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for Education

Pupil premium and recovery premium evaluation

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Glossary

Glossary term/acronym	Definition
Activity	Any type of initiative that schools provided or set up for pupils that was funded by premia, commonly used in relation to cultural or extracurricular activities
DfE	Department for Education
EEF	Education Endowment Foundation
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
FSM	Free school meals
GIAS	Get Information About Schools
Intervention	Any type of support schools provided or set up for pupils that was funded by premia, commonly used in relation to academic support
Maintained school	A state school that is wholly owned and maintained by the local authority
MAT	Multi-academy trust
Menu of approaches	A list of ways schools can use their pupil premium funding
Premia funding	Premia funding refers to pupil premium and recovery premium funding only
PRU	Pupil referral unit
SAT	Single academy trust
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator. Oversees the policy and provision of support for special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SLT	Senior leadership team

Glossary term/acronym	Definition
Special school	A state school that caters for pupils with special educational needs in one of four areas: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; or sensory and physical needs
Support	Any type of initiative that schools provided or set up for pupils that was funded by premia
TA	Teaching assistant

Executive summary

Pupil premium is a direct grant paid to state-funded schools in England which aims to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils aged 5-16. As disruption to learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils, the recovery premium grant was introduced in 2021 to help address this. Recovery premium funding finished at the end of the 2023/24 academic year. Schools have had discretion over how to use both premia within a broad ‘menu of approaches.’

Verian conducted an evaluation of pupil premium and recovery premium to understand how the premia were used in schools. Overall, the findings were positive. Schools felt they had a good understanding of the premia and premia-funded support was felt to be central to schools’ wider offer for disadvantaged pupils. Schools reported that premia funding had an important impact on pupils’ outcomes.

Evaluation methodology

The process evaluation to understand how and why the premia are used was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and undertaken by Verian. It took a mixed-method approach using a mixed-mode quantitative survey and in-depth qualitative interviews with pupil premium leads in both schools and trusts.

Survey data collection with schools was carried out using a mixed-mode (online and telephone) approach. Survey data collection with trusts was conducted online, and trusts were only invited to participate if at least one of their constituent schools was invited to participate in the school survey. Survey fieldwork was conducted between 22 March and 14 May 2024. In total, there were 2,152 valid school responses and 324 valid trust responses.

The qualitative strand of the evaluation consisted of 1-hour in-depth interviews with school and trust staff. Verian conducted a total of 48 interviews: 44 of these were one-to-one, four were paired or triad interviews. Ten of the 48 interviews were conducted with trust staff. The interviews took place via telephone or video call in April and May 2024. Please note this strand of research was designed to explore the views and experiences of schools and trusts in-depth. The data reported in this document has not been designed to provide statistically representative analysis for schools and trusts in England as a whole.

Understanding and views of pupil premium and recovery premium in schools

What was schools' understanding of the premia?

Overall school leaders and trusts interviewed in the qualitative research felt they had a very good understanding of the purpose of pupil premium and recovery premium funding. School leaders felt the main aims of pupil premium funding were to improve educational outcomes and provide holistic support and cultural experiences for disadvantaged pupils, and to level the playing field by creating more opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. School leaders tended to think about pupil premium as a broad initiative where they had considerable flexibility to make spending decisions based on the specific needs of their pupils. In contrast, school leaders tended to see recovery premium as having a more specific focus, mainly targeting the gaps in skills and knowledge that resulted from interruptions to schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, recovery premium more often funded educational interventions.

Were there any differences in how schools saw pupil premium and recovery premium funding?

Six out of ten schools (59%) considered both the pupil premium and recovery premium to be part of the same funding pot and planned how to spend them together. Differences between pupil premium and recovery premium use are drawn out where relevant. Schools where premia funding was treated as one pot of funding felt that it made sense to combine the funds due to the similar and overlapping aims of pupil premium and recovery premium. Schools that used premia funding as two separate pots shared how they viewed recovery premium funding as having different and more targeted aims than pupil premium.

How did premia funding fit into schools' overall funding plans?

The survey shows that the premia were an important source of funding when planning support for disadvantaged pupils. Around nine in ten schools (89%) agreed that 'without the premia, the school would not be able to do as much for disadvantaged pupils.' However, many schools reported using multiple funding sources to provide this support. While 6% of schools said that the premia covered all the support they planned for disadvantaged pupils, around seven in ten schools (69%) reported using multiple funding sources and three in ten schools (30%) said that the premia were the only sources of funding for these activities.

Perceived impact of funding

What were the impacts of premia funding on schools?

Overall, schools were positive about the impact of premia funding on school and trust strategies. Just over half of schools (57%) agreed that 'Having the premia means the school puts more effort into helping disadvantaged pupils, compared with 21% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 21% who disagreed. Over eight in ten (85%) schools and 91% of trusts agreed that having pupil premium meant they had 'a better strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils.'

What support could schools not offer without premia funding?

Around four in five schools (82%) reported that they would have to cut some forms of support they currently offered to disadvantaged pupils if they did not have pupil premium or recovery premium funding. A further 15% said that they would not completely cut any types of support but would have to offer these at a reduced level, for example replacing one-to-one tutoring with group tutoring in larger class sizes.

What were the perceived impacts of premia funding on pupils?

Views of the impact of pupil premium and recovery premium on disadvantaged pupils were also very positive. Around nine in ten schools (89%) and trusts (90%) agreed that having the pupil premium and recovery premium meant disadvantaged pupils had access to a wider range of support than they would otherwise. The majority of both schools and trusts agreed that the premia allowed them 'to offer more targeted support to disadvantaged pupils' (both 89%). Eight in ten schools (80%) and 84% of trusts agreed that the funding provided disadvantaged pupils with wider access to extra-curricular activities.

Special schools felt premia funding had less of an impact on pupil outcomes in their contexts. Leaders from special schools felt that due to the complex and multifaceted nature of their pupils' needs, it was difficult to identify specific impacts that premia funding had on their pupils.

What were the perceived changes in pupil outcomes?

School leaders felt that premia funding had a particular impact on overall wellbeing, attendance and academic outcomes. They felt that premia funding, especially recovery premium, had a positive impact on academic outcomes. This was particularly true for those who worked in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils.

Schools found value in being able to tailor the support to meet their pupils' needs. They recognised the important role holistic support played in supporting pupils' development. There was an overall sense that funding supported pupils in getting ready for their next steps in life, whether that be next steps in education or in a more general sense by

supporting pupils to explore new life experiences, learn about themselves and develop their interests. Some school leaders commented on how success can look very different depending on the challenges the school faced, and the proportion of pupils registered as FSM-eligible in the school. For example, success for some pupils looks like progress in academic outcomes, for others it is more about pupils' wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Who did schools and trusts feel benefits most from premia?

When asked to identify the pupils that benefit most from pupil premium, both schools and trusts were most likely to mention pupils specifically targeted by the funding criteria. The most commonly mentioned responses were FSM-eligibility (77% of schools and 81% of trusts) and pupils in care/looked after (58% of schools and 70% of trusts). This was consistent with the ways that schools defined disadvantage when planning pupil premium. More than nine in ten schools and trusts agreed that the support they had developed as part of the pupil premium strategy had wider benefits for all pupils (92% and 93% respectively). Findings from the qualitative research were consistent with this, as school leaders felt premia funding benefitted all pupils as the knock-on effects of supporting disadvantaged pupils resulted in a more positive learning environment for all. For example, school leaders felt the role of behavioural support and the role of teaching assistants both improved teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum to pupils with less disruption.

Diagnosis of need and decision-making

How did schools make decisions and create strategy statements?

School leaders saw creating strategy statements as central to the decision-making processes behind spending the premia funding. Almost all surveyed schools (99%) reported having written a pupil premium strategy statement in the 2023/24 academic year, with nearly all of these also having published the statement (97% of all schools). Overall, school leaders in the qualitative research had mixed views on their experience of creating strategy statements. Some participants saw strategy statements as a requirement from DfE that was necessary to receive funding. Others felt creating strategy statements was key to their overall decision-making processes and planning for support. Schools took a collaborative approach to decision-making and planning the support they outlined in the statements, with input from the senior leadership team (SLT), school governors, school business and finance managers, trust staff, and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). School leaders reported some common challenges when making decisions for their strategy statements, namely managing different views and priorities, and striking a balance on the level of detail they provide in their statement.

Who was involved in making decisions?

Headteachers were nearly always involved in deciding how schools spent pupil premium and recovery premium (and this was always the case in primary schools). In secondary schools, pupil premium leads were very likely to be involved in the decision-making process. Others involved included senior leadership team (SLT), school governors, school business and finance managers, trust staff, and SENCOs.

What evidence did schools use to inform strategy statements?

Schools commonly used internal evidence sources such as assessment data, feedback from parents and pupils, feedback from teachers and class observations, feedback from specialists such as speech and language therapists and counsellors, and financial evidence to analyse the effectiveness of support and inform decision-making for strategy statements. School leaders also discussed the value of using external evidence, particularly Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance when making decisions about how to design effective interventions. However, some school leaders in special schools mentioned that, though they looked at the EEF guidance, they often did not follow it as they felt it did not fit their pupils' specific needs. They felt more specific guidance for special schools would be beneficial. School leaders also discussed using Early Intervention Foundation and DfE guidance to inform strategy statements.

How did schools define disadvantage and what outcomes did they prioritise?

Schools were aware of the criteria for pupil premium funding but also used the funding to support pupils who were disadvantaged for other reasons. The most common ways of defining disadvantage for the purposes of planning how to spend premia funding were FSM-eligibility, pupils in care/looked after, and previously looked after children. Looking at the outcomes prioritised by schools when deciding what types of support to fund for their pupils, the most common across all schools were improvement in progress or attainment, improvement in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing, and reduction in the disadvantage attainment gap. These were closely followed by improving attendance.

What were the trusts' role in planning and decision-making?

The evidence suggests that most multi-academy trusts (MATs) considered themselves to be actively involved in this regard. Among the 237 MATs surveyed, nearly all (94%) said the trust actively supported schools to identify needs in relation to the premia. Most commonly this involved analysing school-level data (88%), conducting observations and reviews of support (70%), collecting teachers' views (57%) and collecting pupil feedback (46%). Schools that were part of a MAT were less likely to say that the trust was involved in deciding how to use the premia funding. Around three-quarters (74%) of schools in a MAT said that the trust was involved in some way, most commonly by reviewing school strategy statements (55%).

Types of support offered and how spending is distributed

What types of support were offered?

The premia were used to fund a wide range of diverse activities within each of the three tiers outlined in the DfE's menu of approaches (high quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies). Targeted academic support was universally offered via pupil premium. Where the premia were spent separately, it was most common for recovery premium to be used for one-to-one, small group or peer academic tuition, or targeted interventions to support language, literacy or numeracy. Schools also often funded support to address pupil wellbeing such as employing a pastoral lead, mental health support, and family liaison officers. Cultural excursions, provision of resources such as learning equipment and uniform, and phonics programmes were some other examples of activities funded by premia.

How was spending distributed and how did this fit with spending expectations?

The amount that schools spent across the three broad categories of activity set out in the menu of approaches was reasonably evenly distributed¹. Nearly all schools had either spent more on the support outlined in the pupil premium strategy than they had planned (54%) or spent about what they had expected (41%). Almost none said they had spent less than expected (2%) or didn't know (3%). Most surveyed MATs (81%) did not pool schools' premia across the trust to fund joint activities to support disadvantaged pupils.

Implementation

What was schools' experience of setting up and delivering support?

School leaders' experiences of setting up support funded by the premia were generally positive, and schools took a variety of actions to ensure interventions were delivered successfully. The process of setting up interventions varied depending on the type of support schools delivered. Participants in the qualitative research spoke about a range of steps involved in the set-up process, including decision-making processes when creating strategy statements, identifying pupil needs and the logistical aspects of organising the support. School leaders in both primary and secondary schools highlighted recruitment of staff as a key process in the set-up of funded support. Some schools recruited attendance leads to monitor attendance, coordinate a whole-school response to attendance strategies, and remove the responsibility of monitoring attendance from other staff. This aimed to maximise time for quality teaching and interventions, as schools recognised the role of attendance in improving attainment. Where schools were part of a

¹ Schools can select approaches from the menu that best meet their pupils needs and their context. The Department particularly encourages prioritising high quality teaching

trust, the trust also played a role in the procurement and financial aspects of setting up support funded by the premia.

Survey respondents were asked which organisations were responsible for delivering support services offered through pupil premium in their school in the 2023/24 academic year. All schools (100%) said that the school itself was responsible for delivering support. Additionally, around a third (35%) of schools said that private providers were responsible for delivering support. A smaller number of schools used charity/voluntary sector providers (14%), the local authority (12%), or a health or statutory agency (12%). One in 10 schools (10%) overall said that their academy trust was responsible for delivering support.

How did schools target disadvantaged pupils?

In general, school leaders had mixed views on how the level of disadvantage in their school affected their ability to target disadvantaged pupils. Schools that had higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils had more significant challenges but received more premia funding to address these challenges. School size emerged as a potential facilitator in targeting disadvantaged pupils. School leaders in some smaller schools felt they could target their pupils more easily due to having a detailed understanding of each pupil's needs and the support they would benefit most from.

What were the challenges to planning and delivering support?

The three most common challenges to delivery and support identified through the school survey were an insufficient level of pupil premium funding (74%), an increase in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (64%), and the fact that some FSM-eligible pupils were not registered and so did not attract premia funding (56%). Findings from trusts were consistent with this. Just under half of schools identified lack of parental engagement (47%) as a barrier to planning and delivering support. Just over a quarter (27%) said that lack of pupil engagement/getting pupils to attend was a barrier to delivery. This was consistent with findings from the qualitative interviews with school leaders which identified the lack of engagement from both parents and pupils as a major challenge to delivery.

What were the enablers of effective planning and delivery?

Schools drew on their deep knowledge of their pupils to plan effective support and inform strategies. They identified several other factors which supported them to successfully implement premia support. These included the importance of having well-trained staff to deliver support to pupils, tailoring support to individual pupils, and clear communication between schools and external organisations when delivering support and aligning on desired outcomes for pupils. Finally, some school leaders emphasised the positive impact that engaging with families can have on the implementation of support.

Monitoring and evidence

How did schools monitor and use data?

Schools' approaches to premia planning and use were highly data-driven and used a wide range of collection methods to monitor and assess data throughout the school year. Both schools and trusts most commonly monitored the delivery of support once per term (40% of schools and 36% of trusts). Another 42% of schools and 36% of trusts said they monitored delivery of support more frequently than once per term. The most frequently used approach among both schools and trusts was monitoring delivery of support via feedback from staff involved in delivery. Similarly to the quantitative findings, outcome-focused monitoring activities discussed by leaders in the qualitative research included collecting pupil, parent and teacher feedback about specific interventions, as well as running formal assessments, lesson observations and assessing exercise books.

How did schools measure the impact of support on disadvantaged pupils?

Almost all schools surveyed in the quantitative research (98%) used improvements in pupil progress and/or attainment to measure the impact of the support offered through pupil premium. School leaders in the qualitative research also reported using progress in academic attainment gathered through assessments, data from observations, staff, pupil and parent feedback, and reports from other non-teaching staff, such as speech and language therapists, to measure the impact of support on disadvantaged pupils.

How did schools monitor change and plan for contingencies?

School leaders' experiences of monitoring and recording change were mixed. Some school leaders found the strategy statement template to be inflexible, and therefore limited changes were made to it throughout the year. Other schools felt that their strategies and strategy statements were relatively flexible, with changes to the support offer being recorded in the statement throughout the year.

Some schools and trusts interviewed reported keeping a small amount of premia funding aside in case of unexpected costs arising throughout the year. However, overall, school leaders felt there was limited scope within the premia funding to keep money aside for unexpected cost. When unexpected costs did arise, schools often had to use money from different funding pots, such as the general school budget, put forward a business case to their trust for additional funding, or apply for funding from elsewhere (for example, from charitable grants).

Future plans for support and the end of recovery premium

Would there be any changes to support in the coming year [academic year 2024/25]?

Some school leaders were confident that the packages of support they were currently providing were meeting pupil needs and did not foresee significant change over the coming year. However, schools often acknowledged that this would be dependent on the needs of the pupils joining the school in the next academic year. Special and alternative provision schools in particular felt that few changes to their support offer would be required. Where school leaders did discuss plans to make changes to their pupil premium support offer, these were often relatively small changes to individual activities, rather than large-scale changes to the overall support package or approach.

What was the expected impact of recovery premium ending?

The most common plans to fill the funding gap left by the end of the recovery premium funding, reported by half of survey respondents, were to stop providing some forms of support (52%) and to look for cost-savings elsewhere (52%). School leaders in the qualitative interviews also discussed plans which included removing some types of support, such as one-to-one tutoring and extra-curricular activities/trips, as well as reducing numbers of support staff. Trust leaders in the qualitative research had a similar view to school leaders when asked about how they would cope with the end of recovery premium. They discussed how schools would need to reduce or stop delivering specific support.

Introduction

Policy context

Pupil premium is a direct grant paid to schools in England which aims to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils aged 5-16. The value of the grant is based on the number of children currently registered as eligible for free school meals (FSM) or who have been registered as eligible for FSM within the last six years, and children looked after, or previously looked after, by a local authority. It is a requirement in the conditions of the grant that this additional funding is used to support actions which improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.

The disadvantage gap index² at KS2 and KS4 had generally been reducing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic although there was also evidence that progress in this area had begun to slow. It is important to note that these reductions were not necessarily attributable to pupil premium. Disruption to learning during the pandemic led to a reversal of this trend, with greater negative impacts being felt by disadvantaged pupils. The recovery premium grant was introduced as a time-limited grant in 2021 to address this. All state-schools were eligible for recovery premium, using the same eligibility criteria as pupil premium, in addition to special and alternative provision settings in academic years (AY) 2022/23 and 2023/24. Recovery premium funding ended after AY 2023/24.

Schools have discretion over how to use the premia in an evidence-based way, within a broad 'menu of approaches' which includes three tiers: high quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies.

Having high-quality, effective teachers in all classrooms benefits the attainment of all pupils but is particularly important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools are encouraged to prioritise high quality teaching within their pupil premium strategy.

Targeted academic support, such as tutoring and the deployment of teaching assistants, can be particularly beneficial for pupils who are not making good progress.

Non-academic challenges such as attendance, behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and parental engagement can have a negative impact on educational outcomes. Pupil premium can be used to address these wider barriers to learning in order to support pupil's educational outcomes. "Each year schools are required to publish a statement outlining how they plan to spend the premia. The Department for Education publishes pupil premium [guidance](#) and a pupil premium [strategy statement template](#), which schools are required to use. The Education Endowment Foundation also has published [guidance](#). These resources support schools to plan, implement, monitor, and sustain an effective pupil premium strategy.

² The disadvantage gap index summarises the relative attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils, based on the average grades achieved in English and maths assessments at end of [KS2](#) and [KS4](#)

Overview of evaluation activities

Evaluation objectives

The evaluation aimed to understand:

- what and whom funding is spent on
- how schools plan and decide to spend funding
- how schools engage with evidence or guidance
- differences between pupil premium and recovery premium usage
- how funding and strategies are implemented
- why pupil premium and recovery premium have perceived impacts.

Research methodology

The evaluation took a mixed-method approach using a mixed-mode quantitative survey and in-depth qualitative interviews with pupil premium leads in both schools and trusts.

Quantitative methodology

Questionnaire development and testing

The Department for Education (DfE) developed a series of evaluation questions which this project aimed to address. These are listed in Appendix 2. Verian used the evaluation questions developed by the DfE to identify key themes and topics to include in the questionnaire. These were agreed with DfE. Verian then developed the questionnaire with reference to questions used in the [2013 process evaluation of pupil premium](#).

The questionnaire was tested through cognitive interviews (via video conference) with pupil premium leads at four secondary schools, two primary schools and one multi-academy trust (MAT).

Sample

A list of all schools eligible for the study was obtained from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) website. This covered all schools included in the file “Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2023 to 2024”. A small number of exclusions (34) were made for establishments that only teach 16-19-year-olds as these schools do not receive funding through the pupil premium.

The sample frame was augmented with contact data for headteachers from GIAS (Get Information About Schools) and the DfE Compare School Performance service and then stratified by:

- education phase
- school trust status
- size of school (no. of pupils, quintiles)
- local authority
- percentage pupils recorded as FSM-eligible (quintiles).

Please note that not all pupils who are eligible for FSM are registered for FSM by their parents or carers. We have used the percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible as a proxy for the percentage of pupils attracting pupil premium and recovery premium funding throughout the report.

An equal probability random sample of 10,000 schools was then selected from the sample frame.

Trusts were included in the trust sample if at least one of their constituent schools was invited to participate in the survey. They were able to participate even if their constituent school did not complete the school survey. The final sample included 1,134 multi-academy trusts and 428 single-academy trusts.

Fieldwork approach

Data collection with schools was carried out using a mixed-mode (online and telephone) approach. Headteachers were initially posted an invitation to complete the survey online, which they were asked to pass on to their pupil premium lead. Schools that had not responded were sent a further reminder letter, up to two email reminders and a telephone reminder.

Data collection with trusts was conducted online. Initial email invitations were sent to the trust chief financial officer who was asked to pass the invitation to the member of staff who was best able to discuss the trust's role supporting schools with their pupil premium strategy. Trusts that had not responded received a posted invitation and up to two further email invitations.

Survey fieldwork was conducted between 22 March and 14 May 2024. Telephone reminders and interviews with schools were conducted between the 15 April and 19 April 2024.

In total, there were 2,152 valid school responses and 324 valid trust responses.

Weighting

As sampling probabilities were not varied between school types, there was no need to design weight the responding sample.

Weighting targets are based on schools eligible for the study and were derived from the sample frame. The raking algorithm was then used to ensure that the achieved interview sample profile matched the population profile at the margins. Taking the weighting into account, the estimated effective sample size is c.2,109 (a design effect of c.1.02).

Qualitative methodology

The qualitative strand of the evaluation consisted of 1-hour in-depth interviews with school and trust staff. Verian conducted a total of 48 interviews, 44 of these were one-to-one and four were paired or triad interviews. Ten of the 48 interviews were conducted with trust staff. The interviews took place via telephone or video call in April and May 2024.

Please note this research is designed to explore the views and experiences of schools and trusts in-depth. The data reported in this document has not been designed to provide statistically representative analysis for schools and trusts in England as a whole.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited on the basis that they were involved in pupil premium decision-making in their schools. Participants were recruited in two different ways. Firstly, via email from a list of those respondents who agreed to be recontacted following the completion of the quantitative survey element of the evaluation. Secondly, via an external agency who conducted free find recruitment using their database of education professionals.

