

# THE EEF GUIDE TO THE PUPIL PREMIUM



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“ This short guide recognises both the opportunity and the challenge created by the Pupil Premium ”

Simple solutions are often too good to be true. The attainment gap is the most stubborn test facing English schools and the Pupil Premium gives additional public funding to schools in order to close this gap. The idea that it can be solved simply by spending more is beguiling but unrealistic.

If extra money is all the Pupil Premium is about, it is doomed to fail, particularly in a period of wider financial constraint.

But, for me, the Pupil Premium represents much more. It provides funding, but also focus, setting the achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds as a priority for our system.

This clarity is the Pupil Premium's greatest strength. Educational attainment is the best predictor that we have of a young person's long-term outcomes. The Premium can act as a focal point as schools plan and put in place the strategies that will help their students succeed.

But focus can also backfire, if it distorts our behaviour, or distracts us from things we were already doing well.

This short guide recognises both the opportunity and the challenge created by the Pupil Premium, setting out a way of using evidence to inform decision-making.

It provides advice on creating a Pupil Premium strategy, contests some common myths, and contains case studies of four inspiring schools.

For the toughest problems, there are no quick fixes. But used with care and commitment, the Pupil Premium is one of the best bets we have.

Sir Kevan Collins  
**Chief Executive  
Education  
Endowment Foundation**

The EEF is an independent grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.

The EEF was established in 2011 by the Sutton Trust as lead charity in partnership with Impetus and received a founding £125m grant from the Department for Education.

Together, the EEF and Sutton Trust are the government-designated What Works Centre for improving education outcomes for school-aged children.



**I** Impetus

Department for  
**Education**

What  
Works  
Network **W**



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# Key principles

## 1 Schools can make a difference

Closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is the greatest challenge facing English schools. The gap is stubborn because its causes are entrenched and complex, and most lie beyond the control of schools and educators.

However, it is clear that schools can make a difference. In England, the gap has closed in both primary and secondary schools since the introduction of the Pupil Premium, and in every part of the country schools have demonstrated how great teaching and careful planning can make a huge impact on the outcomes of disadvantaged children.

## 2 Evidence can help

Evidence-informed teachers and leaders combine findings from research with professional expertise to make decisions.

Taking an evidence-informed approach to Pupil Premium spending can help schools to:

- Compare how similar challenges have been tackled in other schools
- Understand the strength of evidence behind alternative approaches
- Consider the likely cost-effectiveness of a range of approaches

## 3 Quality teaching helps every child

Good teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Using the Pupil Premium to improve teaching quality benefits all students and has a particularly positive effect on children eligible for the Pupil Premium. While the Pupil Premium is provided as a different grant from core funding, this financial split shouldn't create an artificial separation from whole class teaching.

## 5 Support middle and high attainers too

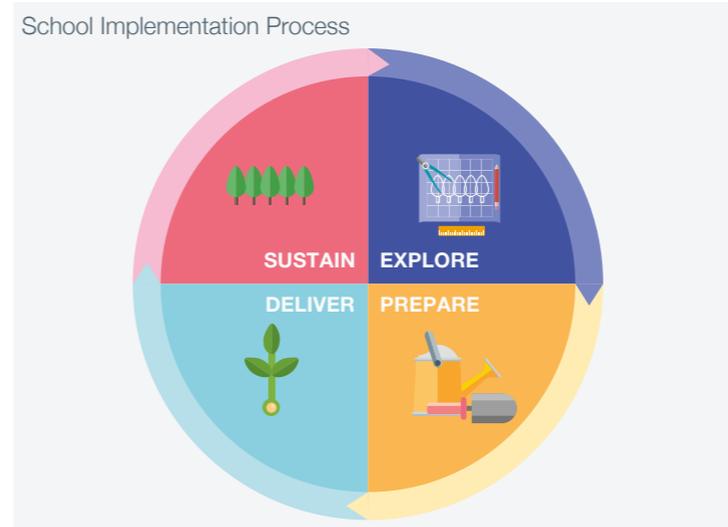
The causes and consequences of disadvantage are varied: Pupil Premium students are not a homogeneous group. Students eligible for the Pupil Premium are more likely to be low-attaining than other children. However, tackling disadvantage is not only about supporting low attainers.

For example, disadvantaged students who achieve highly in primary school are much less likely than their peers to receive top grades at GCSE.

## 4 Implementation matters

The challenge of implementation means that less is more: selecting a small number of priorities and giving them the best chance of success is a safer bet than creating a long list of strategies that becomes hard to manage.

