



Department  
for Education

# Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders

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## Purpose of this document

This document is non-statutory guidance for school leaders and those involved in managing the use of pupil premium in schools, such as academy trust leaders, trustees and governors. It is to help you make best use of pupil premium funding and ensure that you adhere to the [conditions of grant](#), including:

- using pupil premium in line with the ‘menu of approaches’
- publishing a strategy statement on your school website by 31 December using the DfE’s [strategy statement template](#) (if you have a multi-year strategy, you must still publish an updated version each year)

It may also be useful for parents and local authorities who want to know how schools can use their pupil premium effectively, and understand the related reporting requirements.

There is a separate guidance document which gives a brief overview of the [pupil premium](#) for school staff, parents and those interested in the pupil premium.

The EEF [guide to the pupil premium](#) complements this document. We encourage all schools to use it in developing their pupil premium strategies.

## Purpose of pupil premium

Opportunity for children and young people is too often defined by their background. This government is determined to do more to improve the life chances of our most disadvantaged children and break the link between background and future success. The pupil premium grant plays a critical role in supporting the work of government's Opportunity Mission, to drive high and rising standards and ensure every child, no matter their background, can achieve and thrive.

Pupil premium is additional funding for state-funded schools in England to help raise the educational outcomes of disadvantaged 5-16-year-olds. We know that disadvantaged pupils, on average, achieve worse educational outcomes due to the additional challenges they face. The disadvantage gap index, which summarises the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, generally narrowed between 2011-2018, though the pandemic resulted in much of that progress being reversed. The disadvantage gap index has begun to narrow again at both [primary](#) and [secondary](#) level but remains at levels similar to those seen in 2013/14 for Key Stage 2 and 2011/12 for Key Stage 4.

Pupil premium supports the aim of narrowing the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This will help to break the link between children's outcomes and those of their parents. Prioritising early education is critical to this. Roughly 40% of the overall gap between disadvantaged 16-year-olds and their peers has already emerged by age five, and these differences continue to widen as children move through the education system.

Schools should use their pupil premium to address the specific challenges their disadvantaged pupils face, through high-quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies to help pupils to attend, belong and succeed. Evidence such as that from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) shows that these approaches can accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, resulting in higher attainment.

The EEF provides evidence-based guidance to support schools to spend pupil premium effectively, including through its [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), suite of [guidance reports](#), and [pupil premium guide](#).

## Using pupil premium

Schools must ensure that the funding is used in line with the [pupil premium conditions of grant](#). This includes ensuring the grant is used to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and that the approaches they select are informed by evidence.

Pupil premium is not a personal budget for individual pupils. It is for schools to decide how to allocate the funding, after assessing the needs of their disadvantaged cohort and evidence about which approaches are likely to be effective in their context.

Schools can use pupil premium to support pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria, but have other identified needs, such as those who have or have had a social worker, or who act as a carer. It can also be used to support pupils that schools believe to be economically disadvantaged but have not been identified as pupil premium eligible, and on whole class approaches that benefit all pupils, for example high-quality teaching.

To ensure pupil premium is focused on effective approaches that improve the educational outcomes of pupils, schools (including local authority virtual schools) must spend their pupil premium grant on evidence-informed activities in line with DfE's 'menu of approaches', as set out below.

Schools must also publish an updated strategy statement by 31 December each year, using the DfE template. You can see reporting requirements on page 17 of this guidance.

## Menu of approaches

In line with the [conditions of grant](#), any activity that you fund using pupil premium must fall under an approach listed in the table. The menu has been developed in line with the EEF's tiered approach, as set out in its [guide to the pupil premium](#). The 'menu of approaches' can be seen on the next page.

You should select approaches from the menu as you follow steps 1 to 3 of the 5-step approach on pages 9-13 of this guidance. The EEF's [Evidence Brief: Using research evidence to support your spending decisions](#) signposts to evidence-informed resources related to each strand of the menu.