Sample frame and quotas

The DfE and Verian agreed on a set of primary criteria that informed the sample frame for recruitment. The primary criteria were school type, school phase, special schools, urban/rural, level of deprivation, and percentage of pupils registered as FSM-eligible (%FSM). Tables 1-8 outlines the targets for each criterion and a breakdown of completes for the free find and recontact samples.

Table 1. Breakdown of total fieldwork completes

-	-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Total	-	50	20	28	48

Table 2. Breakdown of school type quotas and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
LA Maintained	Max 20	10	11	21
Academies (multi and single academy trusts)	Max 20	10	5	15

Table 3. Breakdown of school phase quotas and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Primary	Max 20	11	9	20
Secondary	Max 20	9	6	15
Primary AND Secondary	-	-	1	-

Table 4. Breakdown of special school quotas and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
AP – Alternative provision school	Min 2	1	1	2
SEND – Special educational needs school	Min 2	2	1	3
PRU – Pupil referral unit	Min 2	1	1	2

Table 5. Breakdown of urban / rural quotas and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Urban	Min 15	12	10	22
Rural	Min 15	8	6	14

Table 6. Breakdown of deprivation quota and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Most deprived decile	Max 10	3	5	8

Table 7. Breakdown of %FSM quota and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Above national average	Min 20	12	9	21

Please note that not all pupils who are eligible for FSM are registered for FSM by their parents or carers. We have used the percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible as a proxy for the percentage of pupils attracting pupil premium and recovery premium funding throughout the report.

Table 8. Breakdown of trust type quotas and fieldwork completes

-	Target	Recruited - freefind	Recruited - recontact	Recruited - total
Trust - MAT	Max 7		9	9
Trust - SAT	Max 3		2	2

Development of research materials

Verian and DfE held a session to identify the areas of research to prioritise for the qualitative fieldwork. This included discussion of key lines of inquiry such as understanding perceptions of premia funding, decision-making processes and structures within schools, and how, if at all, the end of recovery premium would impact the support schools provide. This session also covered areas from the quantitative survey that DfE wanted to prioritise in the qualitative research. In collaboration with DfE, Verian designed a flexible discussion guide which formed the basis of each interview. The discussion guide was refined during the fieldwork period as a result of feedback from the fieldwork team or due to minor additional requests from DfE.

Other research materials designed by Verian for the qualitative research included an invitation letter to participants, an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, a privacy notice and statement of consent.

Reporting conventions

Differences between different types of schools are only reported when they are both statistically significant and relevant to the evaluation objectives. Overall, the research showed relatively consistent approaches to the premia within subgroups.

Additional analytical conventions include:

- statistical significance has been judged at the 95% confidence level
- percentages for single-response questions may not always add up to exactly 100% because of rounding
- where respondents have given multiple responses to a question, the sum of the individual responses may be greater than 100%.

Understanding and views of pupil premium and recovery premium in schools

This chapter covers schools' understanding of the purpose of premia funding and who the funding should target, as well as how the funding fits into schools' wider strategies. It also assesses the ways in which schools may view pupil premium and recovery premium differently and how this affects the way premia funding is spent.

School and trust understanding of the premia

As outlined in the introduction, pupil premium and recovery premium were introduced by DfE to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England. In order for the funding to meet this goal it is essential that school decision makers understand the purpose of the funding and use this knowledge when planning support for disadvantaged pupils.

During the qualitative interviews, school leaders were asked about their views on the purpose of premia funding and the types of pupils it is intended for. Overall, those interviewed in the qualitative research felt they had a very good understanding of the purpose of pupil premium and recovery premium funding and there were no noticeable patterns or differences in how schools with different characteristics approached premia funding.

School leaders felt they were clear on the aims of the funding and felt confident planning support for their pupils accordingly. They felt the main aims of pupil premium funding were to improve educational outcomes, provide holistic support and cultural experiences, and to level the playing field by creating more opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. School leaders tended to think about pupil premium as a broad initiative where they had considerable flexibility to make spending decisions based on the specific needs of their pupils.

"It's just about recognising that they're starting off on the back foot, compared to their peers, to try and give them the best possible deal, that we can reduce that gap as much as possible." (*School leader, secondary school*)

"I think the pupil premium is not just about the academic side of things, I think it's much wider than that, it's about the children thinking of themselves the same as everyone else, looking as if they're the same as everybody else as well." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

Trusts interviewed as part of the qualitative research saw the key purpose of premia funding to be providing equal opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. Trusts adopted a

supervisory role to oversee premia funding and did not manage the funding directly, in recognition that schools were best placed to make decisions on funding.

Differences between pupil premium and recovery premium

Understanding and approach to recovery premium

Between academic years 2021/22 and 2023/24 schools received the recovery premium grant to support disadvantaged pupils whose education was disproportionately impacted in the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure that recovery premium was spent effectively, schools were required to spend the recovery premium grant in line with pupil premium guidance.

Overall, schools felt they had a good understanding of the purposes of pupil premium and recovery premium funding, however there was considerable variation in how the funding was implemented across schools.

In comparison with pupil premium, school leaders tended to see recovery premium as having a more specific focus, specifically targeting the gaps in skills and knowledge that resulted from interruptions to schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, school leaders discussed using recovery premium to fund educational interventions such as additional tutoring and teaching assistants (TAs). One school leader also discussed how recovery premium sometimes funded outcomes related to a pupil's education, health and care plan (EHCP).

"The pupil premium is more around opportunities and access, but then the recovery premium, we've used more around curriculum and the EHCP outcomes." (*Assistant headteacher, primary school*)

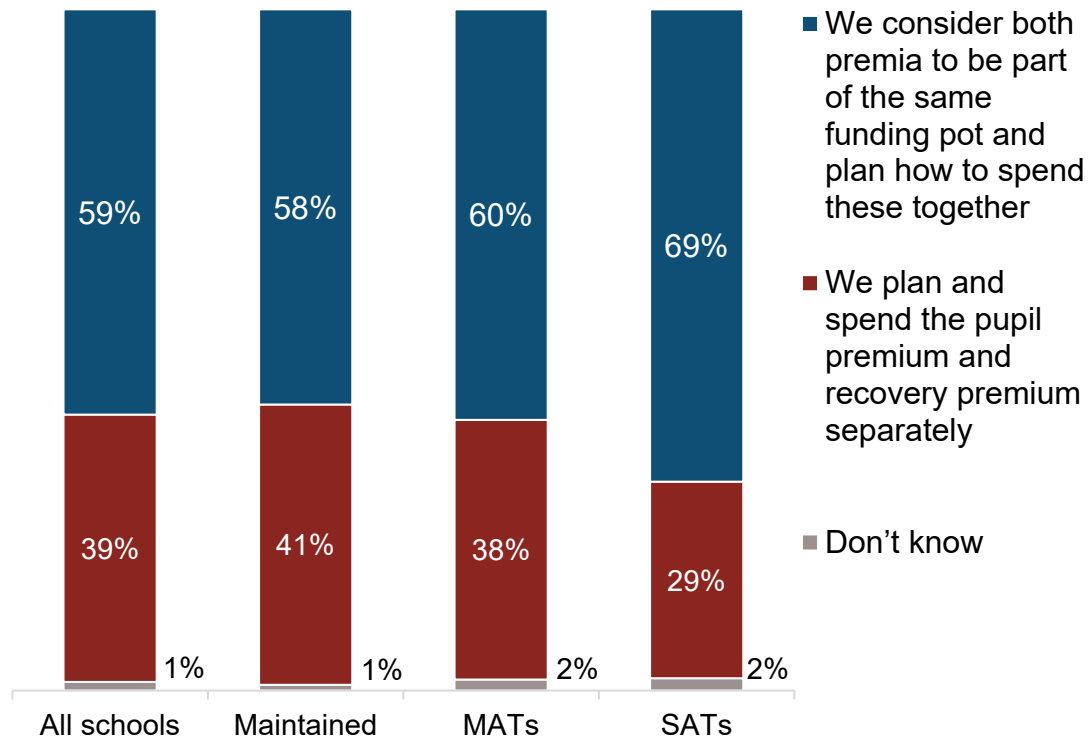
"Recovery premium is very specific, I think. It is looking at outcomes and trying to close the gap through booster provision. So, I would say that the recovery premium is based on the academic curriculum, whereas pupil premium is whole school provision." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

The survey asked schools whether they considered the two premia to be part of the same funding pot and planned how to spend these together, or if they planned and spent them separately. As shown in Figure 1, six in ten schools (59%) considered both premia together. Four in ten schools (39%) said that they planned and spent the pupil premium and recovery premium separately and almost none (1%) said they did not know. The report draws out findings that highlight differences between the use and perceptions of the pupil premium and recovery premium funding.

There was little variation between types of schools in how they approached the premia. Schools in single academy trusts (SATs) were more likely than maintained schools or schools in MATs to say that they considered the pupil premium and recovery premium

together (69% vs. 58% and 60% respectively). In contrast, planning and spending the premia separately was more common in local authority maintained schools and MATs than SATs (41% and 38% respectively vs. 29%). There was no qualitative evidence to suggest differences in premia funding approaches between schools with different levels of pupils registered as FSM eligible.

Figure 1. How recovery premium is planned and spent



DMRP. Which of the following statements best describes how you plan pupil premium and recovery premium spending?

Base: All schools (2,152)

This was consistent with the findings from the qualitative interviews which found that both primary and secondary schools interviewed treated the funding in one of two ways:

- They thought about pupil premium and recovery premium as one pot of funding where funds are pooled together and mainly used for all activities with some exceptions.
- They thought about pupil premium and recovery premium as two separate pots of funding and used them for different support that target different outcomes.

Schools where the two premia were treated as one, single pot of funding discussed how pooling the funds helped them to be strategic and savvy about spending and to plan for longer-term support that aims to have a bigger impact. These school leaders felt that it made sense to combine the funds due to the similar and overlapping aims of pupil

premium and recovery premium. Though they combined the funds to deliver support, these schools did separate the funds when assessing and reporting their spend.

"Ultimately I feel like the aims are similar, and so similar, that as long as we're supporting our most vulnerable disadvantaged students, ultimately does it matter which pot it's coming out of?" (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

School leaders that used the premia funding as two separate pots shared how they viewed recovery premium funding as having different and more targeted aims than pupil premium. While both premia aim to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and can be used on any approach from the menu of approaches, these schools tended to use pupil premium for more holistic support for pupils, and recovery premium more specifically for catch-up tutoring and addressing gaps exacerbated by COVID-19. This, coupled with the short-term nature of recovery premium, resulted in different approaches to the funds.

"You have much more fluency in how you spend your pupil premium, whereas the recovery premium, it's more around what the DfE say they would like you to spend it on." (*Assistant headteacher, primary school*)

Some school leaders had negative views on the targeted nature of recovery premium, they understood there to be limitations on how they could spend this funding and felt the requirements were restrictive. However, this represented a misunderstanding of the spending requirements among these school leaders. There were also concerns that the short-term nature of the funding was a key limitation to its effectiveness and greater impact could be achieved with sustained funding. Sustained funding would allow schools to plan longer-term, more tailored support that could increase the impact of support on pupils.

"The catch-up funding, it's short term, it's designed probably in policy maker's minds, to have a rapid impact. But the reality with some of these issues are long term chronic issues, that will take years to turnaround, so I feel like you need to take a longer-term view in how you can actually help children who have not had access to reading books, or who have not had the same social experiences." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

"The whole approach to the catch-up grant, it felt to me to be overly prescriptive, bureaucratic, and the funding wasn't constructed in a suitably medium-term enough way to allow schools to plan an investment in the medium term." (*CEO of trust, trust interview*)

A small number of school leaders shared how their experience of implementing premia funding changed over time. One primary school shared how they originally used recovery

premium to provide catch-up tutoring for pupils on their return to school after the COVID-19 lockdowns. More recently, the school decided to integrate recovery premium funding with pupil premium funding to facilitate training for staff in new learning software. This software was designed to target those who needed additional support with reading, writing, and maths and therefore was felt to address the need for catch-up tutoring in an alternative way. These school leaders appreciated the flexibility of adjusting the way they spend premia funding from year to year to increase impact of support on pupils.

Though school leaders felt they had a detailed understanding of the purpose of pupil premium and recovery premium, the way funding was used in schools varied.

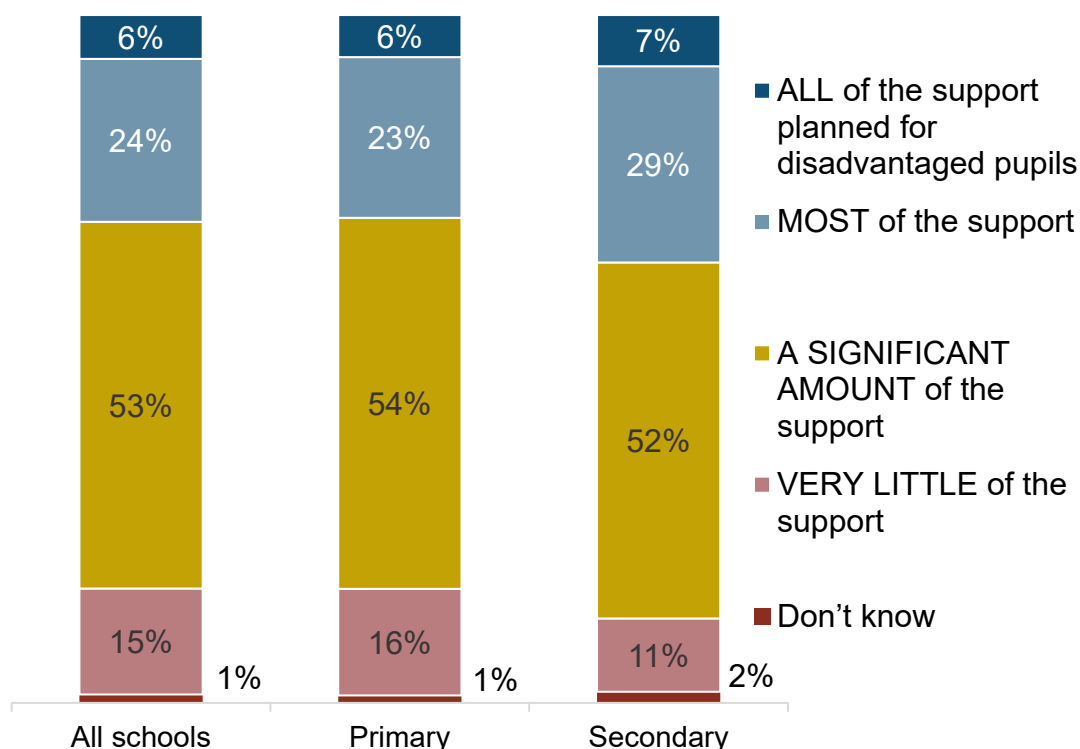
How the premia fit into schools' overall funding plans

In addition to pupil premium and recovery premium, schools may choose to use other funding sources to support disadvantaged pupils. The extent to which schools rely on the premia to provide support for disadvantaged pupils will vary depending on the value of the grants that they receive and any alternative sources of funding that they access. Please note that exploring the use of any additional sources of funding used was beyond the scope of the survey.

Although the premia allowed schools to do more than they might otherwise, the survey findings showed that for many schools the premia did not cover all of the support they planned. Schools were asked how much of the support that they planned for disadvantaged pupils in the 2023/24 academic year was covered by pupil premium and recovery premium funding. Most schools (83%) said at least 'a significant amount' was covered, while 6% of schools said that the premia covered all the support planned, (see Figure 2).

In 15% of schools the premia covered 'very little of the support'. This was more common among schools with smaller premia grants. Schools in the two quintiles with the lowest percentage of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely to say the premia covered very little of the support when compared with schools in the two quintiles with the highest percentage of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM (22% vs. 12%).

Figure 2. Sufficiency of premia funding

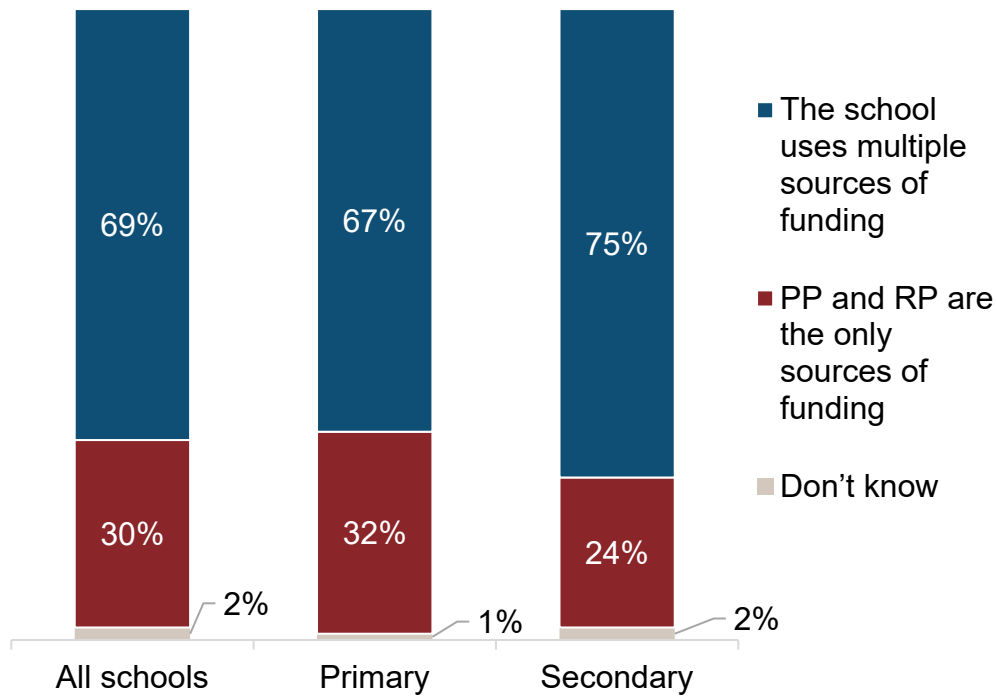


PPCOVER. Thinking about the level of pupil premium and recovery premium funding your school received this year, how much of the support you planned for disadvantaged pupils would you say this covered?

Base: All schools (2,152)

Around seven in ten schools (69%) reported using multiple sources of funding to provide support for disadvantaged pupils. Three in ten schools (30%) said that the premia were the only sources of funding for these activities (see Figure 3). Accessing multiple sources of funding was more common among secondary schools than primary schools (75% vs. 67%). Among primary schools, larger schools (with 300 pupils or more) were more likely to report using multiple sources of funding than the smallest schools (with fewer than 100 pupils (70% vs. 60%). This suggests that larger schools may have greater access to alternative sources of funding than smaller schools.

Figure 3. Role pupil premium and recovery premium play in supporting disadvantaged pupils



OTHERSUP. Which of the following statements best describes the role pupil premium and recovery premium funding plays in supporting disadvantaged pupils at your school?

Base: All schools (2,152)

Perceived impact of funding

This chapter covers schools' and trusts' perceived impact of premia funding on their ability to target disadvantaged pupils and overall pupil outcomes. This chapter also looks at the experience of school leaders in targeting disadvantaged pupils for specific support and whether there are any perceived impacts for certain groups of disadvantaged pupils.

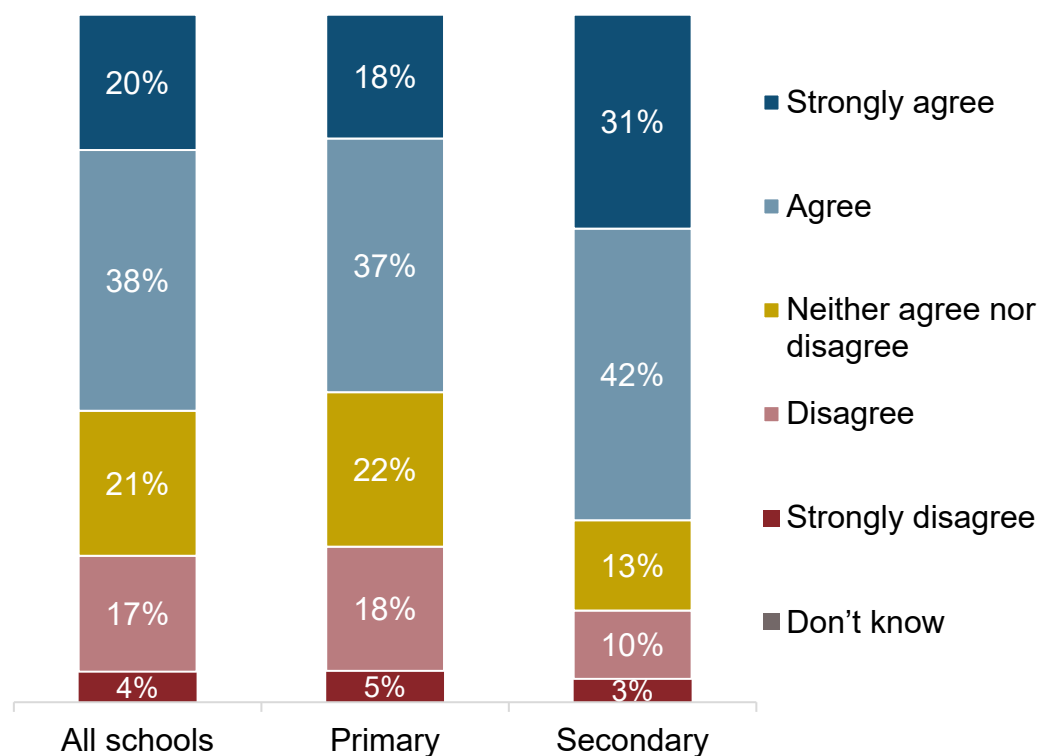
Impact of premia

Impact of the premia on school approaches

Overall, schools had positive views of the impact of the premia. Just over half of schools (57%) agreed that 'having the premia means the school puts more effort into helping disadvantaged pupils. One in five (21%) disagreed (see Figure 4).

A larger proportion of secondary schools than primary schools agreed that having the premia means they 'put more effort into helping disadvantaged pupils' (74% vs. 55%). Agreement also varied according to trust status. Schools that were part of MATs were more likely to agree than maintained schools (60% vs. 55%).

