

Pupil Premium Frequently Asked Questions

| QUESTION | ANSWER |
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| <p>Who is the pupil premium for?</p> | |
| <p>1. Must the activity funded by the pupil premium benefit eligible pupils alone, and exclude other pupil groups?</p> | <p>No. Pupil premium funding is designed to raise the attainment of all disadvantaged pupils. It is not restricted to eligible pupils and can be used to support other pupils needing extra support because, for example, they need or have needed a social worker, or are acting as a carer, even if these pupils are not FSM-eligible. School leaders remain free to meet their pupils' needs as they assess them.</p> <p>The EEF recommends that schools use the grant firstly to improve teaching quality - which benefits all pupils but has a disproportionate benefit for disadvantaged pupils. Basic needs, pastoral and academic support follow.</p> |
| <p>2. Should each eligible pupil have the Department for Education's per-pupil amount spent on them?</p> | <p>The pupil premium is a school-level grant that gives schools extra resources to help meet its challenges, including those arising from deprivation. The needs of all pupils, eligible and others, should be assessed and the grant used to make maximum impact in the school. Pupil needs will differ and will cost differing amounts to address.</p> <p>There is no expectation that schools should spend £1320 on each eligible primary pupil, £935 on each eligible secondary pupil or £2300 for each adopted or looked after pupil; these are proxy amounts that are aggregated to produce the allocation distributed to schools and local authorities.</p> <p>School leaders have freedom over use of the grant and can use it as they judge best for disadvantaged pupils as a whole, including pupil-premium eligible pupils and those who are not eligible but are educationally disadvantaged - for example, pupils who need, or have needed, a social worker.</p> |

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| <p>3. Is the pupil premium intended to support only those pupils who have low attainment?</p> | <p>The grant is to support disadvantaged pupils of all levels of attainment.</p> <p>Evidence shows disadvantaged high prior attainers are especially at risk of under-achievement.</p> |
| <p>4. Is support funded through pupil premium only for pupils listed as eligible in the DfE's 'Key to Success' download?</p> | <p>The Key to Success is a retrospective list of pupils who attracted the funding based on the January census, published each June. As such, it cannot support the planning or delivering of grant-funded activity.</p> <p>We recommend schools base their pupil premium strategy on their understanding of the aggregated needs of their pupils in school at the time the strategy is written; this should be regularly reviewed.</p> |
| <p>5. Shouldn't the Department for Education be more clear about the objectives of the grant?</p> | <p>The Conditions of Grant set out clearly the objective of pupil premium funding; it is designed to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. 'Closing the gap' has often been included in the description; this is the gap between a school's disadvantaged pupils at formal assessment points and the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils at the same points (end of KS2 and KS4).</p> <p>Improvements in attainment support the ultimate aim of pupil premium funding - to better prepare disadvantaged pupils for adult life, the world of work and a sustainable future as an active member of society.</p> |
| <p>Pupil premium payments</p> | |
| <p>6. Doesn't DfE know who the eligible pupils are; why does it tell schools nine months into the school year?</p> | <p>Schools identify pupils who are eligible for free school meals or are adopted and supply this information to DfE through the January census. The department holds information about previously eligible pupils, including looked-after children, so funding allocations are made based on the new information added to the historic information.</p> <p>When pupils join a school the previous school should supply basic pupil information, including pupil premium eligibility, through the Common Transfer File.</p> |

