Introduction and background

The Pupil Premium is additional funding which is allocated to publicly-funded schools in England in order to improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged children, thereby closing the attainment gap between these children and their more advantaged peers. £1,320 is allocated to each child of primary school age and £935 is allocated to each child of secondary age. This guide from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) provides advice on creating a Pupil Premium strategy and sets out to dispel some of the most common Pupil Premium ‘myths’. It also includes a series of case studies.

Key points

Key principles

- The causes of the attainment gap are entrenched and complex; most lie beyond the control of schools and educators. Nevertheless, schools can make a difference as has been shown by the impact of the Pupil Premium over recent years.
- Evidence-informed leaders and teachers combine findings from research with professional experience to make decisions. An evidence-based approach helps schools to look at how similar challenges have been tackled in other schools and consider the likely cost-effectiveness of various approaches.
- Good teaching is the most important factor in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, using the Pupil Premium to improve teaching quality benefits all students and has a particularly positive effect on children eligible for the Pupil Premium. Although the Pupil Premium is provided as a different grant from core funding, this financial split should not mean that there is an artificial separation from whole class teaching.
- Pupil Premium students are not a homogenous group. Although students eligible for the Pupil Premium tend to be lower attainers, this is not always the case. Disadvantaged middle and higher attainers should also be supported. The fact that disadvantaged high attainers fall well behind their better off peers in terms of GCSE outcomes highlights this fact.
- In terms of implementation, less is more. It is better to select a small number of priorities and give them the best chance of success.

Pupil Premium myths

- ‘Only eligible children can benefit from Pupil Premium spending’.
- The Pupil Premium is designed to help schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged children. However, many of the effective ways of doing this, such as improving the quality of teaching, will have a positive impact on other children. This is not a problem. Some forms of targeted academic support or other wider strategies may also benefit other groups including those with Special Educational Needs.
- ‘The Pupil Premium has to be spent on interventions’.
- There is a strong evidence base that struggling students do benefit from high-quality targeted interventions. However, although interventions may be one part of a successful Pupil Premium strategy, they are more likely to be effective when introduced alongside efforts to improve teaching and a focus on wider barriers to learning such as behaviour management.
- ‘All data is good data’.
- Collecting data about the attainment and progress of Pupil Premium pupils is clearly important; it can help to identify trends and target support. However, measuring internal or class gaps is unlikely to provide valuable information; it is not required by the Department for Education or by Ofsted.
- ‘Pupil Premium strategy can be separated from whole school strategy’.
- The Pupil Premium should sit at the heart of a whole school effort. All staff should understand the strategy and their role within it. Schools should ensure that the person who is primarily responsible for the Pupil Premium spend is someone who is also well placed to lead whole school improvements.

Developing a tiered approach

- A tiered approach involves combining 3 key elements in developing an approach to Pupil Premium spending, namely: spending on improving teaching (e.g. professional development, support for early career teachers, recruitment and retention); targeted academic support and one-to-one interventions which are linked to classroom teaching; and wider strategies addressing such issues as attendance, behaviour and emotional and social support.
Case studies

Springfield Junior School
- One third of pupils at Springfield school are eligible for the Pupil Premium. Last year, 90 per cent of these pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.
- The school recognised the importance of effective teaching, creating additional time and space for continuing professional development (CPD). This included regular sequential sessions which enabled subject leaders to have whole school influence. Support staff have a weekly half hour CPD session focussed on their needs. A 3-day CPD programme is delivered by research schools in the local network.
- The school’s approach to CPD is based on evidence, with the use of the Teacher Development Trusts ‘Developing Great Teaching’ and the DfE’s Standards for teachers’ professional development implementation guidance.
- On the final Friday of every month, the pupils take part in an enrichment programme run by support staff and enhanced by visiting speakers such as a dance teacher or cardboard sculptor.

Dixons Kings Academy
- Dixon’s Kings had a higher than average proportion of Pupil Premium pupils in Year 11 last year (46%). These pupils achieved significantly better than those with similar attainment nationally.
- The school prioritises effective teaching. Weekly individual coaching sessions help to support teachers and subject-specific CPD improves the quality of pedagogical content knowledge.
- The school addresses gaps in achievement by focussing on specific knowledge or skills gaps. For example, it places particular emphasis on developing pupils’ vocabulary, recognising that vocabulary acquisition is often linked to socio-economic status.
- Intervention at the schools can take the form of homework, re-teaching, small-group intervention and assignments on sites. It is based on closing a specific gap and therefore of benefit to many students, not just those eligible for the Pupil Premium.

The Aspire Educational Trust
- Across the trust a significant number of pupils have poorer oral language and communication skills than their more advantaged peers. Using the EEF’s guidance reports on improving literacy and preparing for literacy, the trust prioritised dealing with vocabulary-related barriers to learning. Key considerations included: the need for high frequency language to be taught; the need for activities which extend vocabulary to be related to current topics; and the need for teaching to extend both breadth (vocabulary size) and depth (understanding and use in context).
- Each academy wrote an implementation plan based on EEF implementation guidance. Each academy’s implementation team then monitored and evaluated impact.
- Disadvantaged students can now access the curriculum confidently in contrast to the years before the interventions were introduced.

Limpsfield Grange School
- All pupils at Limpsfield Grange have special educational needs and 40 per cent are eligible for the Pupil Premium. Activities at Limpsfield Grange focus on pupil need and include: wellbeing (e.g. weekly1:1 counselling sessions, Occupational Therapy-based interventions); communication (e.g. transport for parents to attend annual reviews, support for pupils to access a range of offsite trips; achievement (e.g. individual and small group tuition, personalised homework support and online learning packages) and independence (e.g. weekly work experience for individuals).
- Impact is measured through the analysis of intervention and pupil progress data.
- Individual targets are set for each pupil and progress in meeting these is analysed at the end of the intervention. The progress of Pupil Premium pupils is discussed with subject teachers during regular meetings.

The full document can be downloaded from:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/pupil-premium-guide/