Figure 4. Having the premia means the school puts more effort into helping disadvantaged pupils



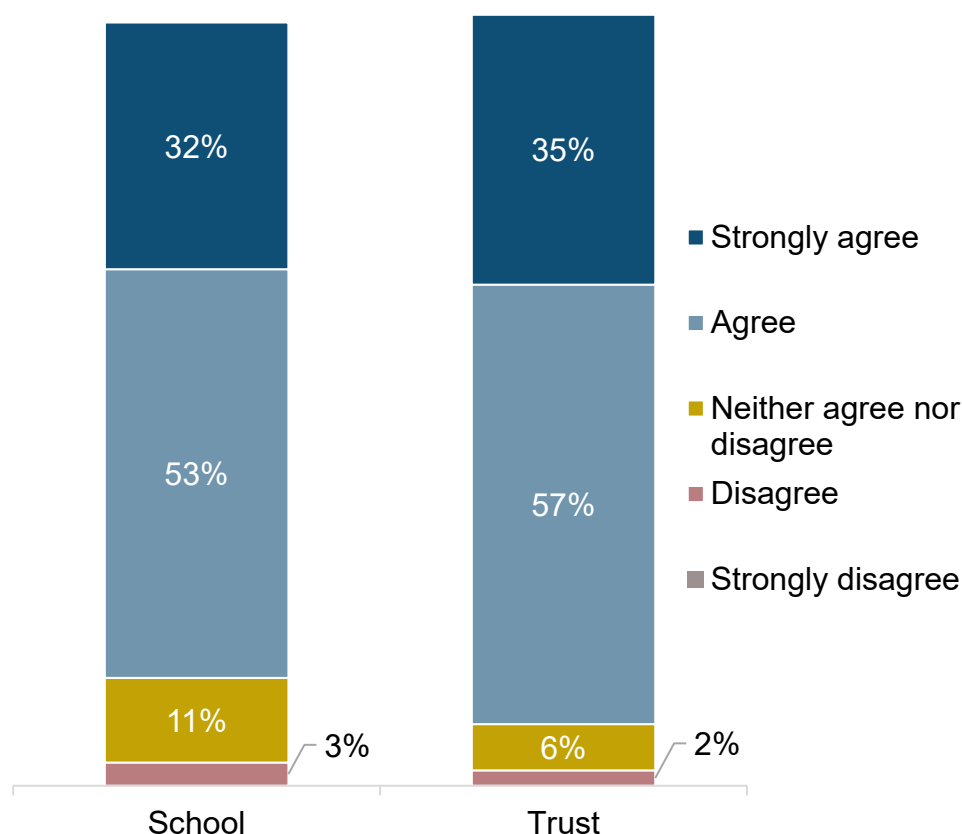
SAGREE1_1. Having the premia means the school puts more effort into helping disadvantaged pupils: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pupil premium...

Base: All schools (2,152)

Consistent with this, as Figure 5 shows, 85% of schools and 91% of trusts agreed that having pupil premium meant they had ‘a better strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils’, suggesting that pupil premium funding enables schools to plan for the needs of disadvantaged pupils more effectively.

Schools in the three quintiles with the highest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely than schools in the quintile with the lowest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM to strongly agree (35% vs. 26%).

Figure 5. Having pupil premium funding means we have a better strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils



BENHOW_1. Having pupil premium funding means we have a better strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts 324)

Impact of the premia on pupils’ access to support

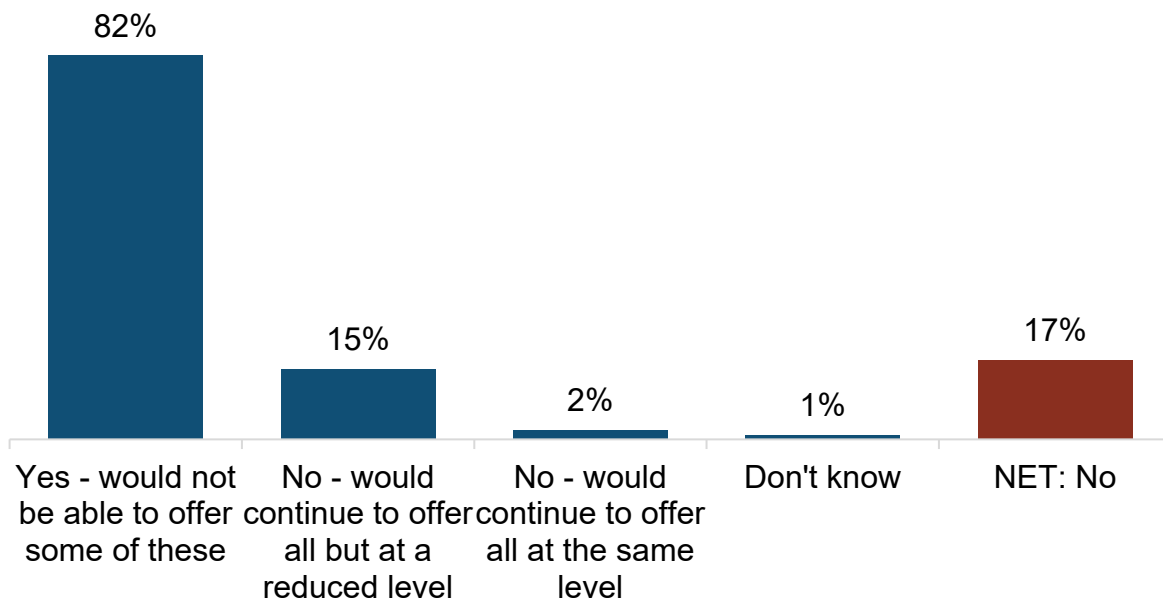
Views of the impact of premia funding on disadvantaged pupils were positive and overall, school leaders felt that the funding was central to the schools’ wider offer to disadvantaged pupils.

The survey asked schools if there were any types of support they would not be able to offer if they did not have pupil premium or recovery premium funding. Four in five schools (82%) reported that they would have to cut some forms of support they currently offer if

they did not have the premia. School leaders in the qualitative research most commonly discussed cuts to targeted academic support such as one-to-one tutoring. A further 15% said that they would not completely cut any types of support but would have to offer these at a reduced level, for example replacing one-to-one tutoring with group tutoring in larger class sizes. Almost no schools (2%) said they would continue to offer all the support they currently offer at the same level even if they did not have pupil premium or recovery premium funding (see Figure 6).

Secondary schools were more likely to say they would have to cut some forms of support (89%) than primary schools (82%). Larger primary schools (with 500 pupils or more) were more likely to say they would not be able to offer some forms of support if the funding was cut (88%) than smaller primary schools (78% of schools with less than 100 pupils). Furthermore, schools in which the premia were the only sources of funding to support disadvantaged pupils were more likely to have to cut some forms of support (87%) than schools that have multiple sources of funding to support disadvantaged pupils (81%).

Figure 6. Whether schools would be unable to offer some types of support without the premia



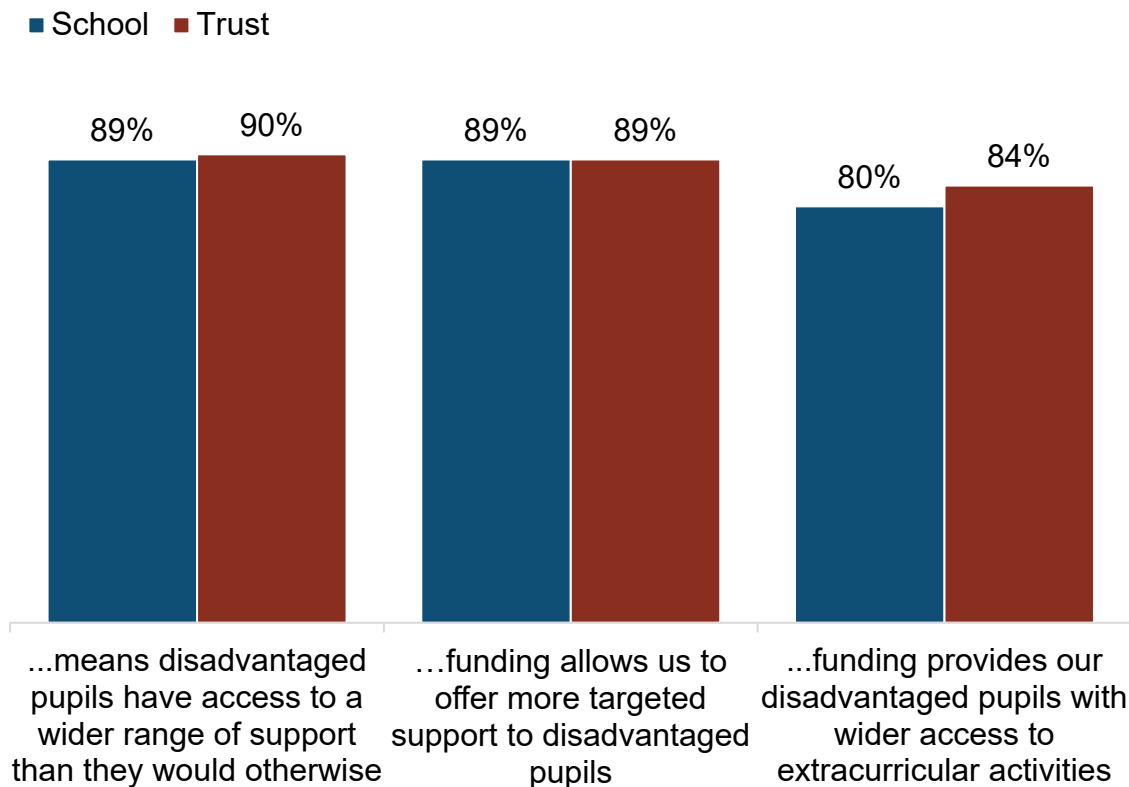
CONTINUE. Are there any types of support that you would not be able to offer if you did not have pupil premium or recovery premium funding?

Base: All schools (2,152)

Around nine in ten schools (89%) and trusts (90%) agreed that having the premia means disadvantaged pupils have access to a wider range of support than they would otherwise (see Figure 7). Only 3% of schools and 3% of trusts disagreed. Schools in the two quintiles with the most pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely to strongly agree (37%) than schools in the two quintiles with the fewest pupils recorded as eligible for FSM (28%).

The majority of both schools and trusts agreed that the funding allows them ‘to offer more targeted support to disadvantaged pupils’ (both 89%). Eight in ten schools (80%) and 84% of trusts agreed that the funding provides disadvantaged pupils with wider access to extracurricular activities.

Figure 7. Benefits of pupil premium

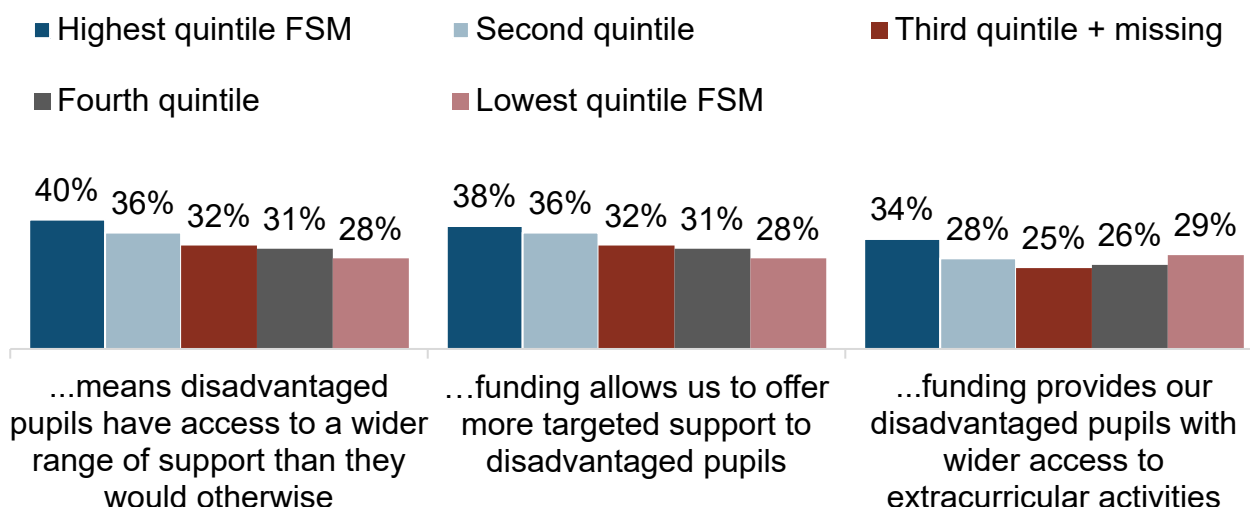


BENEFITS. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts 324)

As shown in Figure 8, views of these benefits varied according to the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. Schools in the quintile with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely to strongly agree with each of these three statements than schools with the fewest pupils eligible for FSM.

Figure 8. Agreement with statement about the benefits of pupil premium, by proportion FSM eligibility



BENEFITS. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; highest quintile FSM: 422; second quintile: 426; third quintile and missing: 447; fourth quintile: 413; lowest quintile: 444)

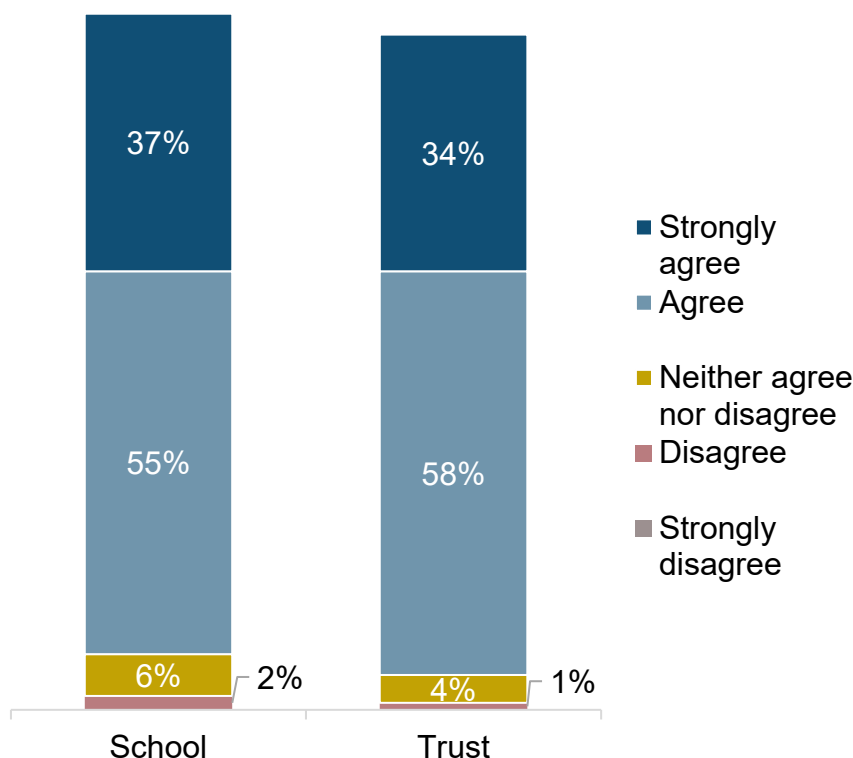
Wider benefits of the premia

Schools and trusts were also asked about the wider benefits of the premia for all pupils. More than nine in ten schools and trusts agreed that the support they had developed as part of the pupil premium strategy had wider benefits for all pupils (92% and 93% respectively) (see Figure 9).

Schools which were likely to receive a larger grant, either because they had a larger number of pupils or because a larger proportion of their pupils attracted pupil premium funding, were more likely to agree that there were wider benefits than schools likely to receive a smaller grant. For instance, secondary schools were slightly more likely to agree that the premia had benefits for all pupils (95%) than primary schools (91%). Larger schools were also more likely to agree than smaller schools. More than four in ten (42%) secondary schools with 700 pupils or more strongly agreed that there were wider benefits, compared with only a quarter (25%) of secondary schools with fewer than 700 pupils. Among primary schools, 40% of schools with 300 pupils or more strongly agreed, compared with 29% of primary schools with fewer than 100 pupils.

Similarly, schools in the two quintiles with the highest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely to strongly agree (43%) than those in the three quintiles with the lowest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM (32%).

Figure 9. Support we have developed as part of our pupil premium strategy has wider benefits for all pupils



BENHOW4. Support we have developed as part of our pupil premium strategy has wider benefits for all pupils: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts 324)

Perceived changes in pupil outcomes

The premia approach as outlined in the theory of change (see Appendix 1) assumes that disadvantaged pupils are targeted effectively by the support implemented. School leaders in the qualitative research felt that disadvantaged pupils were targeted effectively by premia strategies as expected.

Overall, school leaders felt the premia funding had a major impact on pupil outcomes, particularly on overall wellbeing, attainment, and attendance. This was particularly the case in schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils which received higher levels of funding in the school and increased capacity for support as a result. There was an overall sense that the funding supported pupils in getting ready for their next steps in life, whether that be next steps in education or, in a more general sense, by supporting pupils to explore new life experiences, learn about themselves and develop their interests. Some school leaders commented on how success could look very different depending on the challenges the school faced, and proportion of pupils registered as FSM-eligible in the school. Although success did include progress against academic

outcomes, schools also recognised the impact on pupils' readiness to learn and overall wellbeing.

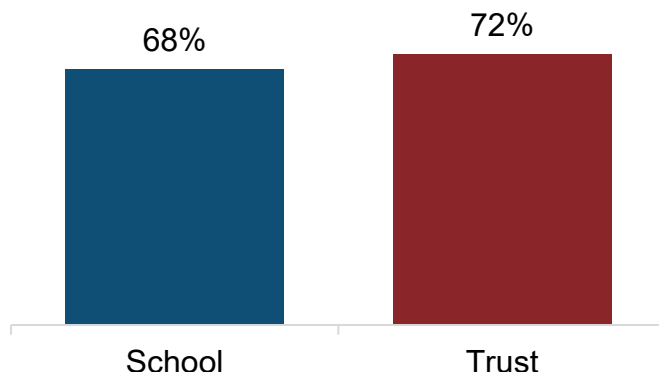
"For me...it's the child who comes to me and says look Miss, I can't talk to my parents about this, but I've got no pencil case, I've got no equipment, I can't ask them for it because there's too many pressures. Could you help me? Of course I can, we sort it for the next day, and they've got what they need. It's the child who's going on an international trip, and they come back absolutely buzzing from it, and saying that's made my mind up, I'm going to university." (*Assistant headteacher, secondary school*)

"I would say success looks like an academic success, whereas here, the success looks like happy children, because they come from such unhappy backgrounds. Their success looks like wellbeing, their success looks like a growth in self-esteem, their success looks like being literate and numerate when they leave." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

There were slightly lower levels of agreement that the 'funding helps our disadvantaged pupils to achieve their academic potential' when compared with schools' views on the impact of the premia on the support provided (see Figure 10). Just over two-thirds of schools (68%) agreed while around a quarter (24%) said they did not agree or disagree.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of trusts agreed that the funding helps disadvantaged pupils to achieve their academic potential with 7% saying that they disagreed.

Figure 10. Pupil premium funding helps our disadvantaged pupils to achieve their academic potential (% agree)



BENEFITS. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts 324)

This was supported by the qualitative findings. School leaders felt that premia funding, especially recovery premium, had an impact on academic outcomes. This was particularly true among those who worked in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Participants reported progress in reading, writing and maths and felt this was due to a range of support provided such as one-to-one tutoring, TAs in classrooms who can provide additional support, and tutoring in specific areas. For example, one secondary school described how their phonics tutoring resulted in pupils showing 30 months progress in 5 months:

"The average was 30 months progress in the first 5 months of the phonics course. One child has gone from a reading age of 8 to 12, and he's there clutching his book that he's just got from the library. It's pretty special because it's the real effect then on their confidence, their outcomes in all the other subjects. So, it genuinely feels like we've made real gains for these children." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

School leaders felt that progress made in academic outcomes was inextricably linked with pupils' levels of confidence and improved behaviour in the classroom, which in turn improved the learning experience for all pupils in the class.

"When you can see that six children in a school have improved their reading, for us that is significant because we know that those six would be able to access their curriculum and when children can access the curriculum, they're focused in class. So, then we haven't got that low level disruption. The knock-on effect is quite significant." (*Director of Education, trust*)

School leaders often saw premia funding as having an impact on pupils' attendance as a result of wellbeing support provided such as breakfast clubs, counsellors, family liaison officers, and attendance officers. For example, one primary school described how their attendance officer would visit families' homes and provide transport to school for pupils unable to attend otherwise.

"We would not have attendance as positive as we do, if we didn't allocate pupil premium funding to support that attendance, in terms of wellbeing provisions - there's no doubt about it." (*Chief Finance Officer, trust*)

Trust leaders interviewed as part of the qualitative research generally felt that the greatest impacts of premia funding were in continuous professional development (CPD) for school staff and progress against phonics and literacy attainment outcomes. One trust discussed how they funded CPD opportunities for school staff, but this was supplemented by premia funding to address any specific gaps in training.

"If you can provide high quality CPD, and then follow it up with going in, supporting schools, monitoring it, driving improvement, then you will absolutely see improvement." (*School improvement director, trust*)

Special schools felt premia funding had less of an impact on pupil outcomes in their contexts. Leaders from special schools felt that due to the complex and multifaceted nature of their pupils' needs, it was difficult to say whether the support funded by pupil premium and recovery premium affected pupils in any meaningful way. Additionally, premia funding often accounted for a much smaller stream of funding than other funding available to special schools.

"Pupil premium is always a nice-to-have addition, rather than it having a profound impact, and therefore it gives marginal gains...as it reflects a marginal percentage of our overall income." (*CEO of trust of 14 special schools*)

Areas of greatest benefit

As shown in Figure 11, when asked to identify the pupils that benefit most from pupil premium, both schools and trusts were most likely to mention pupils specifically targeted by the funding criteria. The most commonly mentioned responses were FSM-eligibility (77% of schools and 81% of trusts) and pupils in care/looked after (58%). This was consistent with the ways that schools define disadvantage when planning pupil premium.