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| <p>7. Shouldn't pupil premium follow pupils if they change school mid-year?</p> | <p>As it isn't a personal budget, pupil premium does not follow a pupil from school to school if they move mid-year. This means schools include support for mid-year arrivals in the plans for their annual pupil premium budget, whenever a pupil joins the school.</p> <p>The only exception is if a pupil is permanently excluded, when there is a budget adjustment to the sending and receiving settings.</p> <p>Alternative Provision settings are free to include a pupil premium element in their place charging structure for all pupils not captured by the annual AP census.</p> |
| <p>8. Where schools make a mistake and a pupil is recorded as PP eligible in error can the Department for Education correct the records?</p> | <p>Yes. While it is not possible to amend the census return itself, the department can update the National Pupil Database to prevent overpayment of pupil premium funding allocations.</p> |
| <p>Using the pupil premium effectively</p> | |
| <p>9. Why is there no clear guidance on how to use the grant properly? It's all left up to schools.</p> | <p>There is an extensive and growing evidence base about what works best to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. For example, the EFF 'Pupil Premium Guide', published at the same time as this advice document, recommends a tiered approach to planning pupil premium funding - cutting across teaching quality, targeted academic support and wider strategies, including those related to attendance and behaviour. The Guide can be found here.</p> |
| <p>10. Is the pupil premium intended only for improving academic outcomes, or can it be used for things like cultural enrichment?</p> | <p>There is good evidence that a good level of personal development can help with academic attainment. Where a deficit in self-efficacy is identified as a barrier to learning (for example self-organisation, motivation, confidence, concentration, aspiration, resilience) this can be addressed through proven approaches funded through the pupil premium.</p> <p>Cultural capital is widely accepted as an important part of a person's readiness for life as an adult and building it is an integral part of the pupil premium's purpose. Ofsted will look at this during inspection.</p> |

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| <p>11. Is it acceptable to use pupil Premium to plug gaps in the funding for core activities?</p> | <p>Attracting and developing high quality staff may be a core activity but, as EEF's Guide shows, it is the single most effective use of the pupil premium. So this is about using resources effectively.</p> <p>Continuous Professional Development is important for the effectiveness and motivation of all teaching and support staff.</p> |
| <p>Online reporting</p> | |
| <p>12. Do schools have to use the template provided by the Teaching Schools Council to plan their pupil premium strategy and publish it online?</p> | <p>While all local authority-maintained schools and most academies are required to publish a pupil premium statement on their school website there is no required format for this. Schools can choose to use the TSC-hosted template or can create their own form that presents the same information.</p> |
| <p>13. Do schools need to account for their pupil premium expenditure in detail, and keep itemised records to prove that all of the funding has been spent on disadvantaged pupils?</p> | <p>Schools should be guided by their internal audit and accounting requirements. The department and Ofsted do not ask for itemised records of the grant's use. Schools are required to publish online statements setting out the rationale for spending decisions and associated impact. However, this is intended to be a strategic document based on the available evidence, not an accounting tool.</p> <p>The department and Ofsted do not require pupil premium data in any specific format, and do not require information about spending on individual students. Neither Ofsted nor the department requires schools to monitor or publish information related to within-class or within-school attainment gaps. The template's detail and length should be proportionate to the size of the grant relative to the school's budget.</p> |
| <p>14. Is the online statement used by the department to help assess the effectiveness of a school's pupil premium strategy? Does the statement affect future allocations?</p> | <p>The department does not use the statement for any allocation purpose. Ofsted uses the information during visit preparation, however this is not the primary purpose of the statement and we would advise against writing the statement with Ofsted in mind.</p> <p>The statement is a local accountability publication for parents/carers and governors and should be written for them.</p> |

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| <p>15. Why does the DfE require schools to complete an online report every year? Is it because DfE does not trust school leaders to use the grant properly?</p> | <p>The online statement is for parents and governors. The department has not assessed the content of any online statements and trusts school leaders to use the grant wisely. This autonomy has been a feature of the pupil premium since its inception.</p> |
| <p>16. Why is there a requirement for schools to publish a pupil premium statement when there is no requirement to account for the rest of their funding?</p> | <p>It is right for schools to be transparent about how they are supporting pupils, and right that parents and governors have a point of reference.</p> <p>All schools need to account for their public funding in detail, though the 'Consistent Financial Reporting' and 'Academies' Accounting Returns' requirements.</p> |
| <p>17. Given the inevitable in-year changes, when is the right time to complete the online statement?</p> | <p>To give schools greater certainty in planning their expenditure, recruitment, teaching practice and staff development, we encourage schools to produce a three-year strategy for pupil premium use, with light touch annual reviews. This will enable school leaders to take a longer view of the support to be provided through the grant and align it with wider school improvement strategy.</p> <p>We recommend that the statement should be completed and reviewed at the beginning of the academic year, although it should be a 'living document' that can evolve over the course of the year.</p> |

