

Pupil Premium – Ofsted Report

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Summary

Ofsted has published [The pupil premium: an update](#) on how well schools in England are using the extra funding they receive through the pupil premium to raise the attainment of their most disadvantaged pupils.

The report concludes that it is too early to find any significant narrowing of the gap nationally between more affluent and poorer children, but it does find schools are spending the extra funding more effectively than before. School leaders are overall demonstrating a strong commitment to closing the attainment gap, targeting interventions and putting in place robust tracking systems.

Ofsted believes that there is “*a strong association*” between a school’s overall effectiveness and the impact of the pupil premium. The attainment gap was found to be closing in all 86 ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ schools; while in 12 the gap had narrowed to virtually nothing. In these schools, governing bodies are taking strategic responsibility for ensuring the extra funding improves teaching and support for eligible pupils. However, weak leadership and governance remain an obstacle “*in a significant minority of schools*” and in particular in those judged to be ‘inadequate’ for overall effectiveness.

The most common use of the extra funding is additional teaching staff, booster classes, reading support, ‘raising aspirations’ programmes and the use of ‘learning mentors’; all typically focused on English and maths. Many schools also provide after-school, weekend and holiday sessions.

The report found wide variations in attainment across local authority areas at Key Stage 2 and 4; with London boroughs having well above average proportions of free school meals pupils achieving five or more good GCSEs.

Briefing in full

Ofsted has published [The pupil premium: an update](#) on how well schools in England are using the extra funding they receive through the pupil premium to raise the attainment of their most disadvantaged pupils.

It is the third in a series of Ofsted reports establishing the progress being made by schools in using the pupil premium. The first report in 2012, [The pupil premium](#), found that only one in 10 school leaders had used the extra funding to change significantly the way pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were supported; with the funding typically used to maintain or enhance existing provision rather than introduce new initiatives. The second report in 2013 [The pupil premium: how schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement](#) found that more schools were using their extra funding well, carefully targeting it to raise

attainment for eligible pupils. Nevertheless, some still were spending it on interventions that were having little meaningful impact.

Background on the Pupil Premium

Introduced in 2011, the pupil premium provides additional school funding for those children from reception to year 11 classed as having a deprived background. In the most part, the Premium is paid according to the number of pupils registered as eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those children whose parent(s) serve in the armed forces since 2011 (sometimes referred to as the 'Service Premium').

Since its introduction, there have been a number of changes to the premium funding levels increasing from £430 per pupil in 2011-12 to £1,300 per primary school pupil or £935 per secondary pupil in 2014-15. In 2014-15 the premium for looked after children was increased even further to £1,900, often referred to as the pupil premium plus; while those whose parents are in the armed forces currently receive £300 (up from £200 in 2011-12). Schools will receive £2.5 billion through the Pupil Premium funding in 2014-15. The 2013 Spending Review announced that the total Pupil Premium budget will be protected in real terms in 2015-16.

The criteria have also changed over time in extending the Premium to:

- to children who had been eligible for free school meals in the past six years and not just those currently eligible;
- to all looked after children and not just those who have been looked after for more than six months;
- to those children who have been adopted from care, or leave care under a special guardianship or residence order; and
- to those children whose parents have died in service and those who were eligible previously but whose parents are no longer in the armed forces or are divorced.

Since January 2013, Ofsted inspections has placed greater emphasis on how schools use their Pupil Premium funding; inspection reports now include a commentary on the attainment and progress of pupils who are eligible for the extra funding and evaluate how this compares with other pupils. According to Ofsted, *"Head teachers know that their school will not receive a positive judgement unless they demonstrate that they are focused on improving the outcomes for pupils eligible for the pupil premium. For example, in a number of previously outstanding secondary schools that have declined to good or below, inspectors have judged that the pupil premium funding was not being effectively spent."*

Schools are also held to account through performance tables which include data on attainment, including the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers ('attainment gap'). They are also required to publish details online each year on how they are using the pupil premium and the impact it is having.

From September 2013, inspectors have been able to recommend a review of the Pupil Premium spending. Ofsted plan to report on the effectiveness of these external reviews in early 2015.