When selecting approaches from the menu, you should also consider how you are using the funding to support:

- Effective identification of pupil needs, for example through diagnostic assessment
- Successful implementation of approaches
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of approaches

In exceptional circumstances, and where this is necessary to overcome specific barriers to pupil attainment, schools may use this funding on items not included on the list, for example to meet acute needs around pupil equipment to ensure readiness to learn.

## The menu of approaches

You should select approaches from the menu, informed by your diagnosis of pupil need and what the evidence says is effective for improving their attainment, following steps 1 to 3 of the 5-step approach.

3 tiers	Approaches you can implement
<b>High-quality teaching</b>	Developing high-quality teaching, assessment and a broad and balanced, knowledge-based curriculum which responds to the needs of pupils
	Professional development to support implementation of approaches, for example, training provided by a DfE validated systematic synthetic phonics programme, mastery based approaches to teaching or feedback
	Mentoring and coaching for teachers
	Supporting the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, for example, providing cover time to undertake professional development such as National Professional Qualifications (NPQs)
	Technology and other resources that support high-quality teaching, for example software to support diagnostic assessment
<b>Targeted academic support</b>	One to one and small group tuition
	Peer tutoring
	Targeted interventions to support language development, literacy and numeracy
	Targeted interventions and resources to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils with SEND
	Teaching assistant deployment and interventions, for example by supporting high-quality provision within the classroom or delivering structured interventions
	Extended school time, including for summer schools
<b>Wider strategies</b>	Supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs
	Supporting attendance
	Extra-curricular activities, including sport, outdoor activities, arts and culture, for example music lessons and school trips
	Breakfast clubs and meal provision
	Communicating with and supporting parents

## Further information on key approaches

The specific issues impacting disadvantaged pupils' educational outcomes will vary, but some of the most common challenges include attendance and English and maths attainment.

This section provides links to resources to support you in addressing these challenges when planning your pupil premium strategy, including through tutoring and effective early intervention.

### Attendance strategies

Reduced attendance following the pandemic continues to be a major challenge. Absence rates for all children increased post-pandemic, but more so for disadvantaged pupils. There are significant costs associated with poor attendance rates including lower attainment, reduced earning potential and poorer mental health and wellbeing. Schools should consider using their pupil premium to support improving attendance, where appropriate, including tackling underlying causes of absence.

- Approaches to support attendance are outlined in the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance](#) and in the [Attendance Toolkit](#).
- The EEF has produced a [supporting school attendance resource](#) structured around six evidence-informed themes to support school leaders and attendance teams.

### High-quality teaching of English and maths

English and maths are key to pupils accessing the whole curriculum and it is crucial that all pupils have the right foundations to achieve and thrive in their education and later life.

- DfE's [Reading Framework](#) provides guidance for schools aimed at improving the teaching of reading from Reception to Key Stage 3, including for pupils who may need more support to learn to read proficiently.
- English Hubs can offer help for primary schools in how to best prioritise and support the lowest attainers in reading. English Hubs can also offer guidance on [choosing a systematic synthetic phonics programme](#) that is best for your school. Use the '[Find your English Hub](#)' function on this website to contact the Hub responsible for your area.
- There is non-statutory maths curriculum guidance for [primary](#) and [Key Stage 3](#).
- Maths Hubs help schools and colleges in England to improve mathematics education, including through [Continuous Professional Development projects](#). You can find your local Maths Hub lead school on the '[Find your Hub](#)' page on the NCETM website.

- EEF's [Promising Programmes](#) lists a number of programmes that have shown promising results for raising attainment, including a range of reading, oracy and mathematics interventions.

## Tutoring

Tutoring is an effective and well-evidenced targeted approach to increase the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

- The department's [Tutoring in education settings guidance](#) provides guidance on how to plan and deliver tutoring. It also includes further resources on tutoring.
- The EEF publish resources to support school leaders implement tutoring, including their [Making a Difference with Effective Tutoring booklet](#).