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| <p>18. Do the department and Ofsted expect schools to ascribe impact to specific PP-funded activity?</p> | <p>It is rare for teaching staff to be able to identify a single activity that has made a step-change to the performance of a pupil or pupil group. It is more realistic to consider the cumulative effects of several activities, some of which may be pupil premium funded, in the explanation for improved months of progress or improved marks in assessment.</p> <p>From September 2019 Ofsted will not discuss pupil progress in this level of detail.</p> |
| <p>19. Given how hard it is to measure or describe non-cognitive benefits experienced by pupils, how should schools report on them?</p> | <p>The department expects non-academic use of the grant to have a good rationale. Qualitative description in place of quantitative measurement is necessary and valid when improvements in a pupil's non-cognitive skills (character, resilience, self-efficacy) are part of a plan to prepare for adult life and improve work readiness.</p> |
| <p>20. Isn't it the case that some schools can't present an accurate picture in an online statement as the general public won't understand or will get a bad impression about the challenges facing the school?</p> | <p>We understand school leaders' sensitivity to disclosing the difficult and often complex choices they have to make in discharging their responsibilities. Yet transparency is a vital element in the relationship of a school with its community, and as parental support for each pupil's learning becomes increasingly important the statement should seek to engage parents honestly.</p> |
| <p>PP Reviews, PP Plus, Service Premium, Governors, stigma</p> | |
| <p>21. What does a Pupil Premium review offer a school beyond an Ofsted-style visit to a school that has decided to think about refreshing its practice?</p> | <p>Pupil premium reviews should be collaborative ventures, where the visiting reviewer looks to learn from the commissioning school at the same time as introducing fresh thinking to the pupil premium strategy or practice.</p> <p>Professionalism and openness should be the basis of the conversation, and the action plan should be co-created by reviewer and school's Senior Leadership Team.</p> |

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| <p>22. Can local authorities do what they like with the 'pupil premium plus' it receives for children in care?</p> | <p>The Pupil Premium Plus allocated to local authorities should be passed on without delay to the child's school after consultation between the Virtual School Head and the school leadership, to support the pupil's Personal Education Plan. Full updated details were published in 2018 for schools here and local authorities here.</p> |
| <p>23. Should the views of adoptive parents be considered when schools decide how to use the pupil premium plus attracted by adopted pupils?</p> | <p>While not a requirement, taking account of the views of adoptive parents is regarded as good practice. Gathering as much information as possible about the child and their circumstances can only improve the relevance and effectiveness of any additional support the school might put in place.</p> |
| <p>24. What are the requirements around the Service Pupil Premium?</p> | <p>Children from Service families attract a separate grant – the Service Premium, currently £300 per eligible pupil. This has no connection with disadvantage; it is paid from the same budget for convenience but is intended to support the pastoral needs of children whose parents are or were in the Armed Forces. Schools' use of the Service Premium is not assessed by Ofsted nor the department. Full details are available for the Service Pupil Premium.</p> |
| <p>25. Does the stigma associated with receiving state benefits still put people off applying for free school meals?</p> | <p>We know that most schools have reduced the issue of stigma by making use of cashless systems and other methods to ensure that children who are eligible for free school meals are not identified separately.</p> <p>Schools have a legal responsibility under the Equalities Act to ensure their provision for pupil premium pupils is invisible. Care must be taken to avoid any arrangements or physical mark that can identify a pupil as disadvantaged, including at meal times, in the classroom and on school trips.</p> |

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| 26. What is the role of the governing body in a school's pupil premium use? | Governors have a key role in checking the school's pupil premium planning and, where appropriate, challenging the senior leadership over its use. Governors should champion evidence-based practice and consider the rationale in all pupil premium-related decisions. |