Progress made by schools

Overall Ofsted found that the pupil premium is making a difference in many schools, especially where there is 'good' or 'outstanding' leadership and a school-wide commitment to raising achievement for eligible pupils with school leadership teams routinely paying more attention to the needs of this particular group of pupils. Across the 151 school inspection reports examined by Ofsted the following picture emerged:

- The attainment gap was closing in all 86 of the schools judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' for overall effectiveness and rapidly in a fifth of these school; while in 12 there was virtually no difference in attainment. However, there was a small proportion of 'good' schools where action was required as the gap was closing slowly.
- The gap was also closing in around two-thirds of the 50 schools judged to be 'requiring improvement' however in these schools the rate of improvement was often inconsistent across year groups. In others the improvement had been more discernable and recent increases in attainment which had been achieved after a period of "*stubborn poor performance*" and often linked to changes in senior leadership or governance arrangements.
- In general poor progress was being made in the 15 schools that were judged as 'inadequate' for overall effectiveness; though in a few of these schools while the performance of FSM pupils was still too low, it was better than their peers.

Many schools are spending their pupil premium funding more effectively

Although use of the pupil premium funding is generally tailored to the age-specific needs of their pupils, Ofsted found no major differences in the types of spending seen in primary and secondary schools (see table below). There was also little difference in the types of spending in the best schools compared with those judged to be 'requiring improvement' or to be 'inadequate'. The major difference was the extent to which resources are carefully targeted at the types of activities that best meet the needs of their pupils and the rigour with which these activities are monitored, evaluated and amended.

Use of the Pupil Premium across <u>all</u> schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional staff including teachers and teaching assistants • One-to-one support and small group tuition • Booster classes, reading support, raising aspiration programmes • Reduce class sizes • After-school clubs and activities and financial support for educational visits • Typically focused on English and maths 	
Use in Secondary Schools	Use in Primary Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to employ extra teachers rather than teacher assistants • Employing 'learning mentors' to support pupils' academic and personal development • Provide after-school, weekend and holiday sessions • Support for English and maths catch-up targeted at Year 7 but also continued across Key Stages 3 and 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to employ extra teachers assistants rather than teachers • Employing specialists to provide specialist support for developing pupils' language and communication skills

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Schools that are committed to 'closing the gap' and that have robust tracking systems are showing most improvement

The most effective school leadership teams were found to be providing an overall package of support that was comprehensive, well-integrated and responsive to changing needs combining whole-school, targeted and specialist support taking into account the needs of all pupils. They did this through:

- Identifying pupils' specific needs accurately and promptly so that low attainment can be tackled at the very earliest stage.
- Tracking the progress of eligible pupils meticulously and make sensible amendments to the support they provide.
- Making every effort to ensure that eligible pupils have access to the best teachers and are supported by skilled and well-trained additional adults whose work is closely monitored and thoroughly evaluated.
- A string commitment by staff and governors to doing everything possible to remove any barriers that might hinder a pupil's development.
- Being highly ambitious by responding to what they know to be good practice, while ensuring that their vision for improvement is clear.
- Making informed choices on spending the extra funding, on a yearly and flexible basis, that matches the particular needs of their pupils.
- Continuing with interventions that have been successful, while amending their practice where it has been less successful.
- Ensuring that pupils catch up with the basics of literacy and numeracy and offering support, where necessary, to improve pupils' attendance, behaviour, confidence and resilience.

Strong governance is critical to schools' successful use of the pupil premium funding to accelerate progress and narrow gaps in attainment

Effective governors and governing bodies:

- Are ambitious for their poorest pupils and hold leaders to account for their decisions and for the impact of their pupil premium initiatives.
- Are fully involved in deciding how the extra funding is used, finances tightly controlled and with spending decisions closely linked to priorities in the school improvement plan.
- Monitor their school's effectiveness in closing the attainment gap between different groups of pupils.
- Have comprehensive knowledge of published data and are skilled in using these data to check progress and hold staff to account, while collecting first-hand evidence for example by meeting with students and teachers.

Weak leadership and governance is an obstacle in too many schools

Common weaknesses in schools where gaps in attainment are not closing quickly enough:

- Insufficient analysis of the learning needs of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- Where available information about progress was not being used well enough to ensure that the funding was appropriately targeted.
- Analysis of pupils' progress had not been shared fully with teachers consequently they were unable to plan work that met the needs of pupils.