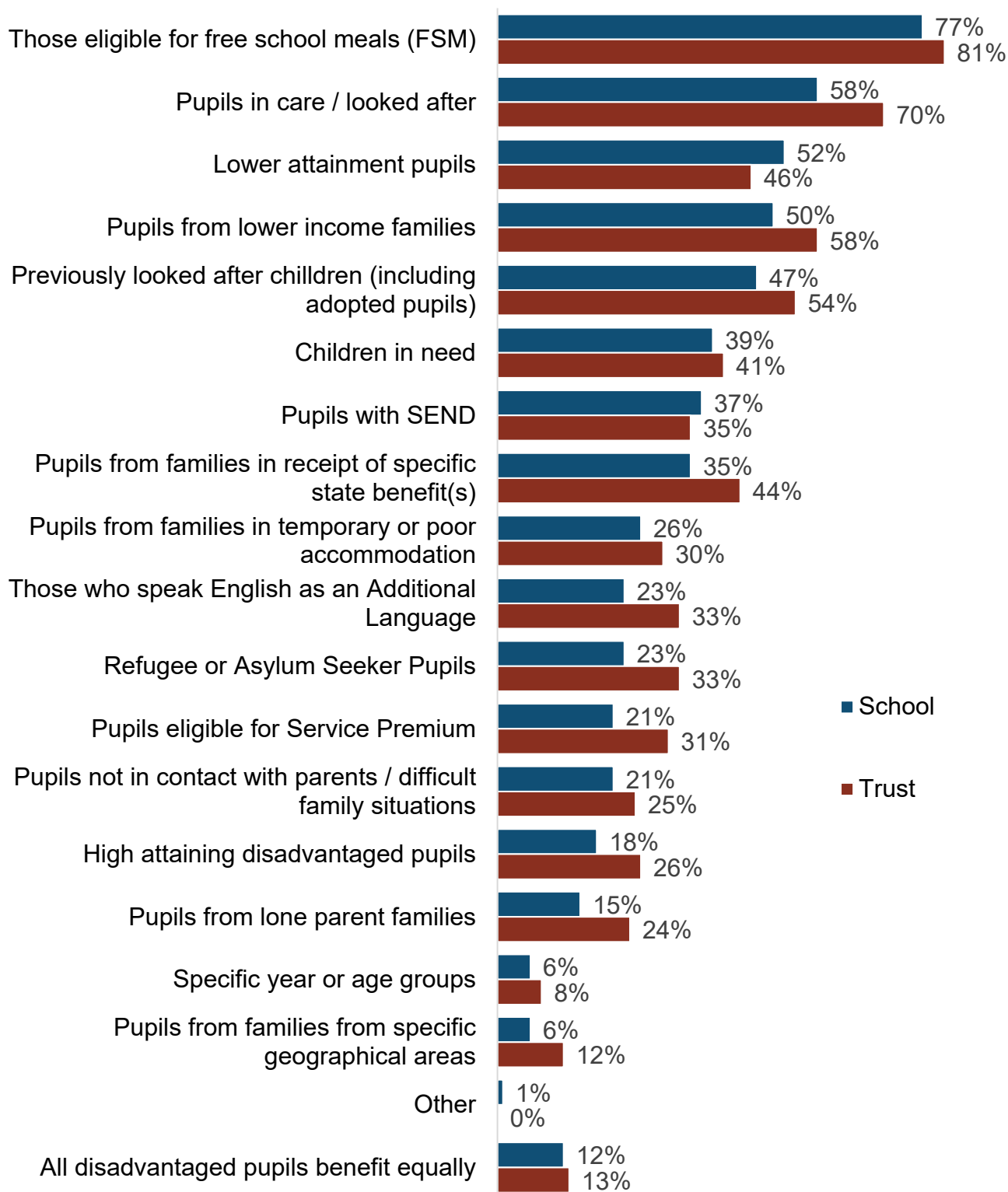
Trusts were more likely than schools to identify pupils in care/looked after (70% vs. 58%), pupils from lower income families (58% vs. 50%) and previously looked after children

(54% vs. 47%) as those who benefit most. In contrast, schools were more likely than trusts to identify lower attainment pupils (52% vs. 46%) as main beneficiaries.

There was little variation by school phase, although primary schools were more likely than secondary schools to say that lower attainment pupils benefitted most (57% vs. 37%). In contrast, secondary schools were more likely than primary schools to say that high attaining pupils benefitted most (27% vs. 17%).

Schools with the lowest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely than schools with the highest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM to say that 'FSM-eligible pupils' were most likely to benefit (79% vs. 72%). They were also more likely than schools with the highest proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM to say previously looked after children were most likely to benefit (54% vs. 43%).

Figure 11. Types of pupils who benefit most from pupil premium, by organisation type



BENWHO. Thinking about disadvantaged pupils in your school. Are there any specific types of pupil who you think benefit most from pupil premium?

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts: 324)

Findings from the qualitative research suggested that, overall, school leaders felt premia funding benefitted all pupils as the knock-on effects of targeting disadvantaged pupils for support resulted in a more positive learning environment for all. For example, one school described how they have a pupil premium-funded 'reset centre' for dysregulated pupils or pupils who struggle with behaviour management. Pupils can go here to get the support they need. This in turn prevents disruption in class and avoids interruptions to learning for other pupils.

"It affects every child as well as the children who need it, for sure."
(Deputy headteacher, primary school)

School leaders did identify some specific groups where they perceived the impact of support to be greater and where approaches have had the intended effect on target pupils. Firstly, school leaders discussed how they felt younger age groups often benefit more from premia-funded support as early intervention is key for academic support and attainment. As well as this, early provision of pastoral support and exposure to cultural experiences often resulted in a more positive school experience and contributed to creating an environment where pupils were ready to learn.

Secondly, some school leaders saw premia funding as beneficial for pupils who struggled with average levels of attainment in the class. These pupils were able to have their needs addressed through the targeted support funded by premia, which may not exist otherwise.

Thirdly, some school leaders felt that pupils who came from white working-class backgrounds were harder to target and engage for support than other disadvantaged pupils. Teachers often lacked parental support for homework, additional catch-up lessons, and sometimes cultural experiences from this group. These schools felt that premia funding benefits pupils who have English as a second language or whose families had immigrated as they were more likely to engage with support and have high levels of aspiration.

"If I'm being really honest for a lot of our EAL who are on free school meals, our non-white children, they perform the best and I think part of that reason is because there is an element of aspiration as well that comes from the parents. A lot of these families have given up a lot to come here to give their children a better life, so they really value education." *(Headteacher, primary school)*

Some school leaders also discussed that families who had a good relationship with the school and were open about the support they needed tended to benefit more from funding.

Diagnosis of need and decision-making

This chapter explores schools' experience of creating strategy statements, who is involved in decision-making and planning for premium funding, and how disadvantage is defined by schools when thinking about their funded support. This chapter also discusses the role of trusts in decision-making and planning and explores the reasons why schools use various sources of evidence when planning support.

Strategy statements

Compliance with strategy statement requirements

In order to show that schools are using their pupil premium effectively, the DfE requires schools to publish a statement, using the DfE template, on their website each academic year. The statements are also intended to improve schools' planning processes.

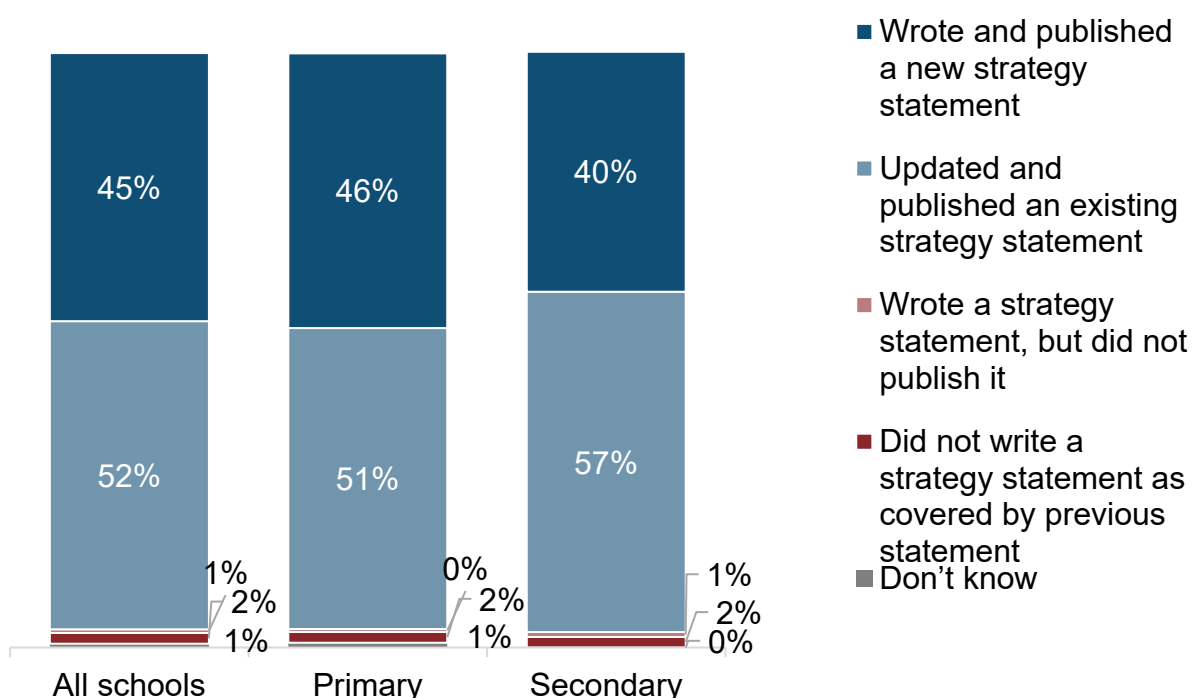
Almost all surveyed schools (99%) reported having written a pupil premium strategy statement in the 2023/24 academic year, with nearly all of these also having published the statement (97% of all schools). Overall, school leaders in the qualitative research had mixed views of their experience of creating strategy statements. Some participants saw strategy statements as a requirement from DfE that was necessary to receive funding. Others felt creating strategy statements was key to their overall decision-making processes and planning for support.

As shown in Figure 12, secondary schools were slightly more likely to have updated and published an existing strategy statement (57%) than primary schools (51%). In contrast, primary schools were slightly more likely to report writing and publishing a new strategy statement in the 2023/24 academic year (46%) than secondary schools (40%).

Two thirds of secondary schools (65%) reported having strategy statements that covered multiple academic years (although this was not significantly greater than the 62% of primary schools who also reported having strategy statements that covered multiple academic years).

In the qualitative research, school leaders with more experience in drafting strategy statements and prior involvement in decision-making processes tended to find the process easier and felt this was likely due to increased awareness of what was important to cover in the statement, and more experience in decision-making and understanding how best to prioritise support for pupils with widely varied needs.

Figure 12. Statement planning in schools



STATEMENT. Did your school write and publish a pupil premium strategy statement in the 2023/24 academic year?

Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; Secondary: 358; Primary: 1,642)

The role of strategy statements in wider planning

The process of creating strategy statements was seen as the central decision-making process for all funded support among school leaders who participated in the qualitative interviews. One school described how pupil premium was at the centre of their overall planning:

"For us, pupil premium and inclusion is the golden thread that sits within all our school improvement planning." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

Overall, school leaders saw strategy statements as formalising their overall school strategy for disadvantaged pupils and therefore did not tend to have a separate school strategy for disadvantaged pupils beyond the statement itself.

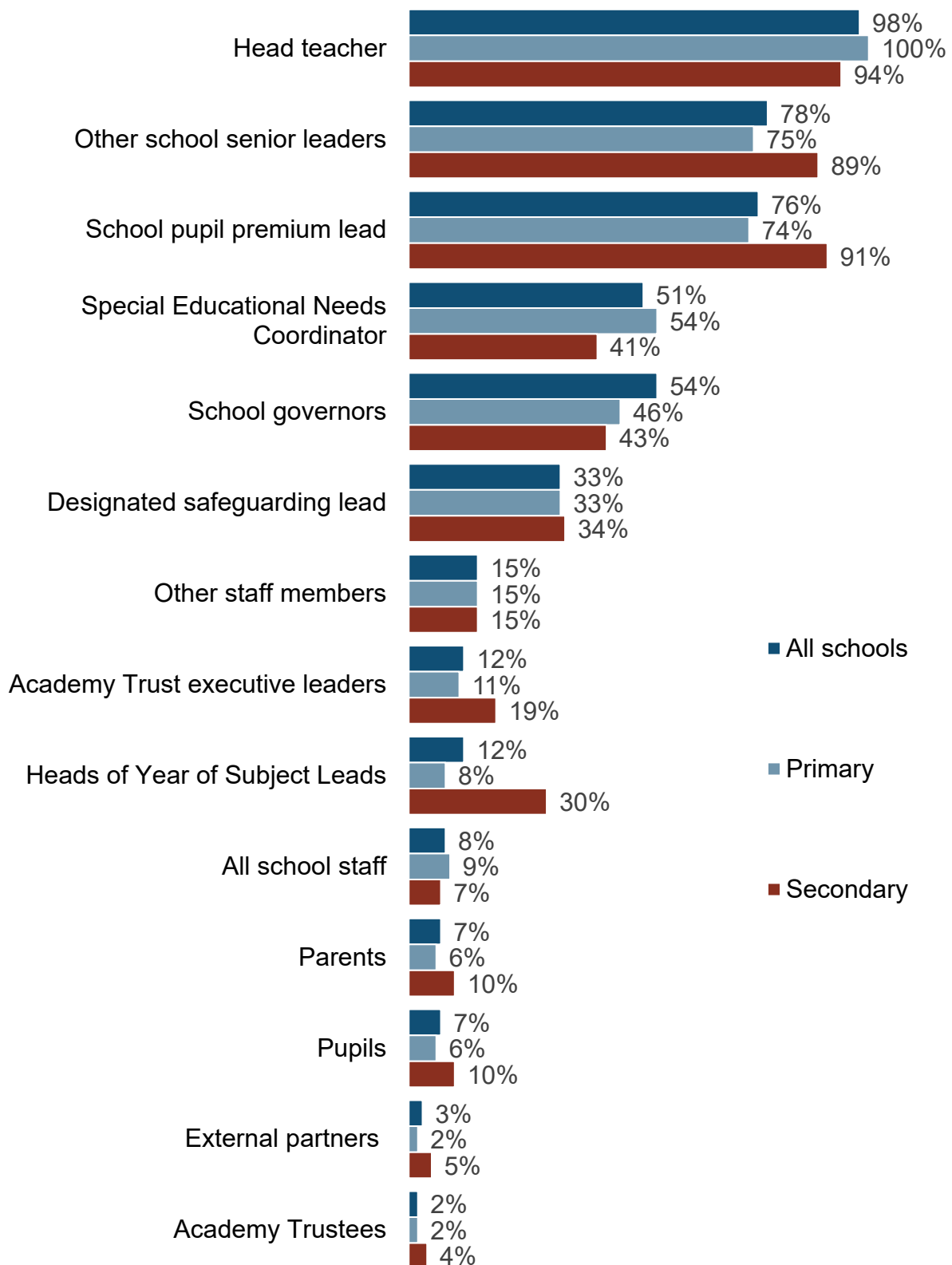
Drafting strategy statements

Schools took a collaborative approach to decision-making and planning the support they outlined in the statements, with input from the senior leadership team (SLT), school governors, school business and finance managers, trust staff, and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

"It [the strategy statement] was written in collaboration with the whole leadership team. We got round the table and identified needs - curricular, development, pastoral." (*Assistant headteacher, secondary school*)

The survey responses also showed that planning premium spend was typically managed by a team. As shown in Figure 13, headteachers were nearly always involved in deciding how schools spent pupil premium and recovery premium (and this was always the case in primary schools). In secondary schools, other school leaders and particularly pupil premium leads were also very likely to be involved in the decision-making process. This may suggest a greater prevalence of designated pupil premium leads in secondary education or an enhanced role for pupil premium leads in the planning process. In contrast, in primary schools, SENCOs were more likely to be involved in the decision-making process compared with secondary schools. Otherwise, the survey findings show a broad range of actors were involved in the decision-making process in most schools (regardless of phase of education).

Figure 13. Who is involved in deciding how to spend pupil premium and recovery premium funds



DMWHO. Which of the following groups are involved in deciding how to spend pupil premium and recovery premium funds?

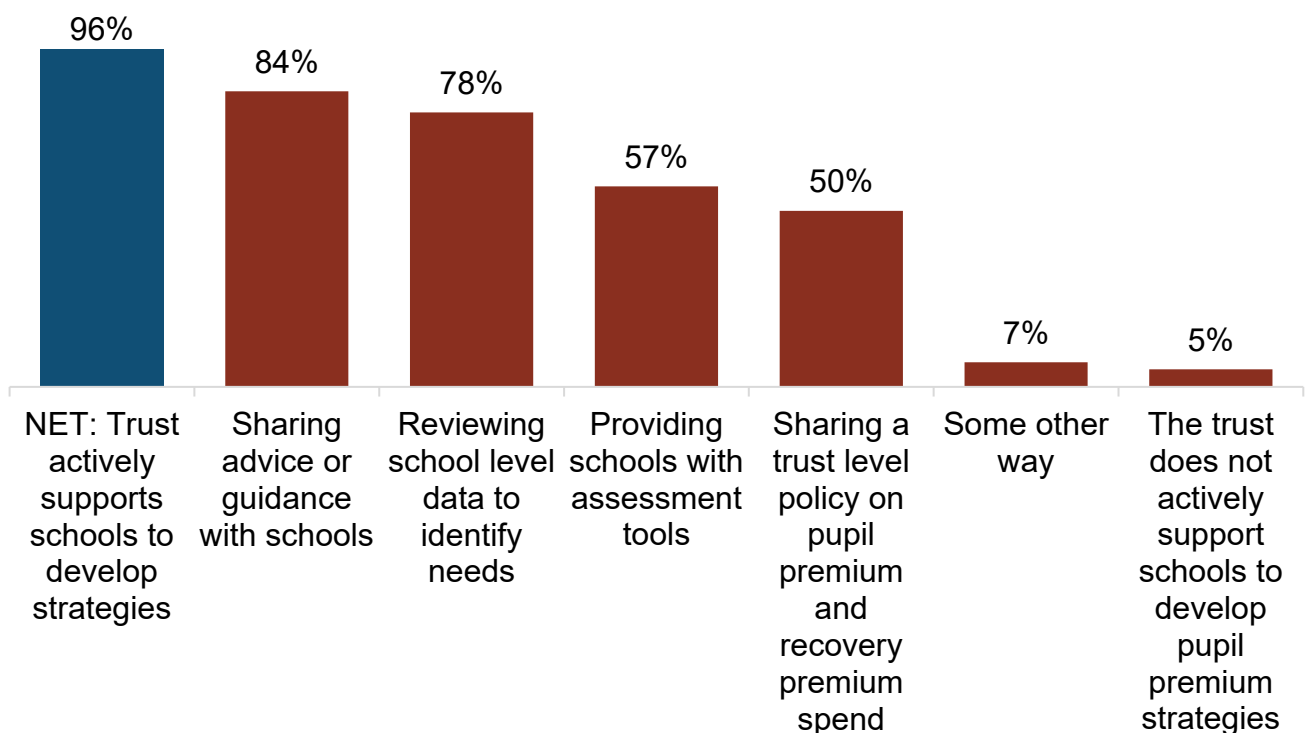
Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; Primary: 1,642; Secondary: 358)

Qualitative interviews with school leaders showed that class teachers, SLT and other school staff were often involved in the initial stages of identifying need and determining the best interventions to support needs. School leaders worked alongside other local schools within networks to provide each other with recommendations, particularly in relation to school trips and external organisations. Staff in special schools particularly valued word-of-mouth recommendations, to help them ensure that provision was sufficiently able to meet the additional needs of their pupils.

"You're seeing a lot of local authority schools at the moment that are planning together, not as an official group, but one that is sharing ideas, resources, training etcetera. So, we get together with six other schools in the local area; those six schools will also plan together in terms of sharing their budget to employ a speaker, a trainer, a speech and language therapist, to come in to deliver it to a larger group but for a price that is much more feasible for schools." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

The survey also looked at the role of trusts in developing pupil premium strategies. As shown in Figure 14, nearly all MATs (96%) reported some active support of their schools to develop strategies. Most commonly, this involved trusts sharing advice or guidance or reviewing school-level data to identify needs.

Figure 14. How trusts support schools to develop pupil premium strategies



MATSTRAT. How, if at all, does the trust support schools to develop pupil premium strategies?

Base: All MATs (237)

School leaders reported common challenges when making decisions for their strategy statements, namely managing different views and priorities, and striking a balance on the level of detail they provide in their statement. School leaders discussed how it was sometimes difficult to reach a final decision on the support they planned to provide, largely due to the level of need across multiple different areas of disadvantage for pupils and the different priorities of different members of staff. For example, those who worked with SEND pupils felt SEND support should take priority or maths leads felt there should be increased maths support.

"It's making sure that the interventions, or whatever we're doing, is beneficial to everybody." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

Evidence used to inform strategy statements

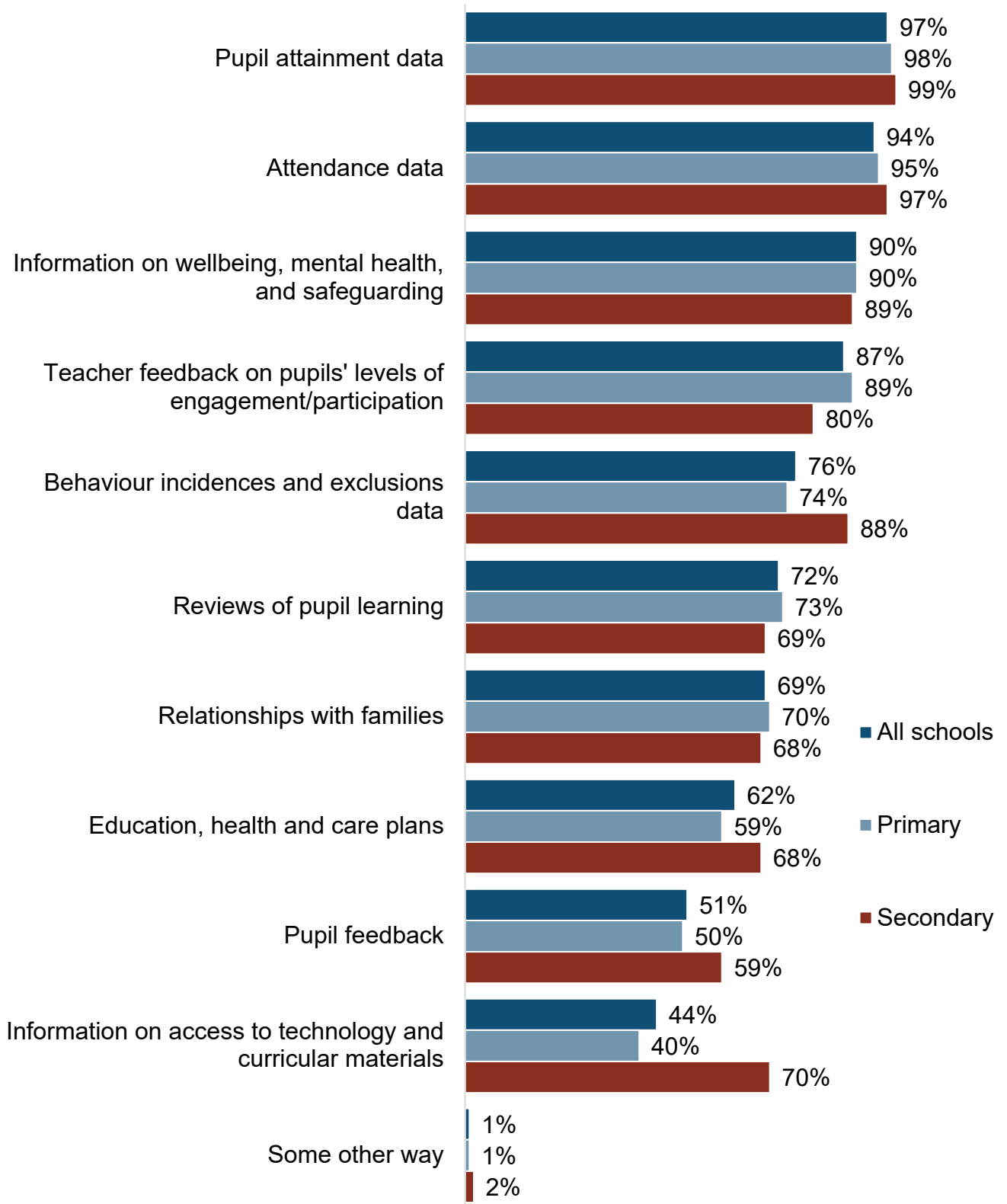
Guidance for use of the premia, published by both DfE and EEF, places a heavy emphasis on using high quality data to inform plans for implementing support. This is intended both to encourage schools to implement effective interventions and to increase school leaders' familiarity with high quality evidence and use of these evidence sources in other circumstances.

