Between 2003 and 2008, the government invested over £840 million in extended schools. A further £1.3 billion has been committed in the current spending period, 2008-09 to 2010-11. This very significant investment will make a real difference to the ability of local authorities and schools to provide access to high quality extended school activities that reflect local needs and priorities.

¹ For more information on extended schools go to www.tda.gov.uk/extendedschools

Services for all: addressing economic disadvantage

Research shows that high quality out-of-hours activities can help improve well-being, raise standards of achievement and make a real contribution to reducing attainment gaps. In many cases, extended services will give economically disadvantaged children and young people and children in care² the opportunity to participate in activities that otherwise would have been denied them.

However, for extended services to be financially sustainable, schools may have to pass on charges to participating children (note that schools are expected to follow clear guidelines on charging³). At the same time, they must ensure that activities are open to all, not just those with the means to pay for them. Charging must not leave economically disadvantaged children and young people vulnerable to exclusion.

The government recognises that economic disadvantage may prevent children and young people from taking part in extended schools activities. It is therefore providing £265.5 million in funding over the next three years – £8.5 million in 2008-09, £40 million in 2009-10 and £217 million in 2010-11 – specifically to address this issue.

The Children's Plan sets out a vision of how schools can use the funding to enhance their extended services offer:

“Schools are encouraged to consult with children and young people and their parents on designing programmes of activities to help increase engagement with learning, offer new opportunities...and help stretch higher achievers – and are required by law to involve disabled children. In addition, through new support mechanisms, schools will be better able to help address individual barriers to learning.

Tackling deprivation and disadvantage to reduce attainment gaps is a core focus of extended schools. We have already announced that we are making £265 million available by 2010-11 to help schools provide and commission an exciting range of activities for children and young people.

This funding will help subsidise access to these opportunities by disadvantaged children, young people and children in care, who through their economic circumstances would otherwise be unable to participate. The funding will give schools the confidence to focus on providing what would most benefit children and young people, not just

² Throughout this document, the term “economically disadvantaged children and young people” is used to mean both children and young people disadvantaged by economic circumstances, and children in care.

³ Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and their Partner Organisations (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00125/) and www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/extendedschools/knowhow/fundingandcharging.aspx

limited to what they can afford to pay for.”

Guiding principles

The DCSF has developed a set of principles to guide how the funding is used:

- **Entitlement:** The funding should enable children and young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and children in care (‘the target group’) to access activities from which they would otherwise be excluded due to their inability to pay.
- **Participation:** The funding should be used to secure the target group’s participation in extended schools activities.
- **Additionality:** The funding should be used to make existing activities more accessible to the target group, and/or to commission new activities that better meet their needs.
- **Involvement:** The target group and their parents/carers should be fully involved in choosing, designing and continuously improving the range of activities on offer.
- **Relevance:** Activities should be attractive and relevant to the target group.
- **Demand:** The target group and their parents/carers should be able to exercise real control of the funding identified for them, in the same way as children and young people whose participation is not excluded by inability to pay.
- **Open to all:** Any new activities should form part of the universal extended schools offer, and be open to all children and young people.

The DCSF recognises that circumstances in every school and for every pupil are unique, and that there will be times when it is unclear how best to use the funding or whether it is appropriate to use it for a specific purpose. These principles are intended to guide schools in their decision-making.

The funding formula

In allocating the pathfinder funding to local authorities, the DCSF has used a formula for pathfinder schools which attributes equal weight to the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and local deprivation as measured by the DCSF tax credit indicator⁴, a broader definition of economic disadvantage. The resulting funding is sufficient for a take-up rate of two-thirds or more of FSM pupils, as is typically found for extended services activities. The DCSF aims to use tax credit data to allocate funding to all local authorities by 2010-11.

⁴ www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12225

The pathfinder

The pathfinder aims to explore two key aspects of making extended services more accessible to children and young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

First, it will look at how to identify those children and young people who are eligible for funding support to participate in activities:

- What factors should schools consider in defining the target group?
- How can the criteria for defining the target group be communicated in a way that is transparent and demonstrably fair?
- What support do schools and local authorities need to make these decisions?
- What other learning can be applied here?

Second, it will look at the activities schools should be offering children and young people, and how they should be delivered:

- Does a fixed number of hours of activities per week simplify the offer?
- Does a fixed hour offer place undue constraints on children, parents and schools?
- How can schools build on the momentum generated by 'one-off' activities by delivering ongoing programmes of activity?

The pathfinder will test two models, 'flexible' and 'defined', whose key characteristics are summarised in the following table.

