

**THE SCHOOL JOURNEY ASSOCIATION**

**SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

**SUPPORTING AND FUNDING DISADVANTAGED PUPILS**

## **Introduction**

**This document has been written to support schools in finding ways to maximise the use of available funding streams to encourage and fund the participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in outdoor and residential experiences.** It makes clear to schools the benefits of educational visits, particularly for disadvantaged children who may not have similar opportunities as part of their home life. It also highlights the various streams of funding, most of which appears in schools' delegated budgets, which can be used to subsidise the cost of residential and outdoor activities for these children.

## **The Benefits of Educational and Residential Visits for all children**

The benefits to all children of taking part in experiences beyond their immediate school and home environment are many. Educational experiences, whether they are part of a week-long residential or simply a day visit, can have a very positive impact on children's and young people's:

- educational achievement
- self-esteem
- friendships and relationships (with adults and their peers)
- independence and coping strategies
- confidence and resilience
- team-building and sharing
- personal development
- motivation and behaviour
- knowledge of the world beyond the classroom
- attitudes to learning and to school
- memories of their school experience

Experiences, such as residential visits, provide opportunities which enrich lives, embed learning and develop life skills which can then have an impact on self-development, attitudes to learning, self-esteem and long-term educational achievement. For some children, a residential or similar experience can be a turning point in their school career and have a lasting impact on their self-esteem and motivation and the meaning they attach to school and their own lives. For many children, such events create and remain long-lasting memories of a positive school experience.

## **Disadvantaged Children**

The above is true for all children but it is perhaps particularly important for those children whose experiences are limited because they are disadvantaged by their family's financial or other circumstances. Without a diverse school curriculum and the creativity and the support of their school, some children, simply because of their circumstances, may experience very few 'rich' and 'memorable' experiences in their young lives.

The School Journey Association therefore encourages all schools to actively develop, in as many ways as possible, the opportunities available to children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This requires a commitment to equality of opportunity and to seeking ways to 'level the playing field' for groups of vulnerable children, particularly those whose families cannot afford to meet the full costs of residential and other activities on offer.

The School Journey Association is **unique amongst providers** of residential and other experiences in that it is a **registered charity** and **offers subsidies** for its tours for families who may not be able to support their child's involvement without some financial assistance. However, schools should also be aware that there are other ways in which schools can and are encouraged by government to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Schools can plan to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the following ways:

- develop and implement a school charging policy which recognises equality of opportunity and the legal provisions for children whose parents are receipt of benefits
- make use of additional funding for children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)
- make use the funding via the Pupil Premium
- make use of Extended Schools funding (where it exists)
- create a 'hardship' or 'opportunities' fund for disadvantaged families
- access funding available via the Parents' Association (PTA)
- access funding available from local and national charities
- apply for subsidy funding from The School Journey Association

These are covered in more detail below.

### **School Charging Policy**

Before a school can ask parents for a financial contribution towards any activities which take place during school hours, including residential visits, it must first publish a charging policy. This is a legal requirement and schools can effectively not charge for anything unless a published policy is in place. This policy must include the charging arrangements for residential visits and other 'optional extra' activities. Where a school activity requires pupils to spend nights away from home, the school is allowed to make a charge for board and lodging only. It may only ask for a *voluntary* contribution for the remainder of the cost of the visit (particularly if it is part of the curriculum and largely takes place during school hours) as it does for all other out-of-school activities. In reality, however, without the strong support of many parents paying the full cost of residential activities, many activities would not take place. A school's charging policy can also make this clear to encourage parent contribution.

### **Free School Meals**

By law, low-income families are exempt from paying the cost of board and lodgings for residential visits. Since April 2003, the eligibility criteria that entitle families to an exemption from paying for the cost of board and lodging on residential visits have been aligned with free school meals eligibility criteria. The headteacher must inform all parents of the right to claim free board and lodging if they are receiving these benefits. In effect, the school should offer a subsidy or discounted charge. Schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of any of the benefits listed below of the support available to them.

- Income Support; Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit
- An income related employment and support allowance.

All schools have, as part of their budgets, an allocation for children who are entitled to Free School Meals. This varies from area to area and from school to school depending on local need and funding and some schools may receive more funding for children entitled to Free School Meals than others. Some schools have always used some of this funding to subsidise the cost of school visits, including residential trips, for children who are entitled to Free School Meals, reducing the cost to parents by at least the cost of board and lodgings, and in some cases up to half the full cost of the visit. In effect, families whose children are entitled to Free School Meals do not have to pay anything towards the cost of a residential activity but in reality many are asked to do so. Children must not be refused a place on the basis that their parents cannot pay. Schools should ensure that they understand this position and make provision for this in their budgeting where they can.

## **Pupil Premium**

The Pupil Premium was introduced into all school budgets in April 2011. The Pupil Premium provides additional funding on top of the main funding a school receives. It is targeted at pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure they benefit from the same opportunities as pupils from less deprived families.

From April 2012, the Pupil Premium allocated to all schools will apply to **any child** who has been registered for Free School Meals (FSM) **at any time** during the previous six years of their school life. This means, for example, that a child in Year 6 who was registered for Free School Meals in Year 2 but is no longer entitled, now qualifies for the Pupil Premium. This potentially gives a school more funding and flexibility when considering targeted support, including subsidies for residential and other activities, for vulnerable children. Some schools have received significant increases in their budgets and now have more funds available to support disadvantaged children so that they *“benefit from the same opportunities as pupils from less deprived families.”*

Although aimed at educational achievement, particularly in English and Mathematics, *“it is for schools to decide how the Pupil Premium, allocated to schools per FSM pupil, is spent since they are best placed to assess what additional provision should be made for the individual pupils within their responsibility.”* In theory, therefore, schools can use some of the Pupil Premium to fund children’s participation in residential and other activities where they believe that there will be clear educational benefits for the children involved.