The EEF's [School's Guide to Implementation](#) offers guidance applicable to any school improvement decision, based around this implementation cycle:



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# Pupil Premium myths

## MYTH: “Only eligible children can benefit from Pupil Premium spending”

The Pupil Premium is designed to support schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged children. However, many of the most effective ways to do this – including improving the quality of teaching – will also benefit other groups: that is fine. Likewise, some forms of targeted academic support or wider strategies will benefit other children, including children with Special Educational Needs and Children in Need.

## MYTH: “The Pupil Premium has to be spent on interventions”

There is a strong evidence base showing the impact that high-quality interventions can have on the outcomes of struggling students. However, while interventions may well be one part of an effective Pupil Premium strategy, they are likely to be most effective when deployed alongside efforts to improve teaching, and attend to wider barriers to learning, such as attendance and behaviour.

## MYTH: “All data is good data”

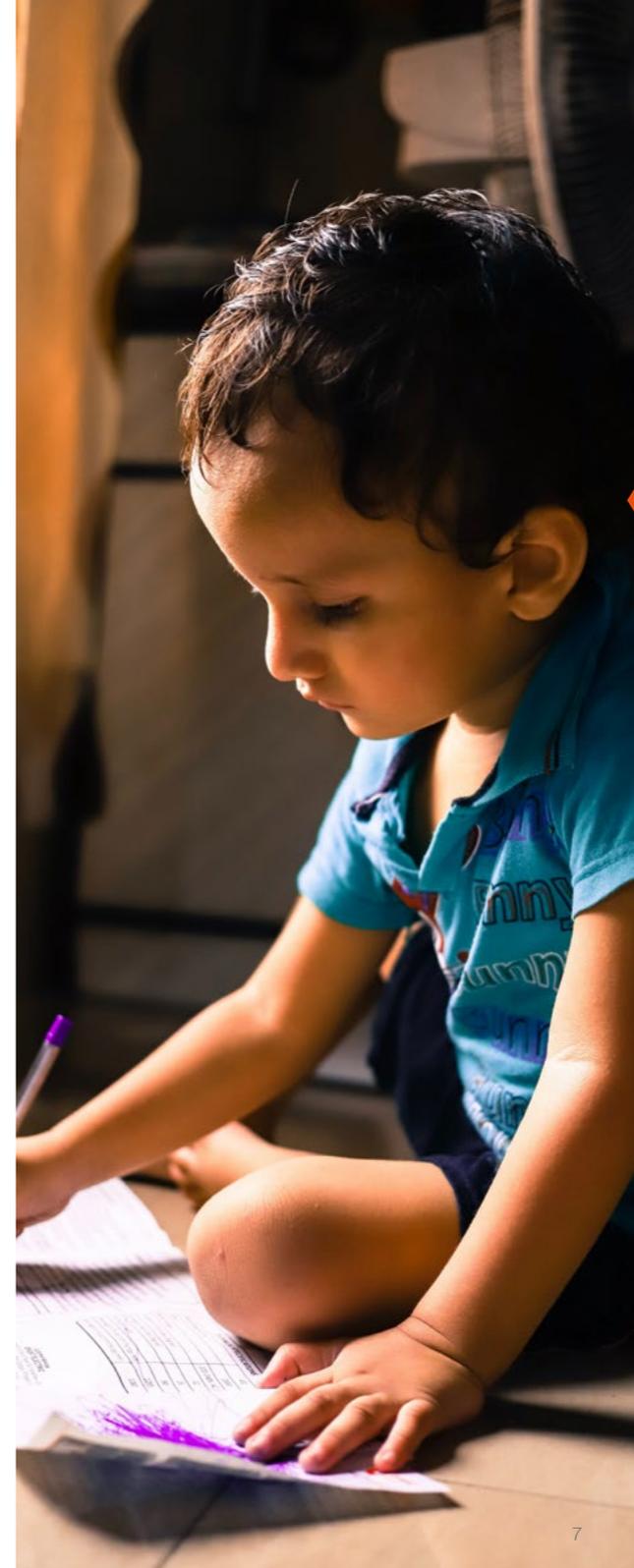
Data is valuable when it supports decision-making. For example, collecting data about the attainment and progress of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium can help schools identify trends and target additional support. It might also be helpful for schools to compare the outcomes of their eligible pupils to schools serving similar populations. The measurement and comparison of internal class or school gaps is less likely to provide useful information and isn't required by the Department for Education or Ofsted.

## MYTH: “Pupil Premium strategy can be separated from whole school strategy”

The Pupil Premium provides an important focus for prioritising the achievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in our education system. When it is most effective, the Pupil Premium will sit at the heart of a whole school effort, with all staff understanding the strategy and their role within it.

