

Addressing Poverty Through Additional Opportunities in School

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Introduction

Beyond the academic curriculum, schools can provide pupils with artistic, musical, sporting, and cultural opportunities. **Enrichment activities are crucial in supporting children in overcoming the effects of socioeconomic disadvantages** and building capacity as learners (Public Health England, 2014). Enrichment activities build non-cognitive skills, including resilience, self-efficacy, and other emotional and social skills (Cutmore, Llewellyn, and Atkinson, 2020). However, **pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have less exposure and participation in these activities due to barriers to access** (The Centre for Social Justice, 2021).

This document examines how schools can ensure equal opportunity for all pupils to participate in comprehensive experiences that provide them with the cultural capital they need to thrive.

Access to additional opportunities was identified as a priority area for action in 45% of schools in the Poverty Proofing© the School Day Bradford sample by Children North East.

84 % of trip letters **didn't highlight the support available** – *'I wouldn't know what support school offers for trips.'* (parent)

53% of the school community felt that some pupils have/will **miss out on trips due to cost** – *'If you can't pay, you have to stay with him [the teacher].'* (pupil)




30% of school **trips/clubs were chosen on a first-come, first-served basis** – *'Sometimes you feel disappointment because you're too late.'* (pupil)

73% of schools had several children say that they **thought the residential was too expensive to attend** – *'My dad said I can't go because he doesn't want me to, but I think it's because it's a lot of money.'* (pupils)

For additional ideas on how to make changes in this area, visit the [Child Poverty Action Group website](#).



Questions To Ask Your School

	Question	Page
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there a varied range of extra-curricular opportunities in school? • Do opportunities build on pupils' interests and/or support pupils to participate in experiences they have never had? • Are clubs arranged at a range of different times? 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there fair and transparent ways to allocate places at clubs or on trips? • Is there a system for monitoring equality in the take-up of and attendance at extracurricular activities? 	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the school try to keep the costs of extracurricular activities down for families? • Are there some free clubs or trips pupils can attend? • Do families get sufficient notice to pay for activities? 	7



Range and Timing of Experiences Offered

What Citizens Say



'Everyone has the chance to do good things at this school.' (pupil)

'I really got into gardening and asked if we could have a club and now there's going to be a gardening club starting after half term which is great.' (pupil)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers

Pupils might **think extracurricular activities involve more schoolwork** or something they're not interested in.

Pupils want to go to clubs after school but can't as they **have other commitments** such as attending a Mosque.

There may not be as many clubs in **winter**, so pupils get out of the routine of attending clubs.

Pupils feel there is no point in learning an instrument as they **don't have one at home to practice**.

Guidance

- A **wide range of clubs** are available to cover different topics, such as arts, music, sports, and culture.
- Clubs could include an enterprise club, sports, baking, or glee club.
- Organise clubs to take place at a **range of times, including lunchtime**, to ensure that as many pupils as possible can attend,
- Consider how clubs are **timetabled yearly** to allow pupils to access them more consistently.
- Consider if **instruments could be loaned** to pupils to practice at home.
- Facilitate opportunities in school, **outside of music lessons**, for pupils to practice instruments.

Case Study



School **action plans highlighted how staff across the schools were aspirational for children** and used visitors to inspire. For example, by arranging for authors to visit the school, with books provided to children free of charge, or children to try archery when a national archery champion visited school.

Pupils had a 'work experience day', in which they took on a role within school for a day. All the pupils that told us about it had thoroughly enjoyed it. **'I was a classroom assistant in Year 2; they called me 'Miss Deborah' – they still do now when I see them!'** All pupils are encouraged to have high expectations no matter what their financial background is.



Allocating Places and Equality Monitoring

What Citizens Say



'We stayed in school, it was still fun but I would have liked to have done the same as them.' (pupil)

'It was brilliant getting to have a go, as I don't have my own bike.' (pupil)

'We know who needs to attend clubs and have conversations with them and their parents to facilitate it.' (staff)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers

Places allocated on a **first-come-first-served** basis mean some pupils can't attend and may be put off asking for support.

Where systems are not in place to monitor attendance at clubs and other extracurricular activities, it is **difficult for schools to check whether all pupils attend, regardless of background.**

Some pupils think they **won't be able to go on the residential trip if they don't pay.**

Pupils who don't go on trips may **feel like they have missed out** and find it difficult when the class returns and are asked to **produce work about their trip.**

Pupils might be worried about going on trips because they may feel they will **stand out in their clothing.**

Guidance

- Consider **allocating places by drawing names** out of a hat to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to be chosen.
- **Could places be kept open for targeted pupils?**

- **Monitor access** and ensure pupils participate in activities and clubs where possible so everybody can attend.

