

A background image showing a classroom with several students in school uniforms sitting at desks, focused on their work. The lighting is bright, and the atmosphere appears to be a typical school environment.

SecEd

Guide to...

Ofsted and the Pupil Premium

Key content

- New Pupil Premium accountability measures and the implications for schools
- The new Pupil Premium Review process
- What Ofsted is looking for when it comes to Pupil Premium students and their achievement
- Which Pupil Premium strategies are the most cost-effective and value for money?
- Ofsted's new focus on the most able students
- A case study of one school's approach to the Pupil Premium

In association with

ASCL Association
of School and
College Leaders

Guide to... Ofsted and the Pupil Premium

Earlier this year, both the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted raised the stakes for schools receiving the Pupil Premium by announcing a series of measures aimed at making them more accountable for raising the attainment of the most disadvantaged children.

Since 2012, Ofsted has had a clear focus on schools' Pupil Premium spending, but from September 2013 has increased its scrutiny with notable implications for schools' judgements.

The DfE is also upping the stakes with planned changes to league tables and the announcement of the new Pupil Premium Review process for schools where the progress of disadvantaged students is not deemed good enough.

It follows the publication by the DfE of an evaluation of the Pupil Premium and how it is being spent in 1,240 schools. It claimed that while 80 per cent of secondary schools had introduced new measures for disadvantaged pupils as a result of the funding, many were not using the money to good effect or were unaware of the published evidence of approaches proven to be effective.

David Laws, the schools minister, said: "It is vital we support disadvantaged children to fulfil their potential. We introduced the Pupil Premium to give headteachers a funding boost to achieve that aim and the evaluation showed promising signs of its impact. However there is much more to be done. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is unacceptably low compared with their peers. Schools must shoulder the responsibility to reverse that and the government must help them do that as well as hold them to account."

The Pupil Premium has risen from £488 per child in 2011/12 to £623 in 2012/13 and £900 in 2013/14. In 2014/15, the Pupil Premium will be worth £2.5 billion and is to increase to £1,300 per eligible primary pupil. The 2014/15 rate for eligible secondary students is yet to be confirmed by the DfE, but is expected to stay at £900.

Ofsted inspections

From September 2013, Ofsted will place an even greater emphasis on schools' performance in driving up standards among children who are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Schools can expect to see an increased focus by inspectors on the performance and progress of these pupils, and it is very unlikely that a school will be judged to be outstanding for achievement (which would also make an overall outstanding judgement unlikely) if disadvantaged pupils are not found to be making sufficient progress.

Schools may be judged to be outstanding for achievement where the proportion of Pupil Premium students achieving the expected progress in English and mathematics is similar to or higher than their peers, or has risen dramatically in recent times.

A grading of inadequate for achievement (and also therefore for overall effectiveness) may be given in a school where Pupil Premium students make no progress and/or their attainment is consistently much lower than their peers.

Ofsted inspectors will also judge the quality of leadership and management of a school partly by how well students eligible for the Pupil Premium are performing.

Outstanding leaders will have shown that they have implemented measures resulting in the rapid progress of disadvantaged children, while an inadequate rating may be given if it is found that the progress of these students is falling further behind their peers who had similar prior attainment in English and/or mathematics.

In short, schools will be held accountable in future for the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils, the progress made by these students, and the in-school gap in achievement between these pupils and their peers.

This data is also to be included in the new-look school performance tables (see later).

Pupil Premium Review

Schools judged by Ofsted to require improvement both overall and in leadership and management, and to have significant issues regarding the attainment of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium, may be told to submit themselves to the new Pupil Premium Review process.

The school will have to commission an external Pupil Premium review, carried out by a system leader, such as a national leader of education, who has experience and expertise in tackling underachievement among disadvantaged children.

The system leader will work with the school to develop a strategy for spending the Pupil Premium. Responsibility for paying for the review will fall on the school, although they may use Pupil Premium money for this purpose.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership has published details of headteachers with a proven track record of achieving good outcomes for disadvantaged pupils on its website.

The Pupil Premium Review could occur alongside a review of governance, which usually takes place when leadership and management is judged as requiring improvement.

School league tables

Given the rises in the amount being allocated to the Pupil Premium, it is perhaps not surprising that ministers want to know how effectively schools are spending the money.

For the first time, league tables are to include general progression measures as well as Pupil Premium attainment and progress measures and information on the attainment gap in schools.

According to a DfE spokesman, the changes to performance tables will come in from December 2013 for key stage 2 and January 2014 for key stage 4.

Primary league tables will include an explicit statistic which shows the gap at Level 4 between pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium and those who are not. The statistic will be the difference between the average figures for both sets of pupils.

Similarly, at secondary level, the gap will be represented by a figure that is the difference between the number of Pupil Premium students

gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, and the number of non-Pupil Premium students who reach this benchmark.