Schools may need to consider who is primarily responsible for their Pupil Premium spend to ensure it is someone best placed to lead whole school improvements to teaching and learning.

“ Good teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils ”



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# A tiered approach to Pupil Premium spending

Considering a tiered approach to Pupil Premium spending can help schools balance approaches to improving teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies.

## 1 Teaching

Spending on improving teaching might include professional development, training and support for early career teachers and recruitment and retention. Ensuring an effective teacher is in front of every class, and that every teacher is supported to keep improving, is the key ingredient of a successful school and should rightly be the top priority for Pupil Premium spending.

## 2 Targeted academic support

Evidence consistently shows the positive impact that targeted academic support can have, including on those who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement. Considering how classroom teachers and teaching assistants can provide targeted academic support, including how to link structured one-to-one or small group intervention to classroom teaching, is likely to be a key component of an effective Pupil Premium strategy.

## 3 Wider strategies

Wider strategies relate to the most significant non-academic barriers to success in school, including attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support. While many barriers may be common between schools, it is also likely that the specific features of the community each school serves will affect spending in this category.



### Adopting a tiered approach

The tiered approach is a guide, not a prescription. Many strategies will overlap categories, and the balance between categories will vary from year to year as schools' priorities change. However, the idea of tiers of support can offer a useful framework for thinking about how to balance different forms of spending.

Schools can also use a tiered approach to help focus on a small number of strategies that are likely to make the biggest difference. For example, a school with high Pupil Premium funding might select two to three priorities in each category, considering the support for successful implementation that needs to be in place and how their chosen approaches work together, rather than creating a longer list of strategies that will each receive less attention.



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# Case studies

## Springfield Junior School

*Additional resources dedicated to teachers' development and pupil PSHE sessions provide a whole-school ethos for improving outcomes for Pupil Premium children in a junior school.*

A third of Springfield pupils attract Pupil Premium funding. We have previously been recognised for our exceptional outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and last year 90% of our 30 Year 6 Pupil Premium children achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

We use evidence-based approaches as our starting points and carefully adapt them to our school context. A key factor for attainment and progress is effective teaching, as highlighted by the Sutton Trust's 2011 report, which revealed that the effects of high-quality teaching are especially significant for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We created additional time and space to prioritise continuing professional development. This included regular sequential sessions, enabling subject leaders to have whole school influence. Support staff have a weekly half-hour CPD slot that focuses on their needs and a three-day CPD programme, "Leading Learning", is delivered by Research Schools in our network. We find that our evidence-based CPD initiative is best implemented this way.

We based our approach to CPD on sources of evidence for effective delivery, including the Teacher Development Trust's Developing Great Teaching and the Department for Education Standards for teachers' professional development implementation guidance.

Furthermore, on the final Friday of every month pupils take part in an enrichment PSHE-themed programme that is run predominantly by support staff and enhanced by visiting experts; for example, a dance teacher or cardboard sculptor.

### **Our Pupil Premium strategy is rooted in our whole-school ethos.**

We know that if you provide high-quality teaching that is effective for disadvantaged learners then you are providing effective teaching for all.

## Dixons Kings Academy

*Classroom interventions and CPD initiatives aiming to address existing gaps in knowledge and skills for secondary school pupils.*

Dixons Kings had a higher than average (46%) proportion of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium in Year 11 last year, achieving significantly better at KS4 than those with similar attainment in earlier Key Stages nationally.

Our disadvantaged pupils performed particularly well, and there are some approaches which we feel are particularly beneficial. Above all, we prioritise effective teaching. Weekly individual coaching sessions help to support teachers and subject-specific CPD improves the quality of our pedagogical content knowledge. Improving teaching raises outcomes for all, but is disproportionately beneficial for the most disadvantaged, so it is always the best place to start.

We try and address gaps in achievement by focusing on specific gaps in knowledge or lack of skills. For example, we place a particular focus on developing pupils' vocabulary, as vocabulary knowledge is a predictor of achievement and is often related to socio-economic status.

### **Intervention can take the form of homework, re-teaching, small group intervention and assignments on sites.**

Our intervention is not on disadvantaged students as a cohort; it is on a specific gap. It's a strategy which should help to close many gaps in achievement, not just for those receiving the Pupil Premium.