## Supporting reception year pupils

Prioritising early learning within a school prevents attainment gaps from establishing and widening in later years.

- The department's [non-statutory curriculum guidance on EYFS, Development Matters](#), provides an overview of effective curriculum and expectations in the early years, including reception.
- Kindred Squared's [definition of school readiness](#) can be used for schools to support parents ahead of their child starting reception, freeing up time for teaching when children start school.
- The department's [child development training](#) and [NPQ in Early Years Leadership](#) is available to reception teachers and provides training on best practice in early years and early years leadership.
- The [Nuffield Early Language Intervention \(NELI\) for reception](#) is an evidence-based programme which can lead to children making up to four months additional progress on oral skills. DfE funds free language screening via this programme.



## Developing and delivering an effective strategy

This section explains how you can make the best use of your pupil premium through a '5-step' approach:

1. Identifying the challenges faced by your school's disadvantaged pupils
2. Using evidence
3. Developing an effective strategy
4. Delivering and monitoring your strategy
5. Evaluating and sustaining your strategy

Effective implementation is important for making best use of pupil premium. You should treat implementation as a process to be executed over a series of stages, not as an event. The EEF's [guide to implementation](#) supports schools to embed an evidence-informed approach to implementation.

### Step 1: Identifying the challenges faced by your school's disadvantaged pupils

Diagnostic assessment, using data from internal and external assessments, is important for identifying the specific areas where intervention and support will improve each pupil's academic progress.

You should also draw on data to develop an understanding of any non-academic challenges that pupils are facing which negatively affect their education and readiness to engage with education, for example:

- attendance and levels of persistent and severe absence
- behaviour incidences and exclusions data
- wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding concerns

When identifying the main challenges pupils are facing, it is important to consider the underlying academic and non-academic causes of them. For example, low attainment may be an outcome of poor early language development. This is further set out in the [EEF's guide to implementation report](#), which provides advice on how to identify pupil needs and their root causes.

When identifying challenges, you should draw on a range of data sources, including internal assessments and [performance data](#), discussions with teachers and support staff, and engagement with pupils and families.

When diagnosing the needs of your disadvantaged pupils, you should bear in mind that you do not have to spend your pupil premium so that it solely benefits eligible pupils. You can use it to support other pupils with identified needs, for example those who have or have had a social worker or are a carer. You can also use it on whole class approaches, for example high-quality teaching, which will benefit all pupils.

You should diagnose the challenges facing higher attaining disadvantaged pupils to help you identify how to help them make further progress. Evidence has shown that high-achieving disadvantaged pupils at Key Stage 2 are more likely than their peers to fall behind by Key Stage 4. You may wish to consider the Sutton Trust's report, '[Social Mobility: The Next Generation – Lost potential at age 16](#)'.

## Step 2: Using evidence

Using evidence is vital to inform your decision-making and wider pupil premium strategy planning.

To support schools to make best use of their pupil premium, we have introduced a 'menu of approaches', based on the evidence of how best to improve attainment. The [conditions of grant](#) require schools to spend their pupil premium in line with the menu, which can be found on pages 5-6 of this guidance. Using pupil premium in line with the menu will help you to develop an effective pupil premium strategy.

It is for school leaders to decide how to use their pupil premium within the framework set out in the menu. You do not have to allocate pupil premium to every menu item; instead, you should focus on approaches that best address the challenges identified in step 1.

When using the pupil premium to purchase external programmes, you should consider programmes which are well-supported by evidence, including from the EEF's list of Promising Programmes, and assess their suitability for your context.

