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Schoolchildren 'devastated' by World Cup ticket failure

(Filed: 19/06/2006)

About 350 youngsters from across the UK travelled to Germany to watch matches in the [World Cup](#) but were unable to get in to the games when their tickets failed to materialise.

Teachers who have returned to the UK said today they believed a scam might have been involved, depriving the youngsters, aged between 11 and 15, of the "once in a lifetime" opportunity to see a World Cup match.



British children love the World Cup

A group of 23 boys from Mayville High School in Portsmouth, Hants, travelled to Cologne to see the Czech Republic v Ghana match at the weekend but were told by tour company Activ4 that the tickets were not available.

They were then told to travel to Frankfurt for the Portugal v Iran match, but before they departed they were told there were no tickets for this match either.

Linda Owens, headteacher, said: "The children have been looking forward to this a great deal and it's a huge disappointment for them."

Joshua Hunter, 12, from Hayling Island, said: "I was just really annoyed. I can't believe someone would do that to children. We had seen the World Cup on TV, we had been talking about it with friends before going and we had been waiting a long time for this trip, but when this happened, it was so disappointing."

James Collins, PE teacher, said he understood that the schools from across the country had paid a total of £64,000 to Activ4, which had paid a ticket agency to provide the tickets for the match.

He said it was not clear whether the tickets had been stolen from this agency or whether it was a scam and the tickets had never been available.

He said: "We just don't know what happened but we understand that it is being treated as a crime and is being investigated."

A spokeswoman for Activ4 said an emergency meeting was being held to establish what happened.

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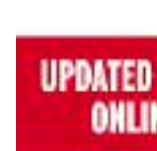
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