	'Flexible' model	'Defined' model
Target group	Schools use local definitions of economic disadvantage to determine eligibility for the subsidy	Children who are eligible for free school meals and children in care
Offer	Flexible, as long as extended school activities are sustained over time	Around two hours of activities a week, and 30 hours in the holidays

All participating schools within a local authority will test the same model.

What will be expected of pathfinder schools

The following expectations are based on established best practice in extended schools. Building on this, the DCSF expects pathfinder schools to use the funding to strengthen and improve access to a core offer of services, not to view it as a separate initiative.

Defining the target group

The purpose of the funding is to target funding at economically disadvantaged children and young people. Defining the target group will be a key challenge, and the approach taken will depend on which model is being used.

As outlined in the table above, in the 'defined' model, criteria have been set centrally and in line with public announcements. Schools using this model should ensure that funding is only available to children and young people who are eligible for free school meals and those in care.

Schools and local authorities using the 'flexible' model will develop and apply their own funding criteria. Many schools are already operating informal subsidies and the pathfinder will look to build on this experience. Schools may of course choose to include recipients of free school meals and children and young people in care within their target group, but they may also take into account other factors or indicators of economic disadvantage. This requires considering approaches which move beyond FSM, something many schools and LAs are already doing. This may mean considering direct indicators of economic disadvantage, such as parents/carers being out of work and those on low incomes or claiming benefits, including those just above the FSM threshold.

It can also mean considering other approaches to identifying economic disadvantage, using information and knowledge about children and young people which may indicate economic disadvantage. The following list, which is neither definitive nor exhaustive, sets out some potential examples of information which may be known to schools:

- Index based on child's postcode of residence - based on index of multiple deprivation or the tax credit data;
- young carers;
- families in temporary or poor accommodation;
- economically disadvantaged children with special educational needs;
- children of young parents;
- refugee or asylum seeker children;
- those children and young people experiencing difficult family issues, such as bereavement, living with family members other than parents, parents with physical or mental health problems or disability, domestic violence, and parents in custody or with debt problems.

Note that while health, social and cultural factors may also act as barriers to the uptake of extended services, they should not themselves be criteria in

applying the funding.

Whatever the criteria used, they should be transparent and fair and avoid the risk of stigmatisation. We would encourage schools and clusters to work with each other to develop criteria, and local authorities to support and guide schools in their decisions.

Funding

The level of funding available is based on the assumption that around £300 will be spent on each targeted child over the course of the year. This will of course vary according to individual needs and circumstances, including the exact number of children in the target group and participation rates.

In line with established principles, funding will not be ring-fenced at school level. However, pathfinder schools will be expected to use the funding to support access to participation in extended schools activities for the target group, not to develop other aspects of the extended schools core offer, to pay for related activity such as consulting children and parents or to meet other indirect or capital costs.

For many pupils – particularly in rural schools – the cost of transport to and from activities is a major financial barrier to participation. To help address this, in both the fixed and the defined models, funding can be used to subsidise transport where appropriate.

Consultation

In line with established best practice, the DCSF expects schools to consult children, young people, parents and the wider community when developing their menu of extended services activities. Evidence shows that extended services have the most impact on confidence, engagement with learning and attainment where children and young people are given a real say in the kind of activities provided.

Many schools will already be familiar with using questionnaires, running focus groups and using input from school councils. Indeed, some may be experiencing “consultation overload”. However, experience suggests that different techniques are needed to successfully engage with economically disadvantaged groups. Where necessary, the TDA will help schools identify appropriate and targeted consultation techniques and tools.

Ownership

Involving children and young people and their parents/carers in choosing, designing and continuously improving the activities on offer will help create a sense of ownership. This will help ensure that activities are valued, and drive increased and sustained participation. This is a difficult objective, but the potential benefits are significant.

Encouraging participation

There are many barriers to participation in extended schools activities, including financial, health, social and cultural factors and low motivation. Subsidy funding can only be used to tackle financial barriers to participation, with schools and LAs expected to build on existing activity to address these other barriers so as to maximise the positive impact of extended services on all pupils, including those in the target group.

Additionality

The DCSF's intention is that the funding should result in real 'additionality'; that is, it should provide additional access to activities rather than replace existing services. In some cases this might mean running or commissioning new activities; in others it might mean opening up access to existing activities to the target group. Effective consultation with children and families will help guide these decisions. Schools will be expected to provide evidence of additionality through tracking and management information.

Working in clusters

Clusters of schools should agree how they will work together to use the subsidy funding to best effect. Where schools within a cluster are using the 'flexible' model, the DCSF recommends that the same definition of the target group is applied across the cluster to avoid any perceptions of unfairness.