In line with the published guidance, school leaders emphasised the use of evidence to inform their decision-making when planning the activities described in the strategy statements. They relied on internal and external evidence to inform these decisions. Schools commonly used internal evidence sources such as assessment data, feedback from parents and pupils, feedback from teachers and class observations, feedback from specialists such as speech and language therapists and counsellors, and financial evidence to analyse the effectiveness of support and inform decision-making for strategy statements. Some school leaders shared how it was necessary to justify every decision in the strategy statement and therefore relied on evidence in order to be confident that the planned support would have an impact on pupils' outcomes. School leaders also discussed the benefits of using external evidence such as EEF, EIF, and DfE guidance. Participants felt that EEF guidance was particularly useful, with many schools citing it as central to their decision-making processes.

"EEF [guidance] is an ever-empowering document...I feel like in the last few years it's become one of those documents that everyone talks about a lot." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

As shown in Figure 15, schools used a wide range of data and knowledge to understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils when planning pupil premium and recovery premium spending. This included almost universal use of attainment and attendance data, and information on wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding.

Figure 15. What schools use to understand needs of disadvantaged pupils when planning premia spend



DMNEED. Which, if any, of the following do you use to understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils when planning pupil premium and recovery premium spending?

Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; Primary: 1,642; Secondary: 358)

This was consistent with findings from the qualitative research where school leaders commonly reported using attainment data from the previous academic year to inform their decision on premia funding. Attainment data collected throughout the year in phonics, maths and literacy were most commonly reported. School leaders felt that this data gave them a clear picture on whether interventions designed to improve academic outcomes were effective in the previous year, helped to identify areas where increased focus may be needed in the upcoming academic year, for example, targeted support for specific pupils with additional needs.

"We now do NGRT - a reading assessment. That's completed by all year 7 students which means we're all talking a common language. It gives us a measure of where we should be intervening." (*Director of Education, trust*)

The survey showed that teacher feedback on engagement and participation was also highly prevalent, particularly in primary schools. This was consistent with findings from the qualitative research where schools collected anecdotal feedback via staff, parent and pupil feedback surveys to understand the experience of support in the previous year and make decisions on how to change or sustain support for the upcoming academic year. Staff feedback included collecting data to understand barriers to learning and ways of working that could be incorporated into practical considerations when designing support – for example, timetabling and additional classroom support.

For pupils, this included understanding how pupils found the support and what changes could be made to improve this support for them in the future. For parents, schools discussed collecting feedback about barriers to attendance and parental engagement to help understand how best to deliver support to increase impact.

School leaders also discussed the benefits of using EEF guidance to inform their funding decisions. Overall, school leaders were very positive about EEF guidance and its ability to help give schools ideas on the types of support that had positive impacts for pupils. School leaders recognised the importance of evidence-informed research to design support for their pupils and felt that choosing support that was backed up by evidence helped to justify their funding decisions to DfE.

"I think all of the EEF resources and guidance are particularly good, really, really good." (*Assistant headteacher, secondary school*)

"The EEF research is why we know that it's important to have the class teacher where possible, that delivers the interventions." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

However, some school leaders in special schools discussed how, though they looked at the EEF guidance, they often did not follow it as they felt it did not fit their pupils' specific needs. They felt more specific guidance for special schools would be beneficial.

"We look at it in terms of it's a good resource, but we don't follow it. We just find that our children don't fit into it in the same way." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

School use of strategy statements

Evidence from the survey suggests schools actively used pupil premium strategy statements; 93% of schools that wrote or updated a statement in 2023/24 reported referring back to their statement 'when planning services and activities for pupils'. The very smallest schools (with less than 100 pupils) were slightly less likely to say they refer back to their statements. Although 87% said they did refer back when planning, with 11% saying they did not. Nine in ten schools with a statement (89%) also reported referring back to their statement when monitoring 'the delivery of support and activities within the school year'. Despite referring back to their statement within the school year, some school leaders felt that the structure of the statements was not flexible enough to reflect the ever-changing nature of schools and school needs.

"I wonder if it [strategy statement] sometimes feels like a bit of a tick-box exercise, and I don't know if it always is a true reflection of what is being delivered." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

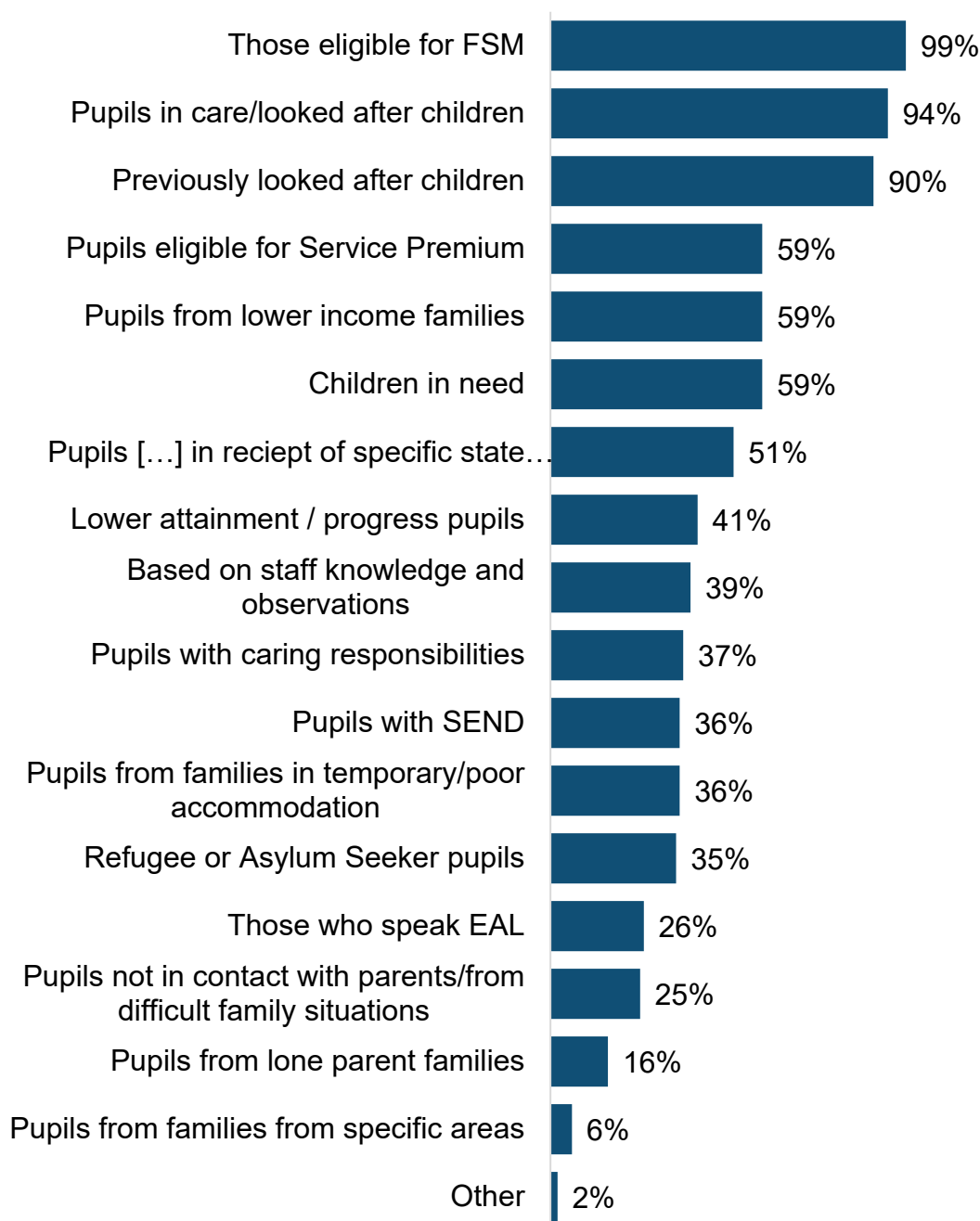
Understanding school priorities

Pupil premium and recovery premium funding aims to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Grant funding is aimed at pupils currently registered as eligible for FSM or who have been registered as eligible for FSM within the last six years, and children looked after, or previously looked after, by a local authority.

In line with premia funding criteria, the most common ways of defining disadvantage for the purposes of planning how to spend premia funding were FSM-eligibility, pupils in care/looked after and previously looked after children (see Figure 16).

Eligibility for service premium, pupils from lower income families, children in need, and receipt of state benefits were also used to define disadvantage by half or more of all schools. There was little variation in how different types of schools defined disadvantage. Although, primary schools were more likely than secondary schools to define disadvantage using lower attainment or progress made by pupils (44% of primaries cited this compared with just 26% of secondaries).

Figure 16. How schools define disadvantage



DMDEFINE. When planning how to spend pupil premium and recovery premium funding, in which ways do you define pupils as being 'disadvantaged' at your school?

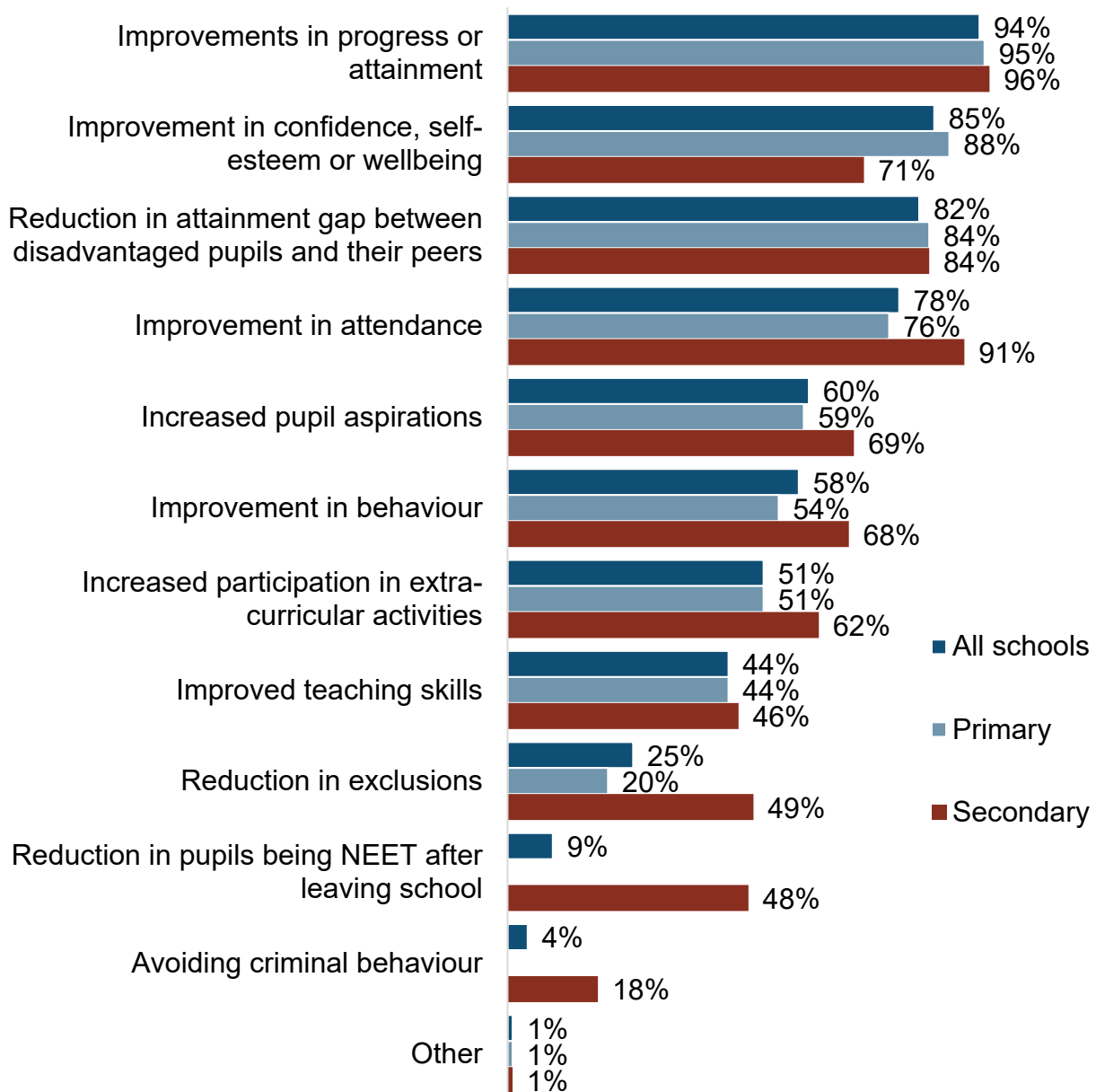
Base: All schools (2,152)

Pupil premium and recovery premium funding exists to improve education outcomes. There are a number of approaches that schools might choose to take to achieve this goal.

The school survey asked schools which of a number of outcomes they prioritised when deciding which types of support to offer through the premia funding. Across all schools,

the most commonly prioritised outcomes were improvement in progress or attainment, improvement in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing, and reduction in the attainment gap. These were closely followed by improving attendance (see Figure 17). Consistent with the findings in relation to what schools use to understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils, there were some differences in prioritised outcomes between primary and secondary schools. Secondaries were much more likely to prioritise attendance, pupil aspirations, behaviour and participation in extra-curricular activities. They were also more likely to prioritise reduction in exclusions and pupils becoming NEET. In contrast, primary schools were more likely to prioritise improvement in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing.

Figure 17. Outcomes prioritised by schools when deciding types of support to offer



WHYSUPP. When deciding which types of support to offer, which outcomes do you prioritise?

Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; Primary: 1,642; Secondary: 358)

Role of trusts in planning and decision-making

The survey also considered the role of MATs in the planning and decision-making process around pupil premium and recovery premium. Evidence from the trust survey suggests that most MATs considered themselves to be actively involved in this regard. Among the 237 MATs surveyed, nearly all (94%) said the trust actively supports schools to identify needs in relation to the premia. Most commonly this involved analysing school-level data (88%), conducting observations and reviews of support (70%), collecting teachers' views (57%) and collecting pupil feedback (46%). Nine in ten MATs (90%) also

said they shared sources of evidence with schools, including 77% who discussed evidence at trust-wide meetings, 53% who organised networking, training and speaker events, 48% who sent evidence to schools when they were writing their strategies and 41% who shared evidence in response to requests from school staff.

Around three-quarters (74%) of schools in a MAT said that the trust was involved in some way when it came to deciding how to spend pupil premium and recovery premium funds. Most commonly this included the trust:

- reviewing school strategy statements - 55%
- sharing sources of evidence for schools to use - 36%
- arranging meetings for schools to share information and ideas with one another - 31%
- helping to draft school strategy statements - 17%
- setting a trust-level policy on pupil premium and recovery premium use - 15%
- helping to assess the needs of pupils who are eligible for funding - 10%

In contrast, it was uncommon for schools to say trusts were involved in:

- pooling resources across schools in the trust - 6%
- pooling and redistributing premia funding across the trust - 1%

These findings were consistent with the qualitative data, where school leaders in MATs or SATs often described trusts' involvement in creating strategy statements. For example, one school described how their trust wrote a general document outlining overall pupil premium priorities, which schools in the trust use to inform their individual pupil premium strategy statements depending on their specific needs and priorities. Other trusts were less involved but would review strategy statements and make suggestions in accordance with what they felt was important (for example a specific focus on support for reading or maths).

School leaders working in schools that were part of MATs and or were a SAT also described how their use of premia funding was influenced by their trust's overall strategies on attendance, numeracy and literacy. This was also reflected in interviews with trust leaders who discussed how their strategies on literacy inform their feedback on strategy statements for their schools. One trust discussed how they had appointed a reading lead within their trust to coordinate support the plans for support across their schools.

"For us at the moment, reading is the biggest priority, and we also feel that as a central team it's something we can provide additional support with." (*Director of Education, trust*)

Types of support offered and how spending is distributed

This chapter looks at the types of support offered by schools and trusts through pupil premium and recovery premium and how funding is distributed across these types of support. It also looks at levels of premia spending across schools' expectations.

Types of support offered

DfE guidance on spending pupil premium sets out support schools could offer to disadvantaged pupils across three tiers in the menu of approaches.

- **High-quality teaching:** Having high-quality, effective teachers in all classrooms benefits the attainment of all pupils but is particularly important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools are encouraged to prioritise high quality teaching within their pupil premium strategy.
- **Targeted academic support:** Targeted activities and interventions to support pupils to make academic progress, such as tutoring and the deployment of teaching assistants, can be particularly beneficial for pupils who are not making good progress.
- **Wider strategies:** Non-academic challenges such as attendance, behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and parental engagement can have a negative impact on educational outcomes. Pupil premium can be used to address these wider barriers to learning.

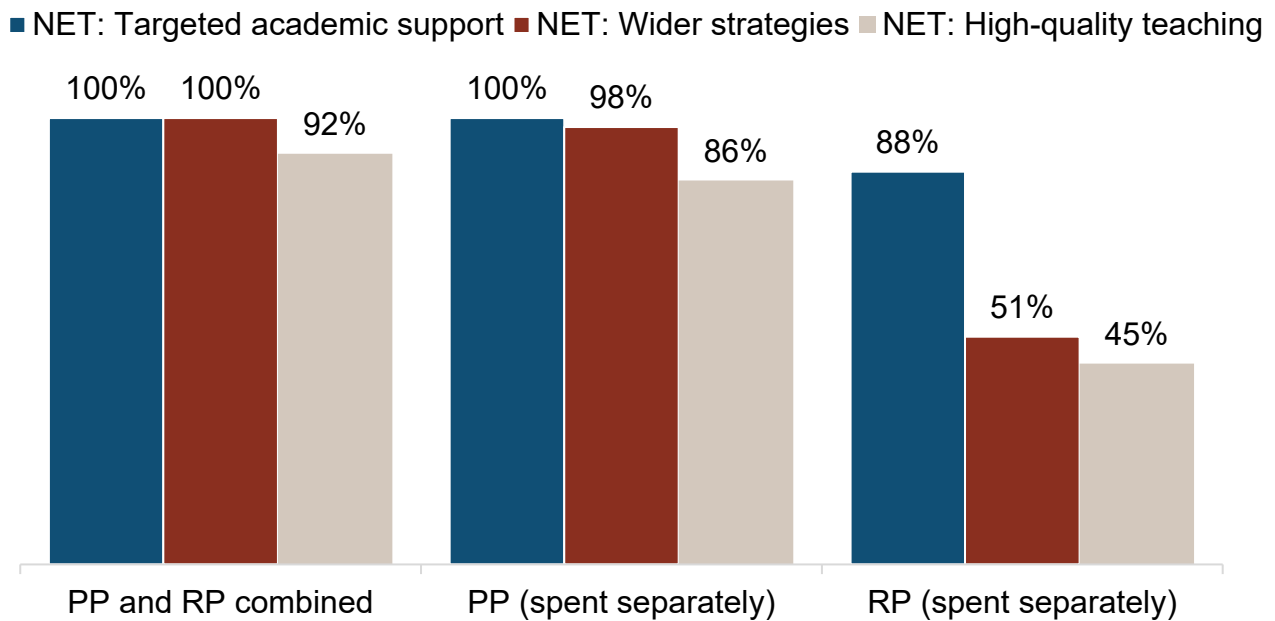
The expectation is that this additional funding is used to support actions which improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. The DfE particularly encourages schools to focus on high quality teaching.

Evidence from both the survey and in-depth interviews was consistent and showed that schools report spending the funding in line with the published menu of approaches.

Schools were asked which types of support they currently provided through the premia. The question was structured according to whether schools spent pupil premium and recovery premium together or treated them as separate pots of funding. As shown in Figure 18, pupil premium and (to a lesser extent) recovery premium were used to fund support in each of the three broad areas outlined in DfE and EEF guidance. Targeted academic support in particular was universally offered via pupil premium. Among schools that spent the premia separately, 88% used both pupil premium and recovery premium for this type of support.

Where the premia were spent separately, recovery premium was much less likely to be used for wider strategies (51%) or high-quality teaching (45%) than pupil premium (98% and 86% respectively).

Figure 18. Types of support provided by schools through the premia



SUPPPUP, SUPPREC1, SUPPREC2. Which, if any, of the following types of support does the school currently provide through pupil premium and/or recovery premium funding?

Base: All schools (2,152)

More broadly pupil premium is being used to fund a wide range of diverse activities in schools. Where the premia were being spent separately, it was most common for recovery premium to be used for one-to-one, small group or peer academic tuition, or targeted interventions to support language, literacy or numeracy (see Table 2).