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[Dixons Kings Academy](#)

The Aspire Educational Trust  
Limpsfield Grange School

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## The Aspire Educational Trust

*An evidence-based approach to improving the oral language skills of disadvantaged pupils in a multi-academy trust of 10 primary schools.*

One barrier faced by disadvantaged pupils is common across the majority of our schools – poor oral language and communication skills. Our data – based on diagnostic assessment tools – has consistently illustrated this gap on school entry. Left unchallenged, this and a narrower vocabulary remain a barrier for many throughout the primary years.

Our response was a collective drive to engage with the evidence and decide upon approaches to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Using the EEF's Guidance Reports (Improving Literacy in KS1, Improving Literacy in KS2 and, most recently, Preparing for Literacy) we initially prioritised responding to the barriers relating to vocabulary.

Key considerations from the reports included:

- language acquisition must be a high priority in schools, with explicit strategies for extending vocabulary as well as a language rich environment;
- careful selection of language to be taught (high frequency words found in many different contexts);
- activities to extend pupils' expressive and receptive vocabulary should relate to current topics, with opportunities to practise using new vocabulary;
- language teaching should develop breadth (vocabulary size) and depth (understanding and use in context).

We looked at the EEF Toolkit's Oral Language Interventions section and found these to have an average impact of +5 months with an extensive evidence base. We developed a whole school approach based on sound principles of vocabulary acquisition as used by speech and language therapists.

Each academy wrote an implementation plan, based upon the EEF's Putting the Evidence to Work: A Schools' Guide to Implementation, identifying active ingredients for targeted implementation activities. Each academy's implementation team monitored and evaluated impact – both quality (fidelity, acceptability, reach, cost) and the impact upon outcomes for pupils.

### **Our disadvantaged students can now access the curriculum effectively and confidently, in contrast to previous years before the interventions were adopted.**

The approach has been accepted positively by staff and pupils and is now reaching all our schools. The cost of implementation has been low with the ongoing cost simply being upfront training and follow-on support for new staff.

## Limpsfield Grange School

*A residential special school for girls aged 11-16 focuses on wellbeing, achievement, communication and independence in their Pupil Premium spending.*

All pupils at Limpsfield Grange School have special educational needs. 83% of pupils are identified as autistic and 40% of pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium.

For pupils with special educational needs deprivation is likely to be part of the broader context for many of the school's families. Therefore, the Pupil Premium is used to help pupils and families to overcome the dual barriers of special educational needs and socio-economic disadvantage.

The school's aim is that all pupils, irrespective of background and barriers to learning, become happy, healthy, empowered adults who participate and contribute to society.

Wellbeing, communication, achievement and independence are areas that the school seeks to address for identified students when spending Pupil Premium funding.

Activities at Limpsfield Grange focus on pupil need and include: wellbeing (e.g. weekly 1:1 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 and experiences); achievement (e.g. individual and small group tuition, personalised homework support and online learning packages) and independence (e.g. weekly work experience opportunities 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 students in receipt of the Pupil Premium is discussed with individual subject teachers during regular meetings.

These initiatives are supplementary to the high-quality teaching and learning that is critical for pupils every day.



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# Further reading and support

## Evidence

The EEF's [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) is an accessible summary of educational research designed to support teachers and school leaders who are making decisions about how to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. It covers strategies that schools might consider using Pupil Premium funding to support, such as Teaching Assistants, Mastery Learning and Small Group Tuition.

Our resources are freely available online: [educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

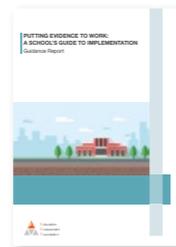


The EEF's [Attainment Gap report](#) highlights what we believe to be the key issues, and how our analysis of them informs our



practical work with teachers and senior leaders, including lessons learnt in the EEF's first six years.

The EEF also produces [guidance reports](#), providing more detailed advice on high priority topics, including literacy, mathematics, metacognition, behaviour and parental engagement. [A School's Guide to Implementation](#) is applicable to any school improvement decision.



The Department for Education provides [guidance on funding levels and accountability for the Pupil Premium](#) and a [standard for teachers professional development](#).

The National Foundation for Education Research produced a report for the Department for Education on [Supporting the Attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils \(2015\)](#), which provides a wealth of advice and case studies.

The Sutton Trust's 2018 report on [Potential for Success: Fulfilling the promise of highly able students in secondary schools](#) reviews the existing research and provides key recommendations.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Schools Week for allowing us to republish some of the featured case studies and to all who provided feedback on drafts of this guide.

## Further support

The Research Schools Network supports schools in using evidence and the Pupil Premium to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For more information, including about courses and training, see: <https://researchschool.org.uk>



For any questions about or feedback on this guide or other EEF resources please contact [info@eefoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@eefoundation.org.uk)



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