Changes to the wording of Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook show that when judging achievement inspectors should ensure that they have taken account of pupils' starting points in terms of their prior attainment and age

Furthermore, both sets of tables will now include a column that shows rates of average attainment and progress over a three-year rolling period.

This is aimed at eliminating the concealment of poor attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in schools where there are few of them on roll, the DfE spokesman said.

Changes to the wording of Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook show that when judging achievement inspectors should ensure that they have taken account of pupils' starting points in terms of their prior attainment and age, in particular those at the lower end of the ability spectrum and the most able.

Duncan Baldwin, deputy policy director at the Association of School and College Leaders, recommends that schools also focus on the progress of different groups of Pupil Premium pupils.

He explained: "For example, there may be different strategies required for pupils who have been entitled to free school meals for six years compared with those who have recently become eligible due to a parent losing a job."

Stretching the most able pupils

A school's focus on raising attainment and closing the gap between different groups must also include appropriate provision for the most able pupils. A report, published in June by Ofsted – The Most Able Students: Are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools? – claimed that too few non-selective schools and academies had high enough expectations of their brightest students.

As a result, chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw said that Ofsted would, from now on, be “focusing and reporting more closely on the teaching and progress of the most able pupils”.

The report found that almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of all high-attaining pupils leaving primary school with Level 5 in English and mathematics did not go on to attain an A* or A grade in both these GCSE subjects in 2012 in non-selective secondary schools.

Sir Michael added: “Too many non-selective schools are failing to nurture scholastic excellence. While the best of these schools provide excellent opportunities, many of our most able students receive mediocre provision. Put simply, they are not doing well enough because their secondary schools fail to challenge and support them sufficiently from the beginning.

“I believe the term ‘special needs’ should be as relevant to the most able as it is to those who require support for their learning difficulties. Yet some of the schools visited for this survey did not even know who their most able students were. This is completely unacceptable.”

For schools, the focus on several groups of potentially underachieving children means ensuring teachers have a greater awareness of ability at year 7 and that the appropriate tracking and strategies are put in place for the duration of

their secondary education to ensure that progress is being made.

Jan Webber, inspections specialist with the Association of School and College Leaders, explained: “Previously, if you looked at a school's data and the overall proportion of A* to C grades, you might make assumptions about how well the school was doing. However this can mask the fact that some pupils could have performed better.

“Now schools will have to present that information to show the performance of an increasing number of different groups of pupils, including those who are most able.

“Previously, the feeling in some schools might have been that if you enter these pupils for maths or English a year early, and they get a B, then that's fine so they are not re-entered to achieve a higher grade. However, that approach may have to change if there is evidence to show that they are capable of getting an A or A*.

“There has been an assumption in some cases that children on free school meals come from a certain background and are less able, but all schools will now have to challenge that mind-set and have greater awareness of their potential.

“There is evidence to suggest, for example, that schools have been holding back more able mathematicians. This is something that will now be focused on even more closely by Ofsted.”

According to changes to the Subsidiary Guidance for Inspectors, Ofsted inspectors will be required to examine progress among the most able pupils in a school, “however small the numbers”.

It states: “Within this group, the progress in English and in mathematics of each different prior-attainment group should be considered and compared with that of the other pupils in the school using the tables in RAISEonline.”

Resources and further information

- Sutton Trust/EEF Pupil Premium Toolkit: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit>
- Ofsted School Inspection Handbook: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook
- Ofsted Pupil Premium resources: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/pupil-premium
- DfE Pupil Premium resources: www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium
- Pupil Premium Reviews: www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/pupilpremiumreviews.htm

Pupil Premium strategies

Most teachers have a good idea of what approaches work best for raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. However, research suggests that schools are relying too heavily on personal experience rather than concrete evidence of what works when deciding on strategies.

The Sutton Trust's Pupil Premium Toolkit, compiled in conjunction with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), details the most effective ways of spending the funding, both in terms of cost and results. Based on work carried out by the University of Durham, the toolkit is an analysis of 5,500 educational studies into strategies for improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

However, a recent study from the Sutton Trust, which asked 1,600 teachers and school leaders to rank their top three most used approaches, found that two of the cheapest and most effective ways of improving attainment – student feedback and peer-to-peer tutoring – are not commonly used.

Instead, more than half of secondary staff said early intervention projects were among their top three strategies, 41 per cent rated one-to-one tuition as a key method, and 22 per cent said increasing the number of teaching assistants was a priority – all expensive approaches.

The study focused on spending priorities for 2012/13 and found that half of secondary schools are drawing up their Pupil Premium spending based on previous experience of what works.

Only 40 per cent said they were drawing upon research evidence, and just 14 per cent said they were using the toolkit.

The toolkit lists “improving teacher feedback” as the most effective method of improving attainment and among the most cost-effective too. At an estimated cost of £100 per pupil, it is thought to add an extra eight months of progress over an academic year to a pupil's performance. However, the study suggests that just 11 per cent of schools are prioritising this among their strategies.