- Ensure that letters use **consistent wording** to explain that support is available, including a **named contact** if a family struggles.

- Could the pupils left at school go on the **trip for one day**, enabling them to participate in the written work when they return to class?
- Consider also **having a sleepover at school** for pupils who can't go.

- Could pupils **wear uniforms rather than non-uniforms** to remove the worry of pupils not having branded items?



Barriers

Pupils might not feel able to join in activities as they **do not have the right or working equipment.**

Guidance

- **Provide pupils who do not have bikes** with them for cycling ability training.

Case Study

Bradford School



Staff manage the places flexibly to allow as many children as possible to attend: ***“Everyone who wants to go to a club can get a place.” (pupil)***

The Performing Arts club was particularly popular with the children who described it as: ***“A place where you can let your hair down and feel good about yourself.”*** All children get the opportunity to play instruments, including drums and clarinets.



Managing Costs

What Citizens Say



'My mum doesn't have a job, so she would not pay for it. I missed out.' (pupil)
 'Saying it's 'only' £10.00. That's still a real struggle for some families.' (parent)

'The teachers say to us, if we don't think we will be able to go because of money – tell your parents to contact the school.' (pupil)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers

Guidance

Children may feel excluded as they **cannot afford** to go on trips or join clubs.

- **Subsidise** different extracurricular activities to ensure participation regardless of financial background.
- Local trips and clubs are free to attend

Families may **not be able to pay the money all at once** or may not have the budget for it that month, so pupils cannot go.

- **Have long notice periods and payment options in instalments.**

Parents may be uncomfortable with the language used when trips are advertised. **Wording may make them seem inexpensive, but to some, they are expensive.**

- **Revisit the wording on letters** to ensure that they are empathetic and that letters contain the details of who to contact if a family cannot afford the costs.

Families may worry about the **costs of equipment** needed for trips (e.g., sleeping bags).

- Consider setting up a **bank of clean equipment that can be loaned.**
- Include details of this in letters to parents to encourage take-up.

Letters sent home about trips do not always include **enough details about the support** the school may be able to offer or who to speak to.

- **Letters explain that if a family is struggling, support is available.**
- For example, 'no child from this school will miss out on any key educational trips and opportunities because of money. If you are unable to pay for this trip, please contact [named person], and our school will make sure that your child can attend.'



Barriers

Parents may worry that they will stand out if they do not send their child with any **spending money**.

Parents feel their children's school photos **are too expensive**, so don't buy them.

Pupils **can identify who has and has not purchased photographs** because of how they are handed out.

Pupils and parents **think you must pay for clubs**, so don't attend.

Guidance

- **Set a limit on spending money** and be explicit about this cost when initially informing parents of the trip details.
- You could include the spending money in the overall cost, which teachers can distribute at the beginning of the visit.
- **The school could produce its own photographs.**
- Schedule the photography session as an optional extra for parents to attend with their children after school.
- **Consider photographs being collected in a central location.**
- **Ensure that the free clubs are regularly and widely advertised.**

Case Study

Bradford School



Pupils get the chance to go on a number of trips throughout their time at school which can help to give them experiences beyond the classroom. The Year 6 pupils were very keen to tell us about their trip to Ghyll Head. Many were looking forward to experiences that they had never had before. *'I'm really looking forward to rock climbing'*.

The school tries to keep the cost down for families and the school will help to pay for any child that they are aware of whose family is struggling to pay for a trip. *'The teachers say to us if we don't think we will be able to go because of money – tell your parents to contact the school'*. If families can't afford to pay for their child to go on the full trip their children can go for one day instead, this way they still get some of the same experiences as their peers.



Appendix

Links Referenced

Child Poverty Action Group
Website

<https://cpag.org.uk/what-we-do/project-work/cost-school-day/resources/ideas-bank/trips-experiences>

References

- Cutmore, M., Llewellyn, J. and Atkinson, I. (2020). *Process evaluation of the Essential Life Skills program Final evaluation report*. Department for Education. [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fd0c218d3bf7f5d02b21962/ELS_Process_Evaluation.pdf [Accessed 9 Nov. 2023].
- Public Health England (2014). *Local action on health inequalities: Building resilience in children and young people's school*. [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74abbbe5274a52940693af/Review2_Resilience_in_schools_health_inequalities.pdf.
- The Centre for Social Justice. (2021). *A level playing field: Why do we need a new school enrichment guarantee, and how do we deliver it?* Available at: https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSJ-A_Level_Playing_Field.pdf.



If you have any feedback on this document or good practice that your school is doing, **we would love to hear from you.**

Please email schools@mylivingwell.co.uk.