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In the very weakest performing schools, Ofsted said that there was a “worrying lack of focus” on eligible pupils. In these schools, a widespread failure in leadership and governance had normally been identified. Leaders had not prioritised raising attainment of eligible pupils, while poorly informed or unskilled governors had not held leaders to account.

Raising attainment and closing the gap

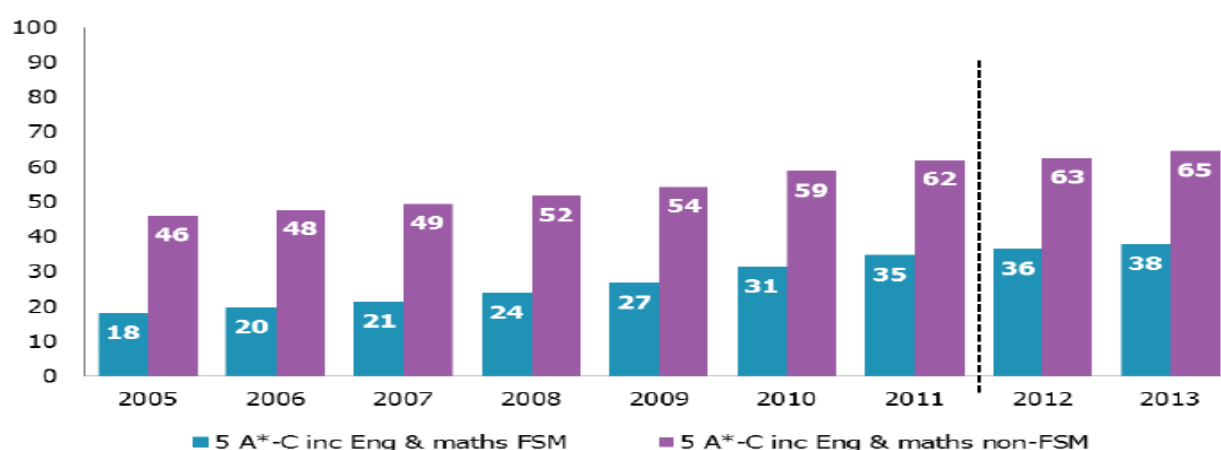
Overall attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM pupils) has improved at a similar rate to other pupils and so the ‘attainment gap’ has closed only slightly.

Performance at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013:

- 60% of FSM Pupils achieved level 4 or better in reading, writing and maths compared with 79% other pupils, an increase 1% for both on 2012 figures, but the attainment gap of 19% still remains the same.
- This was replicated in most regions, with the attainment for FSM pupils the highest in London (69%) and lowest in the East of England (54%). The national average in England was 60%.

Performance at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2013:

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 attaining five or more GCSEs grades A* to C including English and mathematics, by free school meals eligibility, 2005–13



Source: Department for Education

- The attainment gap (27%) remains unchanged since 2012; with 38% of FSM pupils achieving 5 GCSEs A-C including English and maths compared with 65% for other pupils.
- Over the longer term, there has been a pattern of improvement since 2005, but although attainment has gradually improved for all pupils the attainment gap has only narrowed at a very slow rate. See diagram above taken from the report (the dotted line represents when the pupil premium was introduced).
- The fact that the gap has been narrowing before and after the introduction of the pupil premium is Ofsted say is not surprising given how recently it was introduced believing it will take time for the full impact of the policy to be seen in national data.
- The levels of attainment of FSM pupils were highest in London (51%), significantly above the national average of 37.9%, and the lowest in the South West and East of England (32%). Increasing the most from a low base in the South East (3%) and least in the East of England.