A cluster approach to using external providers can also be valuable, enabling schools to more easily commission and sign-post collectively. This enables clusters to share the activity involved in managing relations with other providers, as well as identifying potential providers of services to meet identified needs or offer new opportunities. It can also be easier for providers to engage at a cluster level rather than at an individual school level. The role of the cluster coordinator is critical here.

Sustained interest and participation

Research shows that children and young people benefit from regular and sustained participation in extended services activities. For schools using the 'defined' model, this will be achieved through the regular provision of around two hours of activity a week. For schools following the flexible model, there will be some freedom as to the frequency and regularity of sustained provision: for example, funding could be used to pay for more expensive but less frequent activity, such as taster or one-off sessions, school trips or other 'transformative experiences'. However, if outcomes are to be sustained over time, schools will need to complement such 'one-offs' with regular activity.

Partnership working

Commissioning activities from external providers, especially the voluntary and community sector, can bring real benefits, including enabling schools to offer

a far wider range of activities. These organisations will also often have considerable experience and expertise in engaging with disadvantaged children and young people and breaking the cycle of disaffection and lack of engagement in learning.

School improvement planning

A recent Ofsted report on extended schools found that the schools with the most effective services had integrated the development of extended provision within their school improvement plans, with a clear focus on improving positive outcomes for children and young people. Ofsted also commented that since their previous report schools have become more aware of the need to evaluate the impact of their services on the outcomes for children, young people and their families, although very few had begun to measure this systematically.

The DCSF expects schools to think strategically about engaging the target group, encouraging participation and to manage the process effectively by planning ahead and establishing clear measures of success from the outset. Making extended school activities part of a whole school improvement strategy will maximise their impact on attainment and ensure that participation enabled by subsidy funding is seen as part of the school's wider extended services offer, avoiding any stigma. The TDA's School Improvement Planning Framework^[1] helps schools to focus on outcomes and demonstrate impact.

What will be expected of pathfinder local authorities

Activities will be delivered through the extended schools programme and funding used at school level. All funding must be devolved to schools taking part in the pathfinder, as clearly stated in the funding condition of grant. Funding has already been calculated by the DCSF at an individual school level, and local authorities are encouraged to allocate it on this basis.

Local authorities and, in particular, extended schools remodelling advisers (ESRAs), are expected to support schools through the pathfinder and to ensure that activities paid for through the subsidy are incorporated into their wider extended schools activities and any other relevant strategies. Local authorities also have an important role to play in sharing learning and best practice with other local schools. The DCSF encourages local authorities to consult local social partnerships to discuss the pathfinder and potential workload implications.

Evaluation

The DCSF plans to look at a range of evidence during the pathfinder. Lessons learned will then be applied to the full roll-out of funding (see below under 'Future plans'). Some of this learning will come from the TDA, and some from a systematic evaluation of the work being done by pathfinder schools and local authorities.

The pathfinder is intended to provide answers to the following key questions:

- How can schools best identify the most economically disadvantaged children and target funding at them in a simple, transparent and fair way, while avoiding stigmatisation?
- How can schools best engage the target population in activities? Is a fixed-hour offer the most effective approach?
- How best can children, young people and their parents be consulted about the sort of activities they would like to participate in?
- How can the impact on the workloads of teachers, school leaders and support staff be minimised?
- How can schools be encouraged and supported to engage with outside organisations to commission a varied range of activities?
- How can this funding help secure additional activities, including through links to existing funding and extended schools charging policies?
- How can schools measuring the impact of the subsidy funding?
- How can schools and clusters best be supported by local authorities?
- How can the subsidy best secure activities for disadvantaged children and young people?

The DCSF has commissioned the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) and Newcastle University to produce an independent evaluation of the pathfinder. An initial report to be delivered in April 2009 will inform the scaling up of the project in 2009-10, and full findings will be made available in April 2010. To produce a high quality evaluation, the research team will need the input of all those involved in the pathfinder. The local authorities and schools involved have committed to sharing information and engaging in the process of evaluation. DCSF thanks them in advance for their support and assistance.

Future plans

The pathfinder will run from September 2008, scaling up in funding from £8.5m in 2008-9 to £40m in 2009-10. The DCSF will use this period to gather both evidence of good practice and information about any barriers and problems faced by the participating schools and authorities. This learning will help shape policy development and influence the delivery of subsequent funding. The TDA will play a key role in this, including by sharing best practice and emerging solutions with other pathfinder schools as they are identified. The DCSF is keen that evaluation findings are shared with pathfinder schools, both through the interim report expected in spring 2009 and also through the informal sharing of feedback on an ongoing basis.

The DCSF, working with the TDA, plans to develop proposals for making additional funding available to further local authorities from April 2009, ahead of the roll-out of full national funding in 2010-11.