From September 2012, schools will be required to demonstrate (online) how they have used the Pupil Premium and its impact on the progress and attainment of those children covered by it. From September 2012, Ofsted will require schools to show, as part of a school inspection, how the Pupil Premium for each child has been spent.

## **Services Children**

Some schools have used the Pupil Premium for children whose parents are serving in the armed forces to subsidise the cost of residential or other activities for these children. In most cases, these children will not be entitled to Free School Meals but schools may feel justified in offering parents a subsidy for these children for residential and other activities in recognition of the child’s family circumstances.

## **Extended Schools Subsidy Funding**

Extended schools funding is still available in most local authorities. Extended Schools Subsidy funding was introduced in 2009 to enable children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the full range of activities offered by extended schools. Most schools

continue to receive **Extended Schools Sustainability** and **Extended Schools Subsidy** funding (now part of the Dedicated Schools Grant) and schools are free to use this subsidy funding to fund activities under the Extended Schools Core Offer which includes providing a “*varied menu of study support activities*”. This “menu” of activities can include a range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits. Schools can therefore use this funding to subsidise the cost of residential visits for disadvantaged children.

### **Looked After Children and Children with Special Educational Needs**

Although funding is available for looked-after children (LAC) via the Pupil Premium, schools may also be able to access additional funding for looked-after children via the Local Authority. Funding may also be available for those children for whom the school receives additional funding for Special Educational Needs, perhaps to meet the requirements of a SEN resource agreement or Statement. Whilst the cost of the residential visit will be met by the school and parents in most cases, some extra funding may be available from the Local Authority to cover the costs of any one-to-one support provided by additional accompanying adults. This may also apply to children with disabilities. Schools are advised to contact their Local Authority LAC and Special Needs teams for further advice.

### **Hardship or Opportunity Funds**

Some schools have established hardship or ‘opportunity’ funds. This is often an allocation of the school budget or the school’s unofficial funds which is set aside on an annual basis to provide subsidies and financial support for those parents who are eligible to apply. Eligibility for financial support may not simply be on the basis of Free School Meals but could extend to children and families who are facing other difficulties, including, for example, the recent death of a parent or a parent who is facing a serious illness. It may also extend to children who have faced exceptional family circumstances, or are subject to a Child Protection Plan, for example, but may not necessarily be entitled to Free School Meals.

### **Parents Association (PTA)**

Many schools have an active Parents’ Association which raises additional funds for the school via events such as Christmas and Summer Fairs, quiz nights, social and other events. Some Associations have an agreement in place with their schools to make an annual contribution to a fund which either subsidises the cost of a residential for all pupils or provides a subsidy, on application, for families who may be disadvantaged or facing particular circumstances.

### **Local and National Charities**

Families who are not eligible to receive help with free school meals but are nonetheless facing significant financial pressure to the extent that their child would not be able to attend a school trip due to a lack of funds, might be able to seek help from local or national charities. Schools and parents should look into this on a local level. Charities that might be able to help include local Rotary or Round Table organisations, Gingerbread, Parent Line Plus, The Family Welfare Association or the many charities who assist families dealing with serious illness. The Citizens Advice Bureau might have more information on sources of funding help in your area, and families should approach them for further advice on available grants or loans.

## **The School Journey Association: Subsidy Funding**

**Registered charity number: 312526**

The School Journey Association is one of only a few organisations offering residential tours for schools which is also a registered charity, operates on a not-for-profit basis and offers subsidies to children who may come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

SJA aims to provide cost-effective tours and other packages for schools. Apart from its tour managers and office staff, the organisation is largely managed by volunteers who do not charge for their time or involvement in managing the organisation, thereby reducing organisational costs. Most of the trustees are retired or serving school leaders who give their time and expertise freely. Whilst needing to meet its financial and regulatory obligations as a charity, SJA aims to reinvest potential 'profits' into reducing costs for all schools and providing subsidies for disadvantaged children.

As a charity, each year we aim to provide a number of financial subsidies for children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who might otherwise not be able to participate in a residential school trip due to the financial burden that would be placed on their family. The SJA Board of Management will consider applications from schools for named individuals who, without additional financial support, might not otherwise be able to participate in a planned school visit.

Families applying for this subsidy will normally be in receipt of one or more benefits and/or entitled to Free School Meals. Other circumstances will also be considered. The SJA may consider providing a financial subsidy of up to 50% of either the total cost of the visit or up to 50% of the remaining cost where the school can demonstrate its own contribution from funds made available via the sources of funding above.

Please contact the SJA office in the first instance to request further details and a form to complete. You may then apply to us in confidence. Each case will be carefully and confidentially considered by the SJA Board of Management which meets on a monthly basis. Any subsidy agreed effectively reduces the overall amount charged to the school by SJA when paying for the school trip.

The address to write to is:

Board of Management  
The School Journey Association  
Units 2/3  
16 Porteus Place  
London, SW4 0AS

Telephone      020 8675 6636

Fax              020 7720 4303

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