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Ticket Scam Kids Get Extra Time

Tuesday June 20, 12:50 AM



Tony Blair and a Premiership football club have stepped in to help a group of devastated schoolchildren hit by a World Cup ticket scam. Around 350 youngsters, aged 11 to 15 and from across the UK, were due to watch games in Germany. Their match tickets should have been part of a £410-a-head tour but never materialised.

Instead they returned home without seeing a ball kicked.

But the Government has forced the game into extra time, saying it would get the children back to Germany.

"It's

something we need to work on to make sure they can get out there," the Prime Minister said as he co-hosted a fans' radio phone-in.

Portsmouth FC said it would help out 23 of the boys who came from the Portsmouth area.

The club said it would cover the cost of some of the group's wasted trip to Germany - and try to bag free tickets for a forthcoming World Cup game.

A club spokesman said: "Pompey's Executives visited Mayville High School in Southsea, Portsmouth, to lend their support to the school by offering to cover the entire cost of a trip to Germany for the 23 boys, accompanied by staff.

"Through its contacts with the Football Association and as part of the 'Football Family', Pompey have lodged official requests to purchase tickets for a forthcoming match at Germany '06. Subject to ticket availability, Pompey will also cover the travel and accommodation expenses for the party."

Mayville High School is around a mile from Fratton Park, the home of Portsmouth Football Club, and many of its pupils are loyal Pompey supporters, the club said.

Tour company Activ4, which paid a supplier for the tickets, said police in the UK and Germany had been notified. Kent police has launched an investigation.

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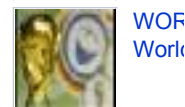
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