You should consider a range of external research evidence, alongside your own knowledge of your pupils. External evidence can help you to better understand:

- which specific activities have been found to be the most effective in addressing the types of challenge that your pupils face
- how to successfully implement your chosen activities
- the relative impact of different approaches

For further guidance about using evidence, see the EEF website for:

- the EEF's guide to [using pupil premium effectively](#)
- an [evidence brief](#), which signposts to high-quality evidence and practical resources for each approach in the menu

- the EEF’s concise guide [to using research evidence](#)
- the [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), which provides an accessible summary of education evidence
- [guidance reports](#), which provide a summary of evidence on specific approaches
- a list of [Promising Programmes](#), which outlines programmes that show promise for raising attainment

### Step 3: Developing an effective strategy

You should develop a strategy for effective use of your pupil premium, that:

- addresses the challenges within your control that are having the most significant impact on disadvantaged pupils’ outcomes
- combines evidence about ‘what works’ with your knowledge of your setting
- sets ambitious but realistic target outcomes

The DfE requires that all schools with more than 5 pupil premium pupils publish their strategy on their school website, using DfE’s pupil premium [strategy statement](#) template. The format of the template reflects the considerations above and should help you to develop your strategy.

The DfE recommends that your strategy covers three academic years. If it does so, you must still review your strategy and renew your school’s published statement each year.

The template and the evidence-informed menu of approaches align with the EEF’s tiered approach to strategy planning, as set out in EEF’s [guide to the pupil premium](#). This helps schools to allocate spending across three key areas:

- developing high-quality teaching
- providing targeted academic support
- tackling non-academic barriers to academic success

The EEF recommends that approaches which support high-quality teaching should be a top priority for pupil premium spending, but the exact balance of spending between categories will vary depending on the specific needs of your pupils and factors such as the size of your pupil premium cohort.

You should consider how your strategy aligns with other strategic school improvement documents, such as your school improvement plan, to ensure that addressing disadvantage is a whole-school approach.

Evidence suggests that engaging stakeholders in strategy development is a key driver of effective implementation (see page 9 of [EEF’s implementation guide](#)). Building an implementation team around your strategy will give it the best chance for success. You should consult governors, trustees and academy trust leaders (as appropriate to your setting), and relevant staff members when developing your strategy – for example, the

designated safeguarding lead, the designated teacher for previously looked-after children, and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). You should also consult relevant external partners, such as the Virtual School Head.

For academy trusts, if common challenges are identified across multiple academies, trusts may wish to pool pupil premium to fund activities that support them. Trusts must ensure that any such approach reflects the needs of each school's disadvantaged pupil cohort, and each academy within the trust must still publish a separate pupil premium strategy statement each year.

## Step 4: Delivering and monitoring your strategy

### Planning delivery

Key considerations when planning the delivery of your strategy should include:

- **Coherence with curriculum:** how to integrate any planned activity with the curriculum, and ensure that pupils receiving targeted support do not miss out on core curriculum content
- **Collective responsibility:** how to ensure that all staff promote the principles and ethos of your strategy, and ensure that professional development requirements are taken into account
- **Targeting and monitoring:** which pupils will benefit from which activity, when and in what group size, and what data and resources will be required to monitor the impact of each activity
- **External providers (if using them):** what internal resources and capacity are required to make the most of any external provision

You may wish to consult the [EEF's guide to implementation](#), to develop and embed evidence-informed approaches and for practical advice about how to unite values, understanding and skills around your strategy.

### Supporting delivery

Once your strategy is in place, you should continue to ensure it is being delivered effectively. Key considerations for supporting delivery are:

- **Monitoring to drive improvements:** for monitoring to improve implementation and pupil outcomes, data and insights on progress need to be shared, understood, and used. Sufficient time and opportunities should be created for staff to reflect on implementation data and feedback, and for implementation leaders to identify and tackle problems. Leaders and staff should reflect jointly on how well the strategy is being delivered, and opportunities for improvements
- **Supporting staff during initial attempts and implementation:** a key role for leaders during the delivery of your pupil premium strategy is to support staff

wellbeing, manage expectations, and encourage buy-in. There is evidence that staff wellbeing can be supported throughout implementation by engaging people in decisions, giving teachers time to collaborate and plan, focusing on realistic goals, providing extra time and support, and discussing wellbeing with staff

- **Reinforcing the strategy:** this could include ongoing professional development of staff delivering elements of your pupil premium strategy, reminders and communications to your staff about the importance of the strategy and how everyone can contribute to your aims

## Step 5: Evaluating and sustaining your strategy

It is important to specify monitoring and evaluation measures when planning your strategy, rather than after it has launched. This helps ensure that your strategy begins with clear outcomes in mind and reduces bias when evaluating impact.