Meanwhile, peer-to-peer tutoring, where older pupils are paired up with younger children to work on certain aspects of school work, is thought to add

about six months of progress and costs around £200 per pupil – but only seven per cent of schools are using it.

Also top of the toolkit's list are the teaching of meta-cognition and self-regulation skills. Known as “learning to learn” skills, they include things such as self-assessment, goal-setting, reasoning and thinking. This approach is thought to cost around £100 per pupil and can yield an extra eight months' progress across a year.

Some strategies are known to be academically effective, but are also expensive. For example, early intervention programmes can cost up to £2,000 per pupil, leaving a huge gap in a school's Pupil Premium allocation, but can boost a child's progress by six months. One-to-one tuition can also add up to five months worth of progress but costs £800 per pupil.

The toolkit says that the use of teaching assistants often doesn't lead to additional progress, but emphasises that they can be effective when given “well-defined pedagogical roles or responsibility for delivering specific interventions”. However, the staffing cost is as much as £1,200 per pupil.

Homework strategies, on the other hand, cost virtually nothing and can add five months to a pupil's progress. However, progress is dependent on how it is set, with integral homework projects working better than simple “add-on” work.

Elsewhere, collaborative learning, where students work together in small groups on a particular task or project, also carries negligible cost implications and brings about five months of progress.

Reducing class size – one of the most expensive strategies since it necessitates employment of additional staff and possible reorganisation of classrooms – adds three months to progress, the same as increased parental involvement, summer schools, and outdoor adventure learning, although these have lower or varying cost implications.

Mentoring, used by many schools to raise aspirations among certain groups of students, is considered expensive at up to £850 per pupil and adds only one month of progress, the toolkit says.

Case study: All about access

How to spend Pupil Premium funding is one headache for headteachers. Another is ensuring that the school can claim for all the money to which it is entitled.

For Dr Annabel Kay, head of The Warriner School in Oxfordshire, this has become not just a funding issue, but one of access to interventions for her pupils.

“We receive about £141,000 for 110 pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium, which is approximately 10 per cent of our cohort,” she said.

“We probably should be receiving two and half times more, and we are working hard with parents to encourage them not to feel embarrassed registering for free school meals for their children. This still seems to be something they are concerned about.

“It is not just about the money, but about making sure that children get the support they need. But, wherever possible, we make sure that all pupils who need it are getting interventions, and not just those who attract the funding.”

The bulk of Pupil Premium funding at The Warriner School goes on staffing. As of this term, Dr Kay has employed two graduates who will work as role models and mentors to young people in maths and English, both in the classroom and running after-school activities. In some situations, they may take pupils out of normal lessons for specific activities.

“While they are intended to support interventions, the aim is that they will do so by inspiring young people through their dynamic personalities and different approaches to doing things,” she explained.

The school also employs a higher level teaching assistant for literacy and numeracy to do targeted work with those who need it, and a student mentor – an unqualified teacher who assists students with issues such as time-management and revision skills.

What is left tends to be spent on bespoke interventions and activities that may involve individual students.

For example, one particularly able girl, who comes from a family with no previous experience of higher education, was sent on a course at Oxford Brookes University to encourage her to consider doing a degree.

The funding may also be used to buy particular resources, such as revision guides or books. “Some pupils have no books at home, but we know that where children read they perform better at school,” Dr Kay said. The funding has been used to create a quiet, secluded corner of the library where they can read in peace without being seen by their peers. “For some of our pupils it isn’t cool to like books, so it’s somewhere students who want to read can go and be out of sight. It’s a bit like being in a tent.”

At 20 per cent the school has a high proportion of pupils with SEN, so it is seen as normal by the children to need some form of intervention. “Every child may need some help and support at some point, so being called out of a lesson for an alternative activity is a well-established practice here.”

In recent months, Dr Kay and her staff have overhauled and updated the school’s data systems in preparation for the increased scrutiny that Pupil Premium will bring. The new system will flag up children in vulnerable groups and, at the click of a button, staff will be able to see how much progress a child is making – and whether they are on track.

“It is now a lot more sophisticated. We have always been pretty good at providing interventions but not always as adept on where best these should be used. That will now change.

“I can now check exactly how many boys in year 7 we have on free school meals, how many are on track making progress and who needs intervention. We could not do this before.”

Dr Kay is aware that the strategies used at The Warriner School do not tally with those deemed most effective in the Sutton Trust’s Toolkit, but she believes there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

“We have never been able to implement peer-mentoring, for example, because, until this term, we have not had a 6th form. But this is something we can look at in the future.

“Every school has to make difficult decisions based on their own experiences and the needs of pupils. Ofsted inspectors, when they inspect schools, need to understand that this level of scrutiny is new to us and that we are all still learning about what works best.”