Table 9. Types of support provided by schools through the premia

	PP and RP combined	PP (spent separately)	RP (spent separately)
NET: Targeted academic support	100%	100%	88%*
NET: Wider strategies	100%	98%	51%*
NET: High-quality teaching	92%	86%	45%*
Targeted interventions to support language development, literacy and numeracy	91%	88%	67%*
Social, emotional and behavioural support	91%	86%	41%*
School trips	86%	85%	20%*
In school extra-curricular activities (e.g. sport, art, music and outdoor activities)	83%	80%	21%*
One to one, small group or peer academic tuition	81%	80%	75%*
Teaching assistants	77%	72%	32%*
Supporting attendance	76%	72%	28%*
Targeted interventions (such as for pupils with SEND)	76%	69%	47%*
Effective professional development to improve support for disadvantaged pupils	74%	66%	23%*
Other specialist staff (e.g. learning mentor, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)	69%	61%	26%*
Broad and balanced knowledge-based curriculum to improve support for disadvantaged pupils	69%	61%	24%*
Meal provision (e.g. breakfast clubs)	61%	59%	14%*
Buying / supporting with cost of equipment	59%	61%	18%*

	PP and RP combined	PP (spent separately)	RP (spent separately)
Technology and other resources to support learning	53%	49%	26%*
Mentoring and coaching for teachers to support disadvantaged pupils	45%	42%	18%*
Communicating with and supporting parents	44%	38%	14%*
Supporting recruitment and retention of teaching staff	30%	23%	8%*
Out of school extra-curricular activities (e.g. Scouts or Guides)	26%	28%	8%*
Extended school time	22%	22%	11%*
Base size	1306	846	846

SUPPPUP, SUPPREC1, SUPPREC2. Which, if any, of the following types of support does the school currently provide through pupil premium and/or recovery premium funding?

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between pupil premium and recovery premium use within schools that spend the premia separately.

As discussed above, the qualitative interviews showed that schools funded activities that supported their wider strategies. Targeted academic support was often used to help improve school-wide phonics and maths outcomes. For example, one school described how they had a three-year phonics strategy for Key Stage 2 (KS2). As part of this they used the premia to fund a phonics programme including the bulk purchase of books and the cost of teacher training and support to implement the programme.

In the light of decreased attendance rates since the COVID-19 pandemic, wider strategies were key to schools' overall attendance strategies. Activities like breakfast clubs and cultural experiences incentivised parents and pupils to come into school.

Looking at the findings across all schools (regardless of whether they combined pupil premium and recovery premium or not) there were also some interesting differences by phase of education. Primary schools were considerably more likely to spend the premia to fund teaching assistants (83% vs. 54% of secondary schools). In contrast, secondary schools were more likely to spend the premia on buying or supporting with cost of equipment (86% vs. 56% of primary schools), technology and other learning resources

(73% vs. 49% of primary schools) and supporting recruitment and retention of teaching staff (52% vs. 23% of primary schools).

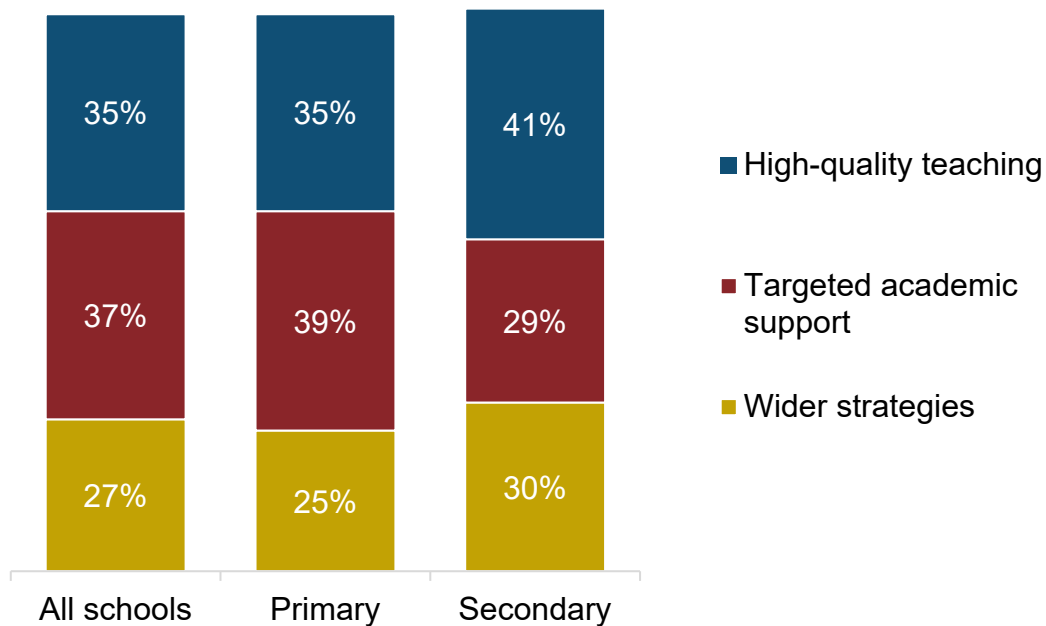
Supporting the development of wider cultural capital was more common in schools with fewer pupils recorded as eligible for FSM. Schools in the two quintiles with the least pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were more likely to spend the premia to fund school trips (90%), in school extra-curricular activities (85%) or out of school extra-curricular activities (31%) than schools in the quintile with the most pupils recorded as eligible for FSM (82%, 78% and 23% respectively).

Overall, schools in the quintile with the fewest pupils recorded as eligible for FSM were less likely to use the premia for high-quality teaching (84%) than schools with a larger proportion of pupils eligible for FSM (91%-93%).

How spending is distributed across activities

As shown in Figure 19, the amount that schools spent across the three broad categories of activities outlined in the menu of approaches was reasonably evenly distributed (with slightly less spent on wider strategies on average across all schools). However, secondary schools on average spent a larger proportion of the premia on high-quality teaching and wider strategies compared with primaries, and a lower proportion of the premia on targeted academic support. The relatively large average spend on targeted academic support in primary schools is consistent with earlier findings, which suggests primary schools were particularly likely to spend the premia on things like teaching assistants and targeted interventions.

Figure 19. Average distribution of premia spend across three broad categories of support



SPEND. Roughly how much of your pupil premium funding did you plan to spend on each of the three 'menu of approaches' tiers during the 2023/24 academic year?

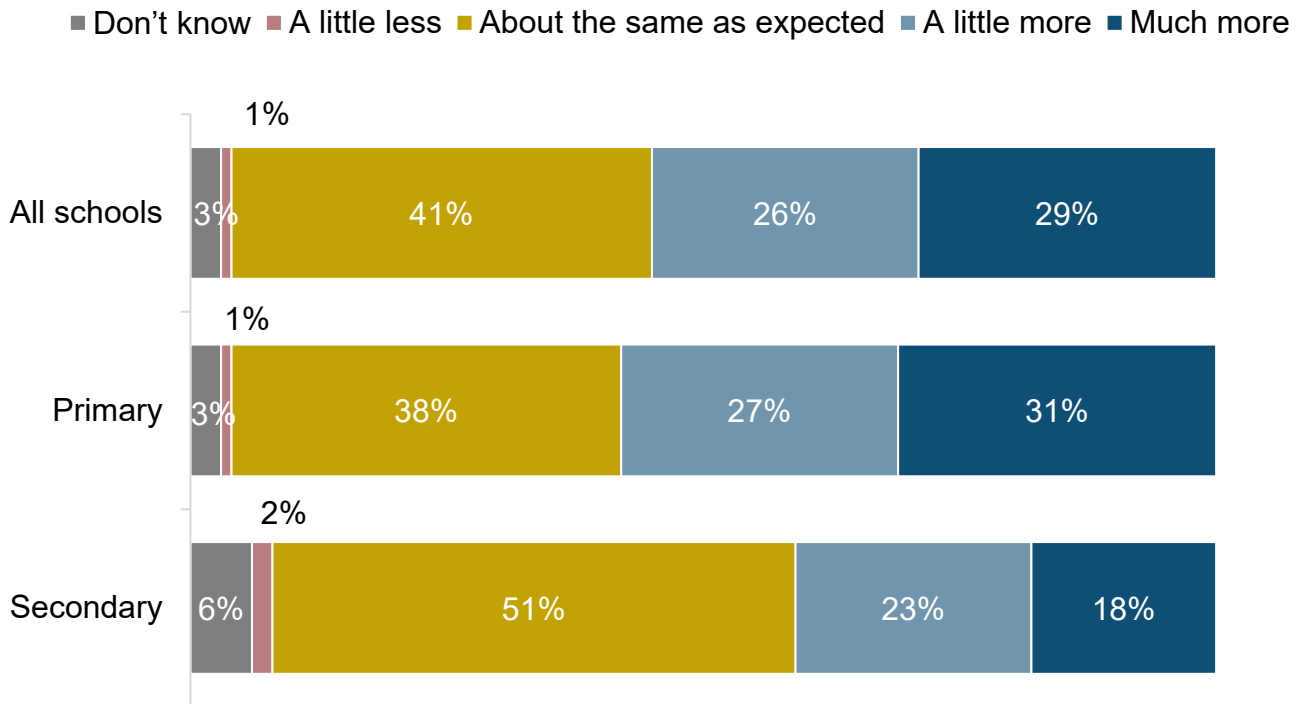
Base: All schools (2,152)

Actual spending compared with planned spending

Nearly all schools either spent more on the support outlined in the pupil premium strategy than they had planned (54%) or had spent about what they had expected (41%). Almost none (2%) said they had spent less than expected or didn't know (3%). As shown in Figure 20, primary schools were more likely to have spent a little or much more than they had planned (58%) than secondary schools (41%). In contrast, secondary schools were more likely to have spent about the same as they had expected (51% vs. 38% of primary schools). Within both primary and secondary phases, schools size also had a bearing on how likely schools were to spend more than they had expected. Generally, smaller primaries and smaller secondaries were more likely to have spent more than expected compared with larger primaries and larger secondaries.

The proportion of schools saying that they had spent more than expected did not vary by the percentage of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM.

Figure 20. School premia spending vs. planned / expected spend



MORLES. Overall, did you spend more or less on the support outlined in the strategy statement than planned?

Base: All schools who wrote or published a strategy statement (All schools: 2,136; Secondary: 358; Primary: 1,626)

Funding in multi-academy trusts

Concluding this chapter, most surveyed MATs did not pool school's premia across the trust to fund joint activities to support disadvantaged pupils. One in nine (11%) MAT leaders indicated that their trust did this, with 81% saying they did not pool funding and 8% saying they didn't know if their trust pooled premia funding.

Implementation

This chapter covers schools' experiences of setting up and delivering support through the premia, including their views of the barriers and enablers for successful delivery.

Experience of set up process

School leaders' experiences of setting up support funded by the premia were generally positive, although the process of setting up interventions varied depending on the type of support. Participants in the qualitative research spoke about a range of steps involved in the set-up process, including decision-making processes when creating strategy statements, identifying pupil needs and the logistical aspects of organising the support.

As discussed in the chapter on Diagnosing Need and Decision Making, the qualitative interviews showed a widespread view that the process of setting up support should begin with identifying pupil needs by reviewing relevant data and collecting feedback from teachers. School leaders also considered the effectiveness of previous interventions for addressing pupil needs, as well as the financial and logistical considerations associated with delivering support, such as staff recruitment and resourcing.

School leaders in both primary and secondary schools highlighted recruitment of staff as a key process in the set-up of funded support. Schools used the premia to fund additional TAs to provide support within the classroom, as well as other support staff to run interventions. For example, one primary school committed to having a TA in every class. In some cases, schools used the premia to fund specialist staff, such as occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and family support workers. Some schools, particularly those with higher proportions of pupils registered as FSM-eligible, also recruited or funded attendance leads to monitor attendance, coordinate a whole-school response to attendance strategies, and remove the responsibility of monitoring attendance from other staff. This was with the aim to maximise time for quality teaching and interventions.

Where schools were part of a trust, the trust also played a role in the procurement and financial aspects of setting up pupil premium-funded support. For example, some trusts were responsible for centrally purchasing equipment and resources (for example, IT equipment) or cross-commissioning external organisations and specialists for which there was shared need across multiple schools in the trust.

"There's two roles really - we can either broker and arrange, or we can contract manage and commission on their behalf, with collective bargaining, increasing purchasing power by driving down costs." (CEO, trust)

How support is delivered

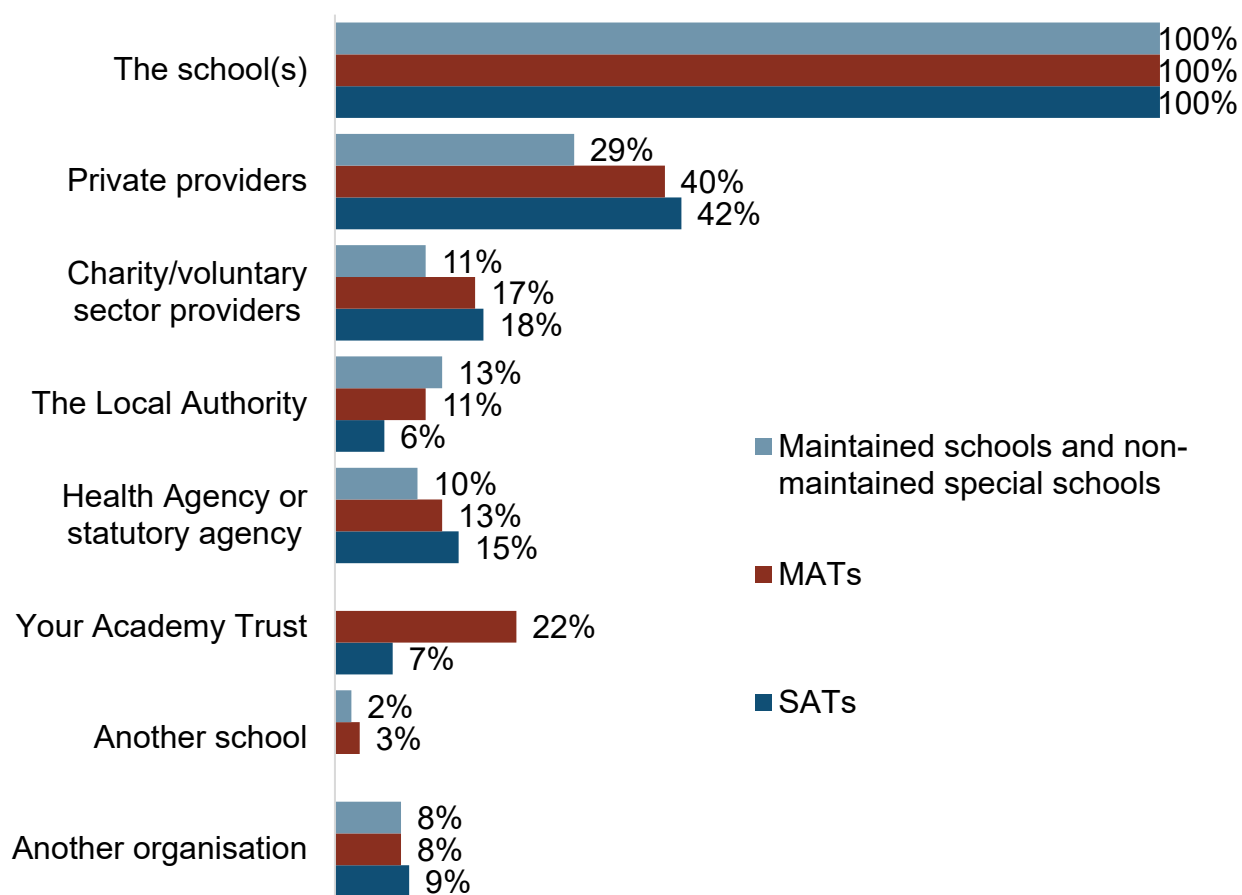
School experiences of support delivery

Schools can use pupil premium funding to deliver interventions themselves, or to fund interventions delivered by other organisations. Survey respondents were asked which organisations were responsible for delivering support services funded by pupil premium in their school in the 2023/24 academic year.

All surveyed schools (100%) said that the school itself was responsible for delivering at least some support provided through the premia. Additionally, around a third (35%) of schools said that private providers were responsible for support delivery. A smaller number of schools used charity/voluntary sector providers (14%), the local authority (12%), or a health or statutory agency (12%). One in 10 schools (10%) overall said that their academy trust was responsible for delivering support. Just over one in five (22%) schools in MATs said that their academy trust was responsible for delivering support compared with 7% of schools in SATs. Very few schools collaborated with other schools to deliver support, with only 3% saying that another school was involved in delivering interventions.

As shown in Figure 21, schools that were part of a MAT or a SAT were more likely than maintained schools and non-maintained special schools to use private providers to deliver support (40% of MATs and 42% of SATs, compared with 29% of maintained schools and non-maintained special schools). Schools that were part of a MAT were also more likely to use charity or voluntary sector providers (18% of MATs, compared with 11% of maintained schools) and health agencies or statutory agencies (13% of MATs, compared with 10% of maintained schools and non-maintained special schools). Finally, maintained and non-maintained special schools were more likely than SATs to use the local authority to deliver support (13% of maintained schools and non-maintained special schools, compared with 6% of SATs).

Figure 21. Organisations that are responsible for delivering support funded through pupil premium, by trust type



IMPRES P. Thinking about all the types of support that your school is offering through pupil premium in the 2023/24 academic year, which organisations are responsible for delivering these services?

Base: All respondent (Maintained and non-maintained special schools: 1,068; MATs: 955, SATs: 101)

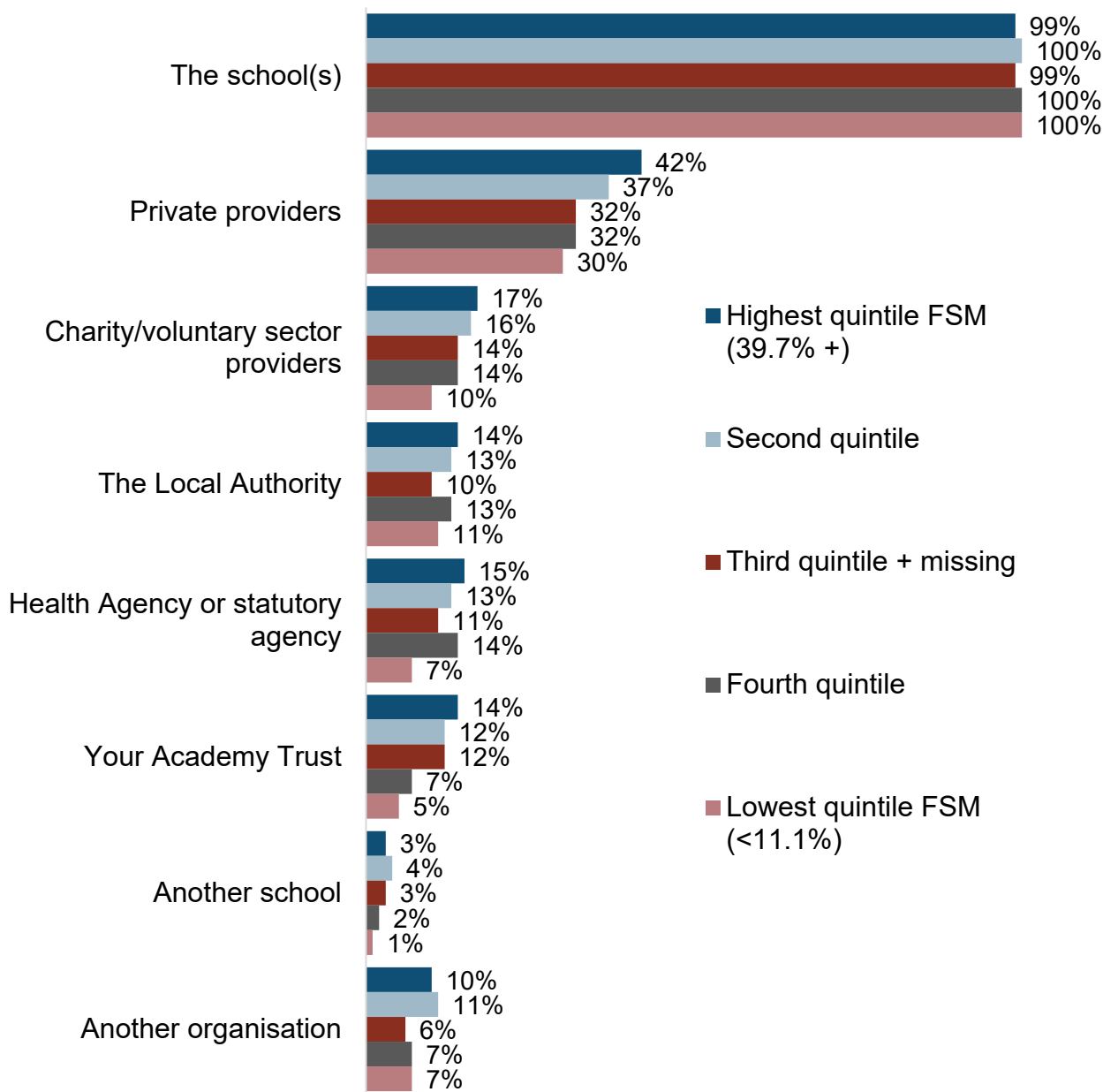
Secondary schools were more likely to have used private providers to deliver support (52%) than primary schools (30%). Among primary schools, larger schools (with 300 pupils or more) were more likely to use private providers (34% vs. 24% of schools with less than 100 pupils). Secondary schools were also more likely to use charity/voluntary sector providers (52%), the Health Agency or a statutory agency (19%), or another organisation (13%) than primary schools (30%, 10% and 7% respectively).

Schools with the highest percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible were more likely to have used external organisations to deliver support, such as private providers (42%), charity/voluntary sector providers (17%), a health or statutory agency (15%) or their academy trust (14%) than schools with the lowest percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible (30%, 10%, 7% and 7% respectively) (see Figure 22).

Most schools relied on a relatively small number of organisations to deliver support. Half of schools (49%) used only one provider, likely the school itself, to deliver support. A further quarter (25%) used two different organisations and 16% used three different

organisations. One in ten (11%) schools used four or more organisations to deliver support offered through pupil premium.

Figure 22. Organisations responsible for delivering support funded through pupil premium, by FSM quintile



IMPRES P. Thinking about all the types of support that your school is offering through pupil premium in the 2023/24 academic year, which organisations are responsible for delivering these services?