When evaluating the impact of your approaches, you should:

- measure success based on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils such as attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- implement a robust and transparent evaluation framework and report outcomes against this
- consider the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes needed to achieve your strategy objectives
- ensure that evaluation is an ongoing process – strategies that have been effective in one year may not continue to be effective the next

When evaluating impact, you should not:

- use data that does not focus on pupil outcomes
- base evaluation solely on the perceptions of those delivering the activity
- use vague intended outcomes, which make an accurate assessment of improvements more difficult

The outcomes of your evaluation should inform your decision on whether to sustain or stop each activity. For further information about making these decisions, see pages 45-46 of the [EEF's implementation guidance](#).

Even where evaluation data suggests a strategy is successful, it is particularly important to continue monitoring implementation. Enthusiasm for approaches may reduce in subsequent years and additional professional development and resources are likely to be required for new and existing staff to maintain successful outcomes.

## Additional guidance for pupil premium plus

Pupil premium plus refers to the portion of the pupil premium grant for children who are looked-after by the local authority or were previously looked-after by a local authority or other state care. This includes children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales.

Looked-after and previously looked-after children achieve significantly poorer outcomes than non-looked after children. In many cases the impact of pre-care and care experience can be a significant barrier to their educational achievement. To help close the attainment gap between looked-after children and their peers, the government has introduced a number of measures, including the pupil premium plus for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

As with the main pupil premium budget, it is not a personal budget for individual children and schools must use their funding on approaches intended to improve pupils' educational outcomes in line with the 'menu of approaches' as found on pages 5-6 of this guidance.

### Looked-after children

Pupil premium allocations based on the eligibility of looked-after children are managed by the local authority's Virtual School Head (VSH). [VSH responsibilities](#) include ensuring pupil premium is used to support the educational outcomes of the children looked after by the local authority.

The school's [designated teacher](#) should work with VSHs to ensure that pupil premium benefits looked-after children in your school. The funding should be used on evidence-informed interventions that are clearly linked to robust Personal Education Plans and in line with the menu of approaches.

The VSH should ensure that there are arrangements in place to discuss how the child will benefit from the pupil premium grant for looked-after children, with the designated teacher or another member of staff in the child's education setting who best understands their needs. Processes for allocating funds to a child's education setting should be as simple as possible to avoid delay.

Local authorities are expected to release these payments as soon as possible to schools, but they may choose to retain a portion of the grant to fund activities that will benefit a group, or all, of the authority's looked-after children.

## Previously looked-after children

Pupil premium funding based on the eligibility of previously looked-after children is part of your school's pupil premium allocation.

The [designated teacher](#) has a key role in ensuring that the specific needs of previously looked-after children are reflected in how you use your pupil premium plus.

Your designated teacher should:

- encourage parents of eligible previously looked-after children to tell the school if their child is eligible to attract pupil premium plus funding
- consult the Virtual School Head on how to use the funding effectively, where appropriate
- encourage parents and guardians' involvement in how pupil premium plus funding is used to support their child
- be the main contact for queries about how pupil premium is being used to support previously looked-after children

## Additional guidance for service pupil premium

Service pupil premium is additional funding for schools with pupil(s) from service families. It has been combined into pupil premium payments to make it easier for schools to manage their spending. Details on eligibility are on the [pupil premium overview page](#).

The principal purposes of the service pupil premium are to:

- enable schools to offer mainly pastoral support to eligible pupils during challenging times
- help mitigate the negative impact on service children of family mobility or parental deployment
- help improve the academic progress of eligible pupils if the school deems this to be a priority

The strategy statement template includes a section to report on how you are using the service pupil premium and its impact on eligible pupils.

