

Committee(s)	Dated:
Education Board	2 December 2022
Subject: Culture Mile Learning – School Visits Fund	Public
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Summary

This paper provides the quarterly update information on the Schools Visits Fund that Culture Mile Learning (CML) was asked to provide as a condition of its funding for 2022/23. It includes data on uptake of the fund and the actions CML is taking to promote the fund.

Main Report

1) Applications

Data is provided by month from the date of our previous report.

- September 28 – September 30: Four applications were made, set to benefit 180 pupils
(Total September figures: 23 applications were made, set to benefit 887 pupils)
- October 1 – October 31: 26 applications were made, set to benefit 1,168 pupils
- November 1 – November 10: 15 applications were made, set to benefit 536 pupils

This takes the total number of applications for this financial year to 185. These applications were made by 112 different schools/youth groups with an average Pupil Premium level of 47%.

This compares as follows to the same period in the previous three years:

- 2021 - 151 applications were made by 60 different schools/youth groups
- 2020 - 13 applications were made by 9 different schools/youth groups
- 2019 (i.e. pre-pandemic) - 222 applications were made by 130 different schools/youth groups

Three applications were not approved during this period as the schools did not meet the Pupil Premium requirement of the fund (i.e. at least 35% of pupils at the school should be eligible for Pupil Premium).

In addition, one school had further funding denied as it had already been awarded three grants this year. We have introduced a limit of three grants per

school/organisation per academic year to ensure that the fund benefits as many schools as possible.

Overall this quarter, applications were made to visit nine different cultural venues supported by the City and within the Culture Mile Learning network.

Patterns of note:

- Natural Environment sites (previously called Open Spaces) continued to be the most popular request for visits during this quarter. 69% of applications made during this quarter were for visits to Natural Environment sites. Teachers stated a particular interest in the range of sessions offered such as the Iron Age workshops at Epping Forest and also their applicability to the Geography curriculum and the appeal of learning outdoors: ‘The children are from urban inner London and most will not have experienced a forest environment before.’
- Other venues attracting significant attention this quarter were the Barbican and London Symphony Orchestra (LSO). There were a range of reasons for this, including visiting the Barbican concert hall to see the LSO orchestra. One teacher stated that this is an opportunity to “increase cultural capital for our many students who would otherwise never see a live orchestra.”
- Numbers of applications in September and October show an increase on the same months in 2021 by 43% and 23% respectively.
- 53% of applications made between October 18 and November 10 were for visits scheduled to take place in autumn 2022, 38% for visits scheduled to take place in spring 2023 and 9% for visits scheduled to take place in summer 2023.
- Teachers have repeatedly communicated a need for this funding due to the cost of living crisis. A teacher from a school with a 46% Pupil Premium level stated that “Planning for school trips can put pressure on parents, but finding ways to finance in advance can help with some of the costs.”
- Other commonly cited reasons for applications remain to:
 - expose students to sights, experiences and events they may not have encountered before
 - improve mental health and wellbeing
 - provide extracurricular activities
 - support curriculum learning
 - enable students from disadvantaged areas to experience culture and know more about their city
 - support Covid recovery for schools whose pupils have experienced significant financial hardship and a lack of access to environments other than school and home over the last two years.
- The most common use of the fund this quarter has been to cover transport costs and admission fees to venues (including workshop charges).

- Use of the fund is inevitably influenced by the general ability/willingness of schools to make cultural visits post-pandemic and during a cost of living crisis. At the most recent CML partner forum meeting on 15 September, several partners reported that in general their school visit numbers were still significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels, for some by as much as 50%.

2) Grants paid out

Five grants have been paid out in this period totalling £1,258 taking the total number of grants this financial year to 40 and the combined amount awarded to £12,045. The number of grants paid out is different to the number of applications received, because schools are paid after they have made their visits, not on approval of their applications, and the majority of the visits that are the subject of the 185 applications are due to take place later this academic year.

3) Evaluation and feedback

Feedback forms completed by grantees show the value of the fund to schools and their pupils and also the ease of the application process.