Base: All schools (2,152)

School leaders in the qualitative research had mixed experiences of working with external organisations to provide support. Participants tended to report positive experiences where external organisations had been used for extracurricular support, but negative experiences where they had been used for academic support, with school leaders reporting that they were better placed to support the academic needs of their

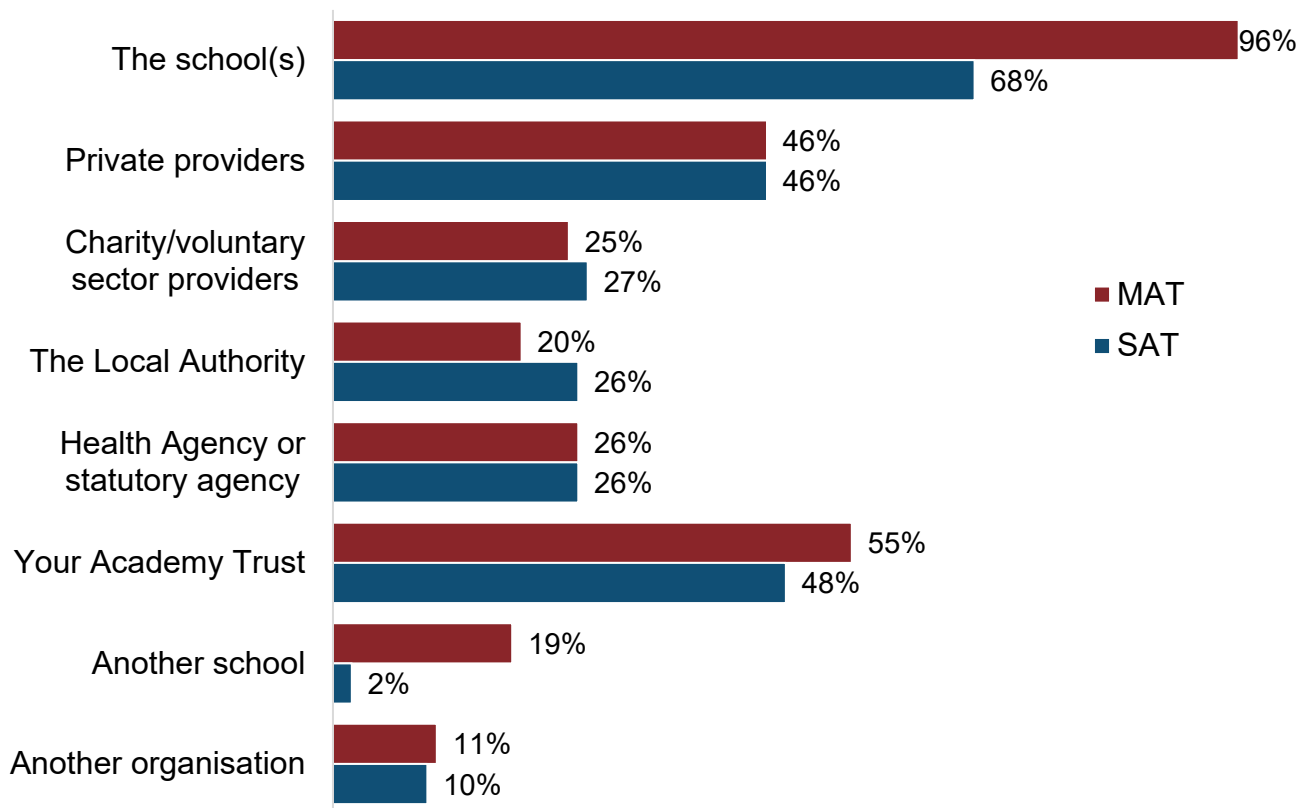
pupils internally. This is discussed in further detail in the section on Targeting Disadvantaged Pupils.

"It's quite hard [to find good external orgs] but once we do, we do invest in them and try to book them again and again. And it's better for our children because they recognise and know them. Our children need repetition." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

Trust experiences of support delivery

When the surveyed trusts were asked who was responsible for delivering support in their schools, 85% said that the schools themselves were responsible for delivering support. Schools that were part of MATs were more likely to be responsible for delivering the support (96%) than schools that were part of SATs (68%). Half of surveyed trusts (52%) said that the academy trust was responsible for delivering support and 46% said that private providers were used. In contrast to the findings from the school survey, 12% of trust respondents said that another school was responsible for delivering at least some of the support (compared with 3% of schools). This was more likely in MATs (19%) than SATs (2%), suggesting a degree of collaboration between schools in MATs (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Organisations responsible for delivering support funded through pupil premium



IMPRES.P. Thinking about all the types of support that your trust/school is offering through pupil premium in the 2023/24 academic year, which organisations are responsible for delivering these services?

Base: All trusts (324)

Targeting disadvantaged pupils

As discussed in the section covering the policy context above, the premia funding is intended to support disadvantaged pupils. Overall, premia funding was seen as crucial for schools to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils. In general, school leaders in both primary and secondary schools felt that the level of disadvantage (that is higher rates of disadvantage) in their school affected their ability to target disadvantaged pupils and affected the impact of support on these pupils. Schools that had higher levels of disadvantage had more significant challenges but received more premia funding to address these challenges.

"I've worked in very lovely leafy suburban schools before where they're getting the money and it's not necessarily going directly to those children, because there's not the same disadvantage, but in our school, there is so much disadvantage that I can hand on heart say, every single penny goes to those children. Without that, they would not be getting the support of the higher quality teaching, they wouldn't be getting the support of the teaching assistants alongside them on a one-to-one."
(Headteacher, primary school)

However, school size emerged as a potential facilitator in targeting disadvantaged pupils. School leaders in some smaller schools felt they could target their pupils more easily due to having a detailed understanding of each pupil's needs and the support they would benefit most from.

"That's what pupil premium does - it comes into a larger school, and you can afford additional resources to tackle a large group of pupils. In a small school, you've already got small numbers, and you just meet the needs of the pupils as you know them." *(Executive headteacher and CEO of trust)*

Smaller schools may also benefit more from their ability to deploy new teaching strategies or learning tools at a lower cost than larger schools. For example, smaller schools could more easily organise smaller teaching groups with targeted support for specific pupils who are underachieving.

Support funded by the premia was often not limited to disadvantaged pupils. School leaders discussed how, depending on the nature of the support provided, some activities would be accessible to all pupils and be beneficial to all.

"We're putting on events for the whole school - some of that pupil premium funding allows us to do that, which means that every child benefits." *(Headteacher, primary school)*

School leaders from special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) were less likely to report targeting specific groups or areas of disadvantage and felt this was due to the nature of their schools, where all pupils have various levels of disadvantage that intersect. These school leaders felt that premia funding benefits all pupils and would commonly provide support to all pupils that was funded by pupil premium and recovery premium.

Challenges to planning and delivering support

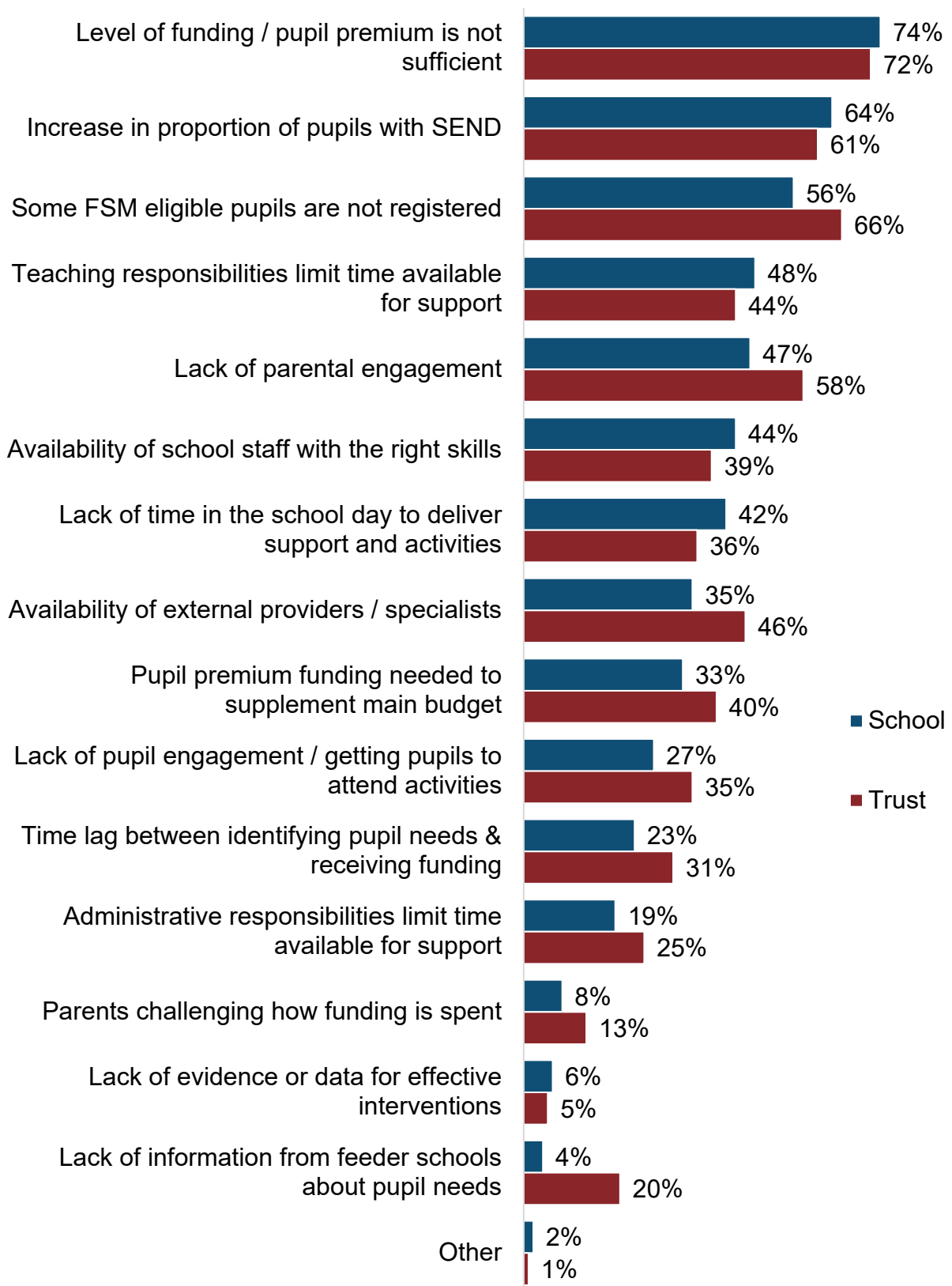
Schools, trusts and school leaders across the quantitative and qualitative research were asked what the main challenges were in relation to planning and delivering support through pupil premium in their school or trust.

School views of challenges to delivery

The three most common challenges to delivery and support identified through the school survey were an insufficient level of pupil premium funding (74%), an increase in the proportion of pupils with SEND (64%), and the fact that some FSM-eligible pupils were not registered (56%). Other frequently mentioned barriers included teaching responsibilities limiting time available to plan and deliver support (48%), lack of parental engagement (47%), availability of school staff with the right skills (44%) and a lack of time in the school day to deliver support and activities (42%) (see Figure 24).

Lack of parental engagement was more likely to be a barrier to secondary schools (62%) than primary schools (46%). It was also likely to be a greater challenge for schools with a 'good' (48%) or 'requires improvement/inadequate' (47%) Ofsted rating, compared with schools with an 'outstanding' rating (37%). Lack of parental engagement was least likely to be a barrier for schools with the fewest pupils recorded as eligible for FSM (33% in the quintile with the lowest percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible vs. 49-54% in all other quintiles).

Figure 24. Main challenges to planning and delivering support



BARRIER. What would you say are the main challenges to planning and delivering support through pupil premium?

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts: 324)

Just under half of schools identified lack of parental engagement (47%) as a barrier to planning and delivering support. Just over a quarter (27%) said that lack of pupil engagement/getting pupils to attend was a barrier to delivery. This was consistent with findings from the qualitative interviews with school leaders which identified the lack of engagement from both parents and pupils as a major challenge to delivery.

Some participants suggested that this was driven by a societal shift in attitudes towards education and school, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. School leaders highlighted that attendance issues were prevalent, especially amongst the most disadvantaged pupils, who were often the focus of the support. If pupils failed to attend school, they were unable to benefit from any interventions put in place to support them. Schools attempted to deal with this issue by keeping records of attendance at interventions and scheduling meetings with parents of pupils with low attendance to discuss available support and try and encourage greater engagement.

"In those highly deprived areas, if you're thinking about the Recovery Premium in particular, and booster groups...some of the children that you really want to target, you've got to address their attendance first, for them to be able to attend the groups." (*School improvement director, trust*)

Additionally, support such as reading interventions or subsidised music lessons were felt to be most effective if parents engaged at home and encouraged pupils to practice outside of school. A lack of parental engagement was therefore highlighted as detrimental to the effectiveness of pupil premium-funded interventions.

"I think some families think schools, and social workers etc, are trying to intervene...obviously that's not the case at all, we are just there to support them as a family, and their child to progress in life as well as progress academically. But I think it's just getting families on board." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

Issues with parental and pupil engagement appeared to be less common among special schools. Special schools were less likely to cite lack of parental engagement (18%) than mainstream schools (49%). They were also less likely to be impacted by lack of pupil engagement (7%) than mainstream schools (27%). In the qualitative research, special school leaders discussed how they felt the pandemic did not change pupils' lives as much as in mainstream schools as parents wanted pupils to continue attending school.

They also discussed how parental input can sometimes vary depending on their level of understanding of different support offered by the school. As a result, special schools worked closely with parents to engage them in decisions. For example, one special school described organising coffee mornings for parents, and including them in discussions with educational psychologists and occupational therapy when designing support for their pupils.

Negative experiences of working with external organisations were cited due to schools feeling that they were better placed to support the academic needs of their pupils internally. Support from external organisations tended to be more successful when schools received a recommendation for the provider from another school in their trust or local area. Schools often discussed that external academic support or programmes for reading and maths did not result in the academic progress they expected as they were unable to cater for specific pupils' needs.

"They actually made negative progress. Until we actually started to measure the reading age systematically, we didn't know it sent them backwards." (*Pupil premium lead, secondary school*)

Special schools faced particular challenges when working with external providers. Recommendations and guidance, especially relating to the use of external providers, were often targeted at mainstream schools, making it difficult to implement appropriate support. School leaders highlighted the fact that, while some providers advertise themselves as working with pupils with SEND, they do not understand the severity of their pupils' needs. One school said that they chose to only follow recommendations from other special schools and liked to invite providers to visit the school before employing them, to ensure they fully understood the needs of the pupils in the school.

"A lot of things can say 'we're SEN', but they're really not our sort of SEN. So, it's a lot of word of mouth and we'll often invite people in for a visit first because it's really important that they understand the needs of our children." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

Reflecting the 44% of schools that mentioned the availability of school staff with the right skills as a barrier, another challenge to implementing support was staff absence and recruitment issues. School leaders in the qualitative research discussed that staff absence and recruitment issues leading to insufficient staffing sometimes prevented consistent implementation of interventions, as staff were often moved around to deal with other issues. This was particularly highlighted as an issue by participants from small and alternative provision schools.

"Staffing is hard because we need so many...there's always an element of needing more." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

The cohort of pupils from families eligible for FSM but not claiming FSM also posed challenges for delivery. Pupil premium funding is allocated based on the number of pupils registered as eligible for FSM. However, not all eligible families register for FSM, because of lack of awareness, the administrative effort of applying or the stigma attached to receiving this type of support. This means that the value of premia funding that some schools receive is lower than would be expected because of the number of pupils not registered who experience disadvantage. In consequence, the allocation does not reflect

the level of need due to disadvantage within the school, limiting the activities that schools are able to implement.

Schools confirmed that this was the case during the qualitative interviews. They identified that fewer families had claimed FSM in comparison to the number of eligible pupils, as a barrier to effective implementation.

Schools felt there was a need to tackle this issue by raising awareness about the purpose of pupil premium funding in order to encourage parents to sign up.

"I think there's a stigma - do you qualify for a free school meal - pupil premium, I feel, is a much nicer way to wording it...saying you need your child to eat for free, there could be a stigma around that." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

"I think anyone that doesn't work in education has no idea what pupil premium is." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

Trust views of challenges to delivery

Consistent with findings from the school survey, the biggest barrier to planning and delivering support reported by trusts was an insufficient level of pupil premium funding (72%). Other common barriers included some FSM-eligible pupils not being registered (66%), an increase in proportion of pupils with SEND (61%) and a lack of parental engagement (58%). The least common barriers reported by trusts were a lack of information from feeder schools about pupil needs (20%), parents challenging how funding was spent (13%) and having a lack of evidence or data for effective interventions (5%) (see Figure 24).

Enablers of effective planning and delivery

Qualitative fieldwork identified several factors which support schools to successfully implement premium support. Firstly, school leaders highlighted the importance of having well-trained staff to deliver support to pupils. This enabled a greater range of support to be delivered internally by staff who know the pupils best. For example, one school used pupil premium funding to professionally train teachers to help pupils deal with cognitive overload, emotional regulation and other challenges they may face in the classroom. Additionally, as discussed in the section covering experiences of implementation, the recruitment of support staff for specific roles, such as attendance leads, worked well by enabling teachers to allocate more time to delivering the support.

"We find it is the expertise of the class teachers that is the most effective, and so that has been used greatly with the recovery funding."
(*Headteacher, primary school*)

School leaders also highlighted the importance of tailoring support to individual pupils. Some schools described implementing additional one-to-one support to pupils who were struggling with certain subjects. Other schools shared how they organised lunchtime clubs aimed at providing informal spaces for pupils to access support with schoolwork in a quieter environment than the classroom. These interventions were aimed at helping those who might struggle in a classroom environment or find it overwhelming.

Additionally, school leaders' experiences of working with external organisations was also recognised as an element of delivering support that worked well. As discussed above school leaders tended to report positive experiences where external organisations had been used for extracurricular and emotional support such as educational psychologists and counsellors as opposed to for academic-based interventions. Schools often saw the external counsellors, psychologists and mental health professionals as part of the school staff and community. These schools felt that the work done with pupils in this area, particularly around self-regulation and emotional intelligence, had profound impacts on pupils' readiness to come to school and learn.

"We've got such a good system set up, with having all these outside provisions coming in, to do work with us, it is working well." (*Middle leader, special school*)

"We will be lost without them [counselling services] if we can't find a way of funding them moving forwards - the need from our young people for this mental health support is high." (*Assistant headteacher, secondary school*)

Some schools also discussed how the use of these external professionals facilitated the provision of an additional level of specialist intervention that the school would otherwise not have been able to provide. For example, one school discussed how 'Thrive', a whole-school programme to improve pupils' mental health, had resulted in improved relationships between teachers and pupils in the school and more confident pupils who are being listened to by their teachers.

"It's taught them [adults in school] to talk to the children in a different way, to validate their feelings and their emotions. We have seen definitely, a more confident child, a child that feels like they're listened to, that they're heard." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

School leaders also highlighted that clear communication between schools and external organisations was a key enabler in improving the outcomes of the support delivered. Schools emphasised the importance of effective ways of working between the school and these external organisations, such as by having a specific staff member (for example SENCO) that is responsible for liaising with external organisations to plan support.

Some school leaders emphasised the positive impact that engaging with families can have on the implementation of support. For example, one school had a family liaison officer who worked with families of disadvantaged pupils to provide them with additional support, with the aim of improving attendance amongst these pupils. This support for families was itself partially funded by pupil premium but also facilitated the implementation of other types of support, such as in-school interventions, by ensuring pupils were in school to receive them.

"We've got a family liaison officer who works with those families, who goes around their house...and has a cup of tea with that mum if they're having a bad day, because otherwise if they're having that bad day, and they go down that spiral, their child isn't going to come to school for 2 weeks, which we've seen happen many times. So, it's about looking at that whole family." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

School leaders in the qualitative research had mixed responses when asked if additional support to target pupils would enable more effective support planning and delivery. The prevalent response from school leaders was that there was little requirement for additional support from other sources as school staff had deep knowledge and understanding of their pupils' needs and were therefore best placed to implement any support that specifically target disadvantaged pupils. These schools often cited the need for more funding rather than support to target disadvantaged pupils. School leaders also often felt the guidance they currently receive was sufficient and that anything more detailed would pose the risk of being irrelevant to their local context.

"I know my children well, and I know their needs." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

However, some schools, especially special schools, welcomed the suggestion of more specific guidance from DfE. A trust with five schools in specialist settings (including alternative provision) described the need for clarity around dual registration, as pupils are often registered to a mainstream school that they do not currently attend but their pupil premium funding cannot be accessed by the specialist school where they are also registered. Other special schools felt more tailored guidance from DfE on funding decisions would be useful.

"Clarity around dual registration would be really helpful...if it's meant for the pupil, it should follow the pupil." (*CEO, trust*)

"If there was a bank somewhere of people that would be really good, rather than just having to turn to other special schools. A bank of approved people for really severe SEN children so that you could find them easily, rather than hoping that you're going to come across someone that actually really does get it." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

A central resource of approved external support providers that could be filtered according to local area was suggested by some participants. This would improve confidence in the support schools provide and facilitate tailored interventions for specific issues.

"I would love there to be a collated document with 'these are all the things that are DfE approved, these are the things that have had impact'. So, if you have girls who are struggling with their well-being because of confidence or whatever you know there is a really good programme that will cost you X amount that you can access from here, because it can be really time consuming to try and find things." (*Assistant headteacher, secondary school*)

Among school leaders who welcomed additional support, insights around shared learning in local contexts also emerged. These schools were likely to suggest networking events, support groups and other forums as a way to connect with other schools in their local area or schools in other parts of the country that had similar contexts and challenges to theirs. It was felt that this would facilitate more creative support funded by premia. Special schools in particular welcomed shared learning on innovative approaches or methods for their pupils.