There is separate guidance on service children and service pupil premium available on [GOV.UK](#).



## Reporting on pupil premium

In line with the [conditions of grant](#), schools whose allocation for pupil premium is based on more than 5 eligible pupils must publish a strategy statement annually on their school website using the [DfE template](#). Schools whose allocation is based on 5 eligible pupils or fewer are not required to publish a strategy statement. The DfE template is designed to help you develop your strategy effectively and efficiently, in line with the steps outlined in this document.

The strategy statement template can be found on the [guidance page](#), along with some completed examples to illustrate how to complete the form. You must develop your own strategy and reflect this accurately in your statement.

The strategy statement is a tool for you to demonstrate how your school is using pupil premium to help disadvantaged pupils to raise their attainment. It is published primarily for the benefit of parents, governors and trustees. You should write it with them in mind.

The Department for Education will review a sample of schools' published statements each year to ensure that plans for use of funding comply with the conditions of grant – including that activities are in line with the 'menu of approaches'.

Ofsted's [handbook](#) sets out the way in which a school's pupil premium strategy is considered as part of a school inspection.

### Format of the template

The strategy statement template has been designed to reflect the 5-step process to developing an effective strategy for the use of pupil premium, which is set out in this guidance.

**Part A** is for you to outline your strategy and the approaches that your pupil premium is funding in the current academic year. The format is designed to reflect the steps needed to develop an effective strategy, in order to help you with that process.

**Part B** is for you to explain what outcomes were achieved for disadvantaged pupils in the previous academic year, including reference to performance measures data. It can be challenging to evaluate the impact of any activity that is not directly linked to academic outcomes, such as activity supporting social and emotional wellbeing. You should still write about this in your online statement and refer to any evidence that shows you are making progress.

There is an optional further information section to provide any additional information you wish to publish.

## **Publishing your strategy**

You have until 31 December each year to publish your statement. This will enable you to take the needs of your new intake into account.

If you have developed a multi-year strategy for pupil premium, you must review your strategy and publish an updated statement every year.

Although multi-academy trusts (MATs) can pool resources for use of pupil premium funding across multiple academies, each academy within the MAT must publish a separate pupil premium strategy statement each year.

## Checking your allocation and payments

Pupil premium is a financial year grant from 1 April to 31 March of the following calendar year. Information about the pupil premium funding your school will receive is available in the allocations document. The pupil premium [conditions of grant and technical note](#) show the payment timetable and explains how each school's allocation has been calculated.

### 'Get Information About Pupils' data download

If you need to check which pupils your school's allocation is based on you can consult [Get Information About Pupils \(GIAP\)](#) from April each year.

GIAP should not form the sole basis on which schools plan their PP strategy, as it is a retrospective list of eligible pupils based on the October census. For pupils in alternative provision settings, GIAP is based on the January census.

### Pupils who move schools

As pupil premium is not an entitlement for individual pupils, you will not get an adjustment if a pupil leaves your school or joins another school. The only exceptions are those adjustments made by the local authority for permanently excluded pupils and where a pupil in respect of whom a pupil premium is payable leaves a school for reasons other than permanent exclusion and is receiving education funded by a local authority other than at a school which is maintained by that authority.

The school that the pupil leaves will have their pupil premium reduced by the value of one pupil, pro-rated to the point in the financial year when the pupil leaves. A school that receives an excluded pupil will be credited by the value of one pupil, pro-rated to the point in the financial year when the pupil joins the receiving school.

Further information about these adjustments can be found in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations and the Schools Operational Guide for the relevant financial year. The web page for the latter relating to the 2025 to 2026 financial year is: [Pre-16 schools funding: local authority guidance for 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#).

### Errors in payments

[Contact DfE](#) if you have mistakenly recorded a pupil as eligible for the pupil premium.

We can change the national pupil database for you to correct individual pupil errors, but we cannot amend your census return.



Department  
for Education

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