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The picture across the difference local authorities for Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2013:

- There is “considerable variations” across local authority areas in the proportion of FSM pupils achieving expected levels at Key Stages 2 and 4 and the rates of improvement from year to year.
- The national level of FSM pupils achieving five good GCSEs including English and maths was 37.9% in 2013, while the highest and lowest levels in individual local authority areas were:

Local authority/Region		% of FSM Students attaining GCSE benchmark		Change between 2012 and 2013
		2012	2013	
TOP FIVE PERFORMERS				
Kensington and Chelsea	London	76.8	76.7	-0.1
Westminster	London	65.3	62.2	-3.1
Southwark	London	51.7	60.1	8.4
Tower Hamlets	London	59.4	60.0	0.6
Lambeth	London	56.1	59.5	3.4
BOTTOM FIVE PERFORMERS				
Northumberland	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	26.1	25.2	-0.9
North Lincolnshire	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	31.9	24.6	-7.3
South Gloucestershire	South West	32.7	24.4	-8.3
Portsmouth	South East	28.0	22.6	-5.4
Barnsley	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	22.5	21.8	-0.7

Comment

The Pupil Premium has, and continues to be, a dynamic policy with its introduction in 2011 followed by a series of changes to its scope as well as increasing the amount of funding dedicated to it (see earlier background section of this briefing). Around 29% secondary school and 27% of primary school pupils are eligible; with the additional funding worth just over 6% of schools funding (£2.5 billion each year). An average sized secondary school with the average number of eligible pupils will receive around £200,000 in additional funding per year, equivalent to five full time teaching staff.

Further changes are planned; [schools will get extra funding this financial year for pupils adopted from care before 30 December 2005](#), as well as after as at present. [Plans are also being made to extend it from April 2015 to disadvantaged 3 and 4 years olds](#) with a premium worth £300 per child

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enabling nurseries to employ qualified staff or specialists in activities like speech and language to give an extra focus on basic skills.

The DfE is currently [consulting on changes to the schools admissions code](#) that would give all state schools the freedom - though they will not be compelled - to give priority in admissions to children eligible for the Pupil Premium. Academies and free schools are already able to do this. Under these proposals, primary schools will also be allowed to give priority to children eligible for Pupil Premium who attend a nursery that is part of their school.

This move is likely to prove controversial if it means relatively wealthier and articulate parents find it more difficult to get their child into the school of their choice, and one which could be highly significant for the future of the Pupil Premium. The policy will be exposed in a way that it was not previously, testing whether all parents support additional funding and teaching support being providing to other pupils in their child's class, as well as priority in admissions. While parents generally accept extra resources being devoted to those pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, will this be the case for pupils on free school meals where much larger proportions of the pupil population are involved?

DfE sees the link between free school meals eligibility, both current and recent, and underachievement as being very strong. They also value the ability to identify pupils, which is not the case with other deprivation indicators. But while it is also easy collect and is updated yearly DfE accepts that free school meal eligibility under reports the actual level of deprivation estimating that 14% of pupils are entitled to free meals but are not claiming them. In addition, some pupils may be significantly affected by disadvantage, but may not be eligible for free school meals, for example young carers. Equally, we should not assume that all FSM pupils underperform. Some will be from high achieving families disadvantaged by circumstance such as temporary parental unemployment. Who is and who is not eligible is likely to come under scrutiny when a popular school changes its admissions arrangements.

At a national level the policy's impact will be a key factor in winning the argument. However, Ofsted cannot find evidence that the Premium is making a radical difference to educational achievement of poorer pupils. That is understandable given that it is still early days. But it is an uphill task, as eligible pupils will need to make faster progress than their peers if the gap is to narrow. Therefore, whoever is in Government next summer when Ofsted reports again will be hoping to see some clearer and stronger evidence that the extra funding is indeed making a real difference.

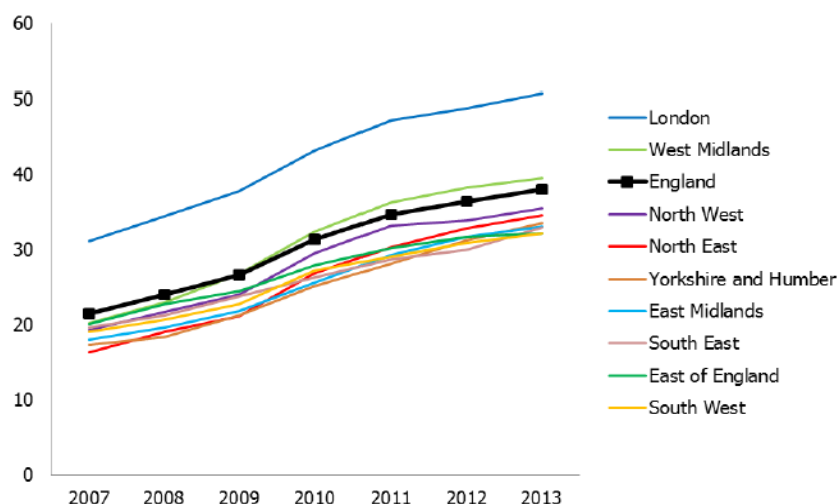
What is certainly evidenced is the considerable variation across local authority areas in how many pupils achieve expected levels. Pupils who are eligible for free schools meals in Barnsley, Portsmouth and South Gloucestershire, North Lincolnshire and Northumberland have attainment levels less than half found in Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth. Ofsted are right that such a 'post code lottery', for pupils with similar backgrounds, is not acceptable.