- The visit increased young people's confidence and motivation
25% of teachers 'strongly agree' and 75% 'agree'
- The young people learnt something new as a result of the visit
75% of teachers 'strongly agree' and 25% 'agree'
- The young people were engaged and enjoyed the visit
75% of teachers 'strongly agree' and 25% 'agree'
- The visit supported our objectives and/or curriculum
75% of teachers 'strongly agree' and 25% 'agree'
- The visit helped develop young people's communication, thinking, organisational, or creative skills:
75% of teachers 'strongly agree' and 25% 'agree'
- Ease of applying
100% of teachers found the application process 'very easy'.

Quotes from teachers include:

'Hugely valuable - many of our girls come from low-income backgrounds so they would not have been able to afford this independently.'

‘The fund ensured we were able to take the children on a trip which would normally be out of reach due to the prohibitive costs. It also meant we were able to cover staff at school.’

‘They gained confidence in themselves and in their peers.’

‘The children's communication skills were developed through team activities where children had to discuss their ideas, ensure the members of their team were aware of their actions and steps in order to provide assistance. The children used their thinking skills to look at artefacts and discuss and explain their ideas about what the objects were and how they might be used.’

‘The children benefitted from the visit by being given opportunities to explore and test their ideas and thinking. All the children in the class were given the opportunity to try things and contribute ideas. They enjoyed working together in groups, often with children they perhaps didn't already know very well.’

‘They developed their organisational skills by considering the best way to build a shelter, or arrange materials to create eco-art, and they were creative in deciding how to use natural materials to create a picture or sculpture.’

‘They returned to school engaged and ready to do more learning on the topic. The children also benefitted from being outside to do their learning, being given relative freedom to explore, and engaging with nature.’

4) School Visits Fund development

As reported in October, we are taking a two-pronged approach to this:

- targeted marketing to schools with higher needs
- general marketing to all eligible schools.

Targeted marketing to schools with high needs

This work is about encouraging access to the fund for primary and secondary schools as well as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) who have extremely high levels of Pupil Premium ranging from 50% to 87%, and who haven't used the fund before or those who have used it sparingly. It involves 1:1 meetings with teachers and enrichment staff to introduce partner offers and support the application process.

We have now expanded this work from six to nine boroughs and from 16 to 35 schools. The boroughs are: Southwark, Hackney, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Haringey, Camden, Enfield and Wandsworth. These have been selected due to having areas with some of the highest poverty rates in London.

12 of the selected schools are primary, with one being a primary PRU.

23 of the selected schools are secondary, with three being secondary PRUs.

We are aiming, in particular, to boost access to the fund for secondary schools as the fund is currently mostly used by primary schools.

Our experiences of this development work to date have demonstrated that this is long-term work as it requires building relationships with schools that struggle when planning trips and have been deterred from taking their students out of the school environment due to budget cuts and a lack of time to organise them. Through meeting with the staff we can make both the venue selection and the application process less daunting and overwhelming. Our current goal is to establish trust and regular communication which we anticipate will lead to an increase in applications from these over the next six to twelve months.

During this quarter we have continued to work with our cultural partners to update and share their marketing materials with schools. This began with marketing Natural Environment workshops for primary schools and has expanded to working alongside Barbican to directly invite SEND schools to their 'To the Moon and Back' workshops in December. As such, 16 specialist SEND primary schools and seven specialist SEND secondary schools in Newham and five specialist SEND schools in Tower Hamlets have been contacted directly about the event. The fund has also recently been shared with teachers at a Barbican Teach Meet. We have also been able to work closely with the LSO Discovery team to set aside a proportion of tickets for their Spring Key Stage concerts which will be reserved for the schools we're working with as part of this development project.

All eligible schools and youth organisations are still able to apply independently as previously.

General marketing to all eligible schools

We commissioned Schools Mailing, a specialist digital marketing agency, to do this work and, on their advice, three emails were sent approximately one week apart to all eligible schools in London from mid-October to the first week of November. Our campaign report shows extremely high engagement. Across all three emails the average rate of opening the email was 18.4%, compared to the agency's school industry rate of 5%, and the average rate of clicks through was 6.4% compared to their school industry rate of 1.3%. The agency has also informed us that emails are commonly forwarded and the true figure of opens and clicks are regularly higher meaning that these statistics are only an indication and will be lower than the real figure. Again, it will take time for this marketing to translate into increased applications but early indications are positive. Between October 18 and November 10, nine schools have applied to the fund who have never applied before.

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