"Pinpointing strategies that have worked with schools that are in a similar situation." (*Deputy headteacher, secondary school*)

"I don't want to know about a multi-academy trust and how they've managed to make a difference. I want to know how schools just like mine, in very challenging areas and with very similar challenges, how do they make it?" (*Headteacher, primary school*)

"As we are fully aware nowadays, one size doesn't fit all, and what could have worked in one school, won't necessarily work in another. It's looking for evidence informed approaches." (*School improvement director, trust*)

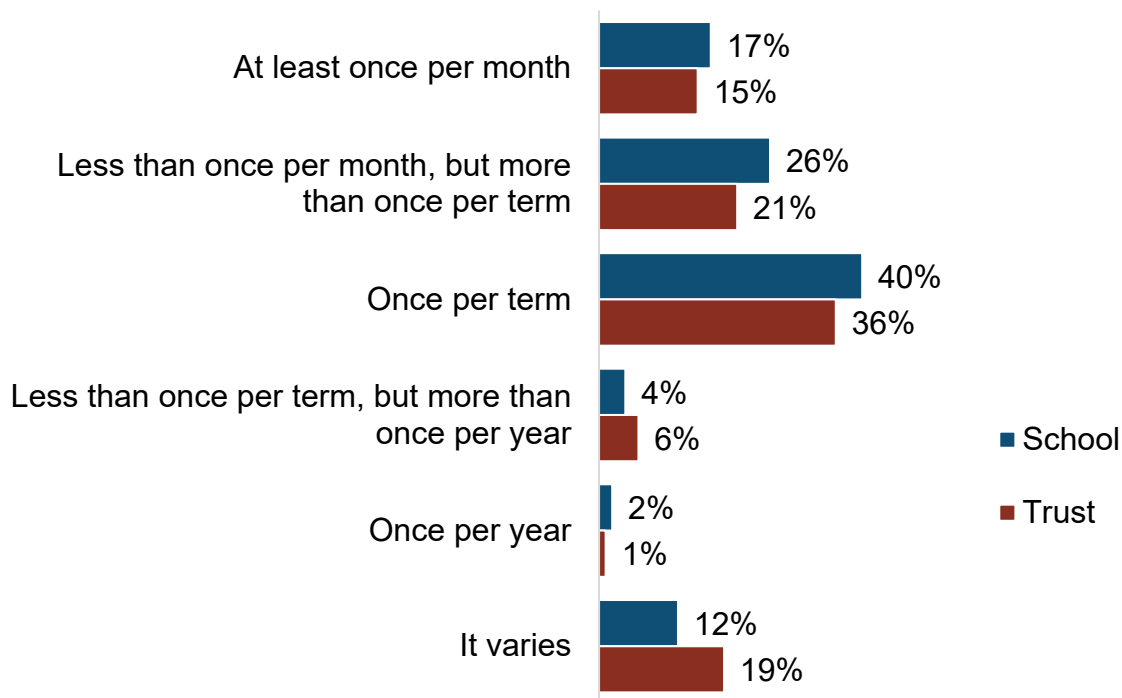
Monitoring and evidence

This chapter covers the ways schools monitor the delivery of support throughout the year, as well as how they measure the impact of support on disadvantaged pupils. This chapter also explores schools' experiences of contingency planning and monitoring and recording changes to support.

When support is monitored

Schools and trusts were asked how often they monitor support offered through pupil premium to ensure that it was being delivered as expected. Both schools and trusts most commonly monitored the delivery of support once per term (40% of schools and 36% of trusts). The remaining schools tended to monitor support more regularly, either at least once per month, or less than once per month but more than once per term (see Figure 25). One in ten schools (12%) and one in five trusts (19%) said that the frequency at which they monitor the delivery of support varied. A small proportion of schools (2%) and trusts (1%) only monitored delivery of support once per year. This was consistent with the qualitative data, where school leaders most commonly discussed collecting feedback from parents, pupils and staff every term. Attainment data was also often collected every term, whereas data on engagement and attendance were often collected more frequently.

Figure 25. How frequently schools and trusts monitor delivery of support



MONFREQ. How frequently do you monitor the delivery of support offered through pupil premium across your school/trust?

Base: All who monitor delivery of support (Schools: 2,137; Trusts: 312)

How support is monitored

School monitoring of support delivery

Schools were asked how they monitored the support offered through pupil premium to ensure that it was being delivered as expected. Similar patterns arose from both the survey and the qualitative interviews.

The most frequently used approach was monitoring delivery of support via feedback from staff involved in delivery (79%). Schools also commonly collected feedback from pupils (61%) and tested pupils to assess impact (57%) (Figure 26).

Figure 26. How schools and trusts monitor delivery of support



MONHOW. How do you monitor whether the support offered through pupil premium in your trust is delivered as expected?

Base: All respondents (Schools: 2,152; Trusts: 324)

Consistent with the quantitative findings, outcome-focused monitoring activities discussed by leaders included collecting pupil, parent and teacher feedback about specific interventions, as well as running formal assessments, lesson observations and assessing exercise books. They also discussed financial monitoring activities used to inform tweaks to the support offer throughout the year. This largely consisted of regularly reviewing budgets to ensure the funding was being spent where it had been initially planned and creating termly and yearly financial reports to be sent to governors for review.

When monitoring support based on pupil outcomes, there was a specific focus on disadvantaged pupils compared to their peers. One school described how pupil progress meetings with class teachers focused on a range of different groups of pupils, including whole-class progress, progress of pupils who attract pupil premium and SEND pupils. They compared information between these groups to identify why some groups of pupils may perform less well than others. Another school ensured they included some pupils

who attracted pupil premium in their pupil voice groups, and other schools kept additional progress and target documents for disadvantaged pupils so they could be monitored more closely.

"For those bottom 20% [of disadvantaged pupils] of our children, there's an additional tracking grid that's just for those children. We want them to be making the most progress because they're getting above and beyond, they're getting more than everybody else." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

Reviewing of strategy statements was also part of the monitoring process, with nine in ten (89%) schools reporting that they refer back to their statement when monitoring delivery within the school year. School leaders in the qualitative interviews reported regularly reviewing their statement (often every term) in relation to the outcomes of the monitoring activities discussed above. This process helped to hold schools accountable for progress and make necessary changes to their strategy throughout the year. For example, some school leaders said their school 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rated types of support outlined in their strategy statement, to identify which types of support were working well and which needed adjusting. This enabled them to clearly monitor progress against the strategy statement throughout the year.

Trust monitoring of support delivery

Trusts were less likely to monitor delivery of support via feedback from staff involved in delivery (69%) than schools (79%). They were also less likely to use feedback from pupils (54% vs. 61%) and to test pupils to assess impact (48% vs. 57%) (Figure 26). This may be because trusts have less direct access to staff and pupils within their schools, making it harder to gather feedback and conduct testing.

In contrast, trusts were more likely than schools to monitor delivery of support by checking that new support they planned to deliver had started (46% vs. 39%). Trust staff interviewed as part of the qualitative research generally acknowledged that monitoring of support was largely done at the school rather than the trust level. The main ways trust leaders said they were involved in monitoring throughout the year were most commonly related to governance and oversight of schools' own monitoring activities, such as quality assuring monitoring systems and reviewing annual and termly data collected by schools and delivered to the trust. This data included behaviour and safeguarding reviews, special needs reviews and attainment data. Some trusts discussed more practical monitoring activities they undertook such as informal classroom visits. One trust also discussed how, whilst they were not directly involved in monitoring activities, they were responsible for ensuring trust-wide guidance for support monitoring was put in place, promoting best practice and ensuring consistency across the trust.

Measuring the impact of support

As well as being asked how they monitored whether support was being delivered as expected, schools were also asked how they measured the impact of the support on disadvantaged pupils. Almost all schools surveyed (98%) used 'improvements in pupil progress or attainment' to measure the impact of the support offered through pupil premium. School leaders in the qualitative research also reported using academic attainment progress, gathered through assessment, as a measure of impact. In primary schools, evidence from reading, writing and numeracy assessments was collected, and secondary schools commonly used evidence from in-class tests and mock exams.

As shown in Figure 27, data relating to improvements in attendance (89%) was also commonly used to measure the impact of support. This was more common among schools in the three quintiles with the most FSM eligible pupils (91%-93%) than those in the two quintiles with the fewest FSM eligible pupils (82%-86%). In the qualitative research, leaders from schools with a high proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for FSM cited attendance data as a key piece of evidence used to determine the effectiveness of support in their school. These schools highlighted low attendance, particularly amongst disadvantaged pupils, as a key issue faced by their schools. Attendance evidence was also valued by trust staff, who used this to determine whether the schools within their trust were effectively delivering support.

"You're spending money and organising everything around very intricate provision around a group of pupils, and if they're not in school, it's not having any impact at all." (*Headteacher, primary school*)

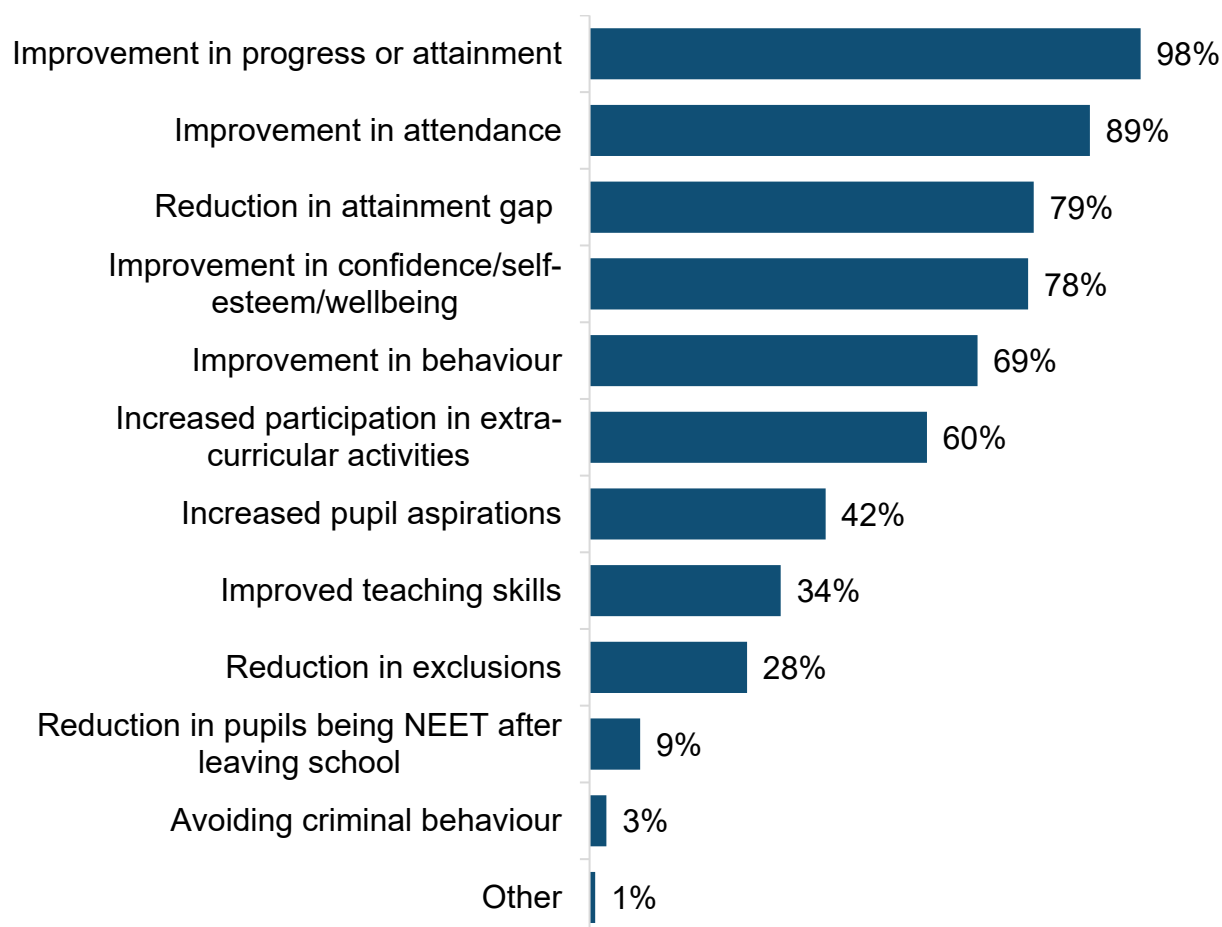
"As a trust, we're putting money into making sure pupils are in school, because then they benefit from carefully planned provision that's been provided in school." (*Executive headteacher, trust*)

Other common measures of impact reported in the quantitative survey were a reduction in the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers (79%), improvements in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing (78%), improvements in behaviour (69%) and increased participation in extra-curricular activities (60%).

Improvements in behaviour were more likely to be used as a measure of impact in secondary schools (87%) than primary schools (65%). Similarly, schools with a 'requires improvement/inadequate' Ofsted rating were more likely to use behaviour information as a measure (78%) than schools rated 'outstanding' (66%) or 'good' (69%). Schools with higher proportions of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible were also more likely to use behaviour to measure impact (71-75% of schools in the three highest quintiles) than schools in the lowest quintile (61%).

In contrast, primary schools were more likely to measure the impact of support by looking at improvements in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing (83% vs. 57% of secondary schools). Additionally, improvements in confidence, self-esteem or wellbeing were more likely to be used to measure impact in schools in the quintile with the lowest percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible (86%) compared with all other quintiles (75-78%).

Figure 27. How schools measure impact of support

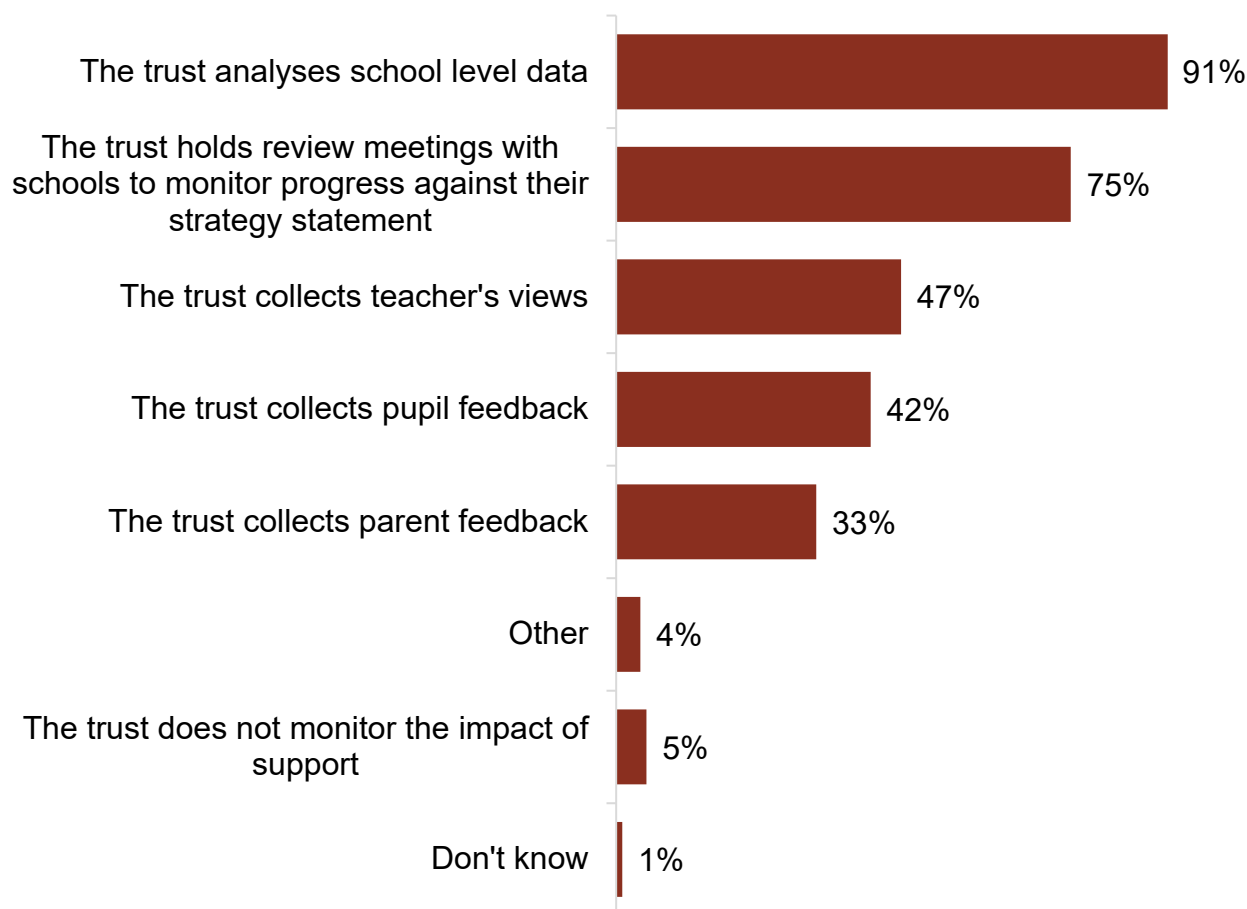


IMPACTMEAS. How do you measure the impact of your support for disadvantaged pupils, do you look at any of the following...

Base: All schools who measure impact on disadvantaged pupils specifically (1,848)

Surveyed trusts were asked how they monitored the implementation and impact of the support offered through pupil premium. The most common method of monitoring was by analysing school-level data (91%), followed by holding review meetings with schools to monitor progress against their strategy statement (75%). Other forms of monitoring, which were used by less than half of trusts, were collecting teacher, parent and pupil feedback (Figure 28). A small proportion said that the trust does not monitor the impact of support (5%).

Figure 28. How trusts monitor the implementation and impact of support



MATIMP. Which, if any of the following does the trust use to monitor the implementation and impact of the support?

Base: All MATs (237)

Experiences of contingency planning and monitoring change

Experience of recording change

School leaders' experiences of monitoring and recording change were mixed. Some school leaders found the strategy statement template to be inflexible, and therefore limited changes were made to it throughout the year. Other schools felt that their strategies and strategy statements were relatively flexible, with changes to the support offer being recorded in the statement throughout the year. Changes were also recorded in documents such as school development plans and minutes from governor meetings. However, even schools who felt that they could update their strategy if needed tended to make only small tweaks to support rather than wider changes to the strategy, therefore limited monitoring of change was required.

"It's easy to change if I want to, but I don't feel that I need to." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

Experience of contingency planning

School leaders generally felt that changes to their planned support and spend were inevitable due to changing pupil numbers and levels of need throughout the school year. Therefore, there was an element of contingency planning built into their strategy statements and plans, but this varied across schools.

Some schools and trusts interviewed reported keeping a small amount of premia funding aside in case unexpected costs arose throughout the year. For example, one secondary school allocated approximately 70% of the funding to their support offer at the start of the year, with the remaining 30% kept for contingencies which may come up throughout the year, such as travel costs for disadvantaged pupils or grants to help struggling families. Other schools, who received less funding, were unable to keep a significant proportion of the funding aside but were able to keep a small buffer.

"We try and allocate as much of the costings as we can so that the income we're getting actually matches our spend plan, but there is generally room for a buffer. Not huge amount, perhaps even just £2000 that can be used for something that might come up, which we can put on the PP statement as additional resources." (*Finance manager, secondary school*)

However, overall, school leaders felt there was limited scope within the premia funding to keep money aside for unexpected costs. When unexpected costs did arise, schools often had to use money from different funding pots, such as the general school budget, put forward a business case to their trust for additional funding, or apply for funding from elsewhere (for example, from charitable grants). For more information on spending, see Figure 20. One participant described how their executive headteacher engaged in outreach work within the local community. This helped to bring funding into the school, which was used to fund additional activities for the pupils, such as school discos. However, if unexpected costs relating to pupil premium support arose, this money would instead be used to fund this support.

"There's a website with technological grants, grants for school finances, buildings, so we apply for those where we see fit. We also have our parent-teacher association, and they raise money for us as well." (*Deputy headteacher, primary school*)

Future plans for support and the end of recovery premium

This chapter covers schools' plans for their support offer in the future, including any changes in the coming year (2024/25) and impacts of the end of recovery premium on support.

Plans for 2024/25 academic year

The qualitative interviews revealed a range of views about plans to use pupil premium funding over the forthcoming academic year. Some school leaders were confident that the packages of support they were providing at the time of interview met pupil needs and did not foresee significant change over the coming year. However, schools often acknowledged that this would be dependent on the needs of the pupils joining the school in the next academic year. Special and alternative provision schools in particular felt that limited changes to their support offer would be required. This was because they expected the backgrounds and needs of pupils joining the school in the coming year to be similar to those of current pupils, with support already being implemented to meet these needs.

"I think the model works well for our children and our needs don't change very much. Our cohort stays very similar - we're not going to suddenly get a lot more deprived children." (*Deputy headteacher, special school*)

Where school leaders did discuss plans to make changes to their pupil premium support offer, these were often relatively small changes to individual activities, rather than large-scale changes to the overall support package or approach. For example, one school decided that the literacy intervention they were currently using was not having the desired results, with only a very small percentage of pupils making sufficient progress. Therefore, they planned to trial an alternative literacy intervention for KS2 pupils in the 2024/25 academic year. Other schools planned to make changes to the staff delivering interventions, such as by switching from external providers to in house staff.

School leaders who did expect substantial change over the coming year often focused on negative changes, due to increasingly stretched budgets and growing numbers of pupils in their schools. In these cases, changes included removing support for pupils wanting to attend out-of-school sports clubs, reducing the number of staff delivering the support and stopping cultural activities.

"I don't think in the format it's in, we will be able to sustain what we've been doing, I think we're going to have to look much more critically...I think we will struggle going forward." (*Business manager, primary school*)

However, some schools did plan for positive changes to their support approach, such as increasing the focus on maths teaching and learning (based on attainment data), improving support for SEND pupils and increasing the focus on emotional wellbeing and pastoral support. For example, one school planned to add outdoor learning, in the form of forest schools, to their offer for the next year, with the aim of having a positive impact on social and emotional behaviour. These larger changes were particularly the case for schools who were expecting to expand over the coming years or were nearing the end of the three years that their strategy statement was planned to cover.

There were also mixed views from the trust leaders who participated in the qualitative interviews on whether there would be changes to support in the coming year. Those who thought there would be little to no changes generally felt their support plans were working well and there was no need to adjust them. Those who planned for changes to support cited various reasons for this. One trust discussed how many of their schools' 3-year strategy statements were coming to an end and therefore they imagined a more thorough review of the support offered would occur. As part of this, the trust wanted to have a renewed focus on continuous professional development (CPD) for school staff. Another trust discussed how they planned to have a renewed focus on emerging evidence-based models of intervention and that any changes to support would prioritise these types of support.

"We expect to be utilising more consistently, evidence-based models of intervention for all pupils...as and when emerging research is putting forward models for us to consider adopting." (*CEO, trust*)

One trust discussed how they would have a renewed focus on pupil premium funding at the trust level in the coming year, to help shape priorities for their schools.

"There will be a renewed drive, I would say at trust level next year, because we are going to be putting a spotlight on pupil premium data...because we recognise that we can do even more for those pupils and it will through really spotlighting that data, that we can raise even greater awareness of key children, that can then be targeted, so that their outcomes improve." (*CEO, trust*)

Impact of the end of recovery premium

School leaders were asked how they expected the end of the recovery premium funding after the 2023/24 academic year to affect their future support plans. Opinions about the end of recovery premium funding were mixed. School leaders either tended to feel that it was an appropriate time to end the premium, or that it was too soon as they were still seeing the negative impact of the pandemic on their most disadvantaged pupils.

The survey asked schools what they planned to do, if anything, 'to fill the funding gap' left by the end of the funding. The most common plans, reported by around half of

respondents, were to stop providing some forms of support (52%) and to look for cost-savings elsewhere (52%).

In qualitative interviews, school leaders also mentioned needing to end some types of support in response to the end of recovery premium funding, such as one-to-one tutoring and extra-curricular activities/trips, as well as reducing numbers of support staff. These changes to plans were generally expected to have negative knock-on effects on pupils' outcomes. Some schools also discussed plans to restructure budgets and raise funds elsewhere.