Going through the league table provided in the report, what stands out is that 23 of the top 25 local authority areas in attaining the GCSE benchmark are London Boroughs. While in five London Boroughs deprived children are achieving above or in line with the national figure for all children. That is no accident.

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Since the introduction of the [London Challenge](#) in 2003 schools in London and secondary school in particular have performed better and improved at a faster rate than schools in the rest of

Figure 5: Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at the end of Key Stage 4 attaining five or more GCSEs grades A* to C including English and mathematics, by region, 2007–13



Source: Department for Education

England. (See diagram left taken from the Ofsted report). Although funding for the London Challenge was cut three years ago, results have kept rising. It seems the improvement had developed its own momentum.

No wonder notable figures such [Sir Michael Wilshaw](#) and [Tristram Hunt](#) and the [Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission](#) are recommending the reintroduction of the London Challenge. If that was to happen, a Government faced with a backlash from parents whose children are stuck in 'adequate' schools and are not directly benefitting from the pupil

premium would have a more defensible position. (The London Challenge was expanded between 2008 and 2010 to include local authority areas in Black Country and Greater Manchester). However see the recent analysis produced Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (see [Related Briefings](#)) which finds the improvements in London schools can be explained by the Literacy and Numeracy strategies, and not the London Challenge.

Going forward the policy is likely to be developed further as each of the main political parties make decisions on their respective policies post 2015 and next May's General Election.

The Liberal Democrats want to develop the Premium so that the level of funding varies depending on the extent of deprivation and the individual circumstance of each child. Allowing a wider range of existing funding intended to tackle deprivation to be routed the Pupil Premium and as a consequence increasing accountability and transparency, as well as providing for more accurate targeting of resources; but they admit this would make the policy considerably more complicated. This will be debated at the Party's conference in October.

Meanwhile Lib Dem President, [Tim Farron](#), is also backing calls for extending the pupil premium to young carers who as group are said to have significantly lower attainment levels at GCSE and are twice as likely to be 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' between 16 and 18.

Labour are likely to continue to back the Pupil Premium, though it may review the level and the use of the extra funding to ensure it is sufficiently targeted. This may mean moving away from it being based on free school meals eligibility and taking in a wider set of factors. Labour are also supportive of plans to change the Schools Admissions Code to allow all schools to prioritise those disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium. But would go further and give local areas the powers to direct all schools to admit hard-to-place children. They also argue for a clear local

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accountability process, so that children, young people and their parents are assured that there is not a postcode lottery for services. Again, the position will become clearer after their conference in September.

The Conservatives supported the idea of the pupil premium in their 2010 manifesto and while they have not spoken of their post-2015 plans, they are unlikely to walk away from the policy. In line with their 'payment by results' public service reform approach they could possibly start to tie a proportion of premium funding to school success in meeting attainment measures, including closing the gap, and providing schools with additional funding that they can use to reward the staff responsible or to make other improvements within the school.

External links

[The pupil premium: an update – Ofsted Report \(2014\)](#)

[The Pupil Premium: how schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement – Ofsted Report \(2013\)](#)

[The pupil premium – Ofsted Report \(2012\)](#)

Related briefings

[Education Services Grant 2015-16](#) (August 2014)

[Lessons from London schools – Government research](#) (July 2014)

School Admissions Code – Consultation – to follow

School funding 2015-16 – to follow

For further information, please visit www.lgiu.org.uk or email john.fowler@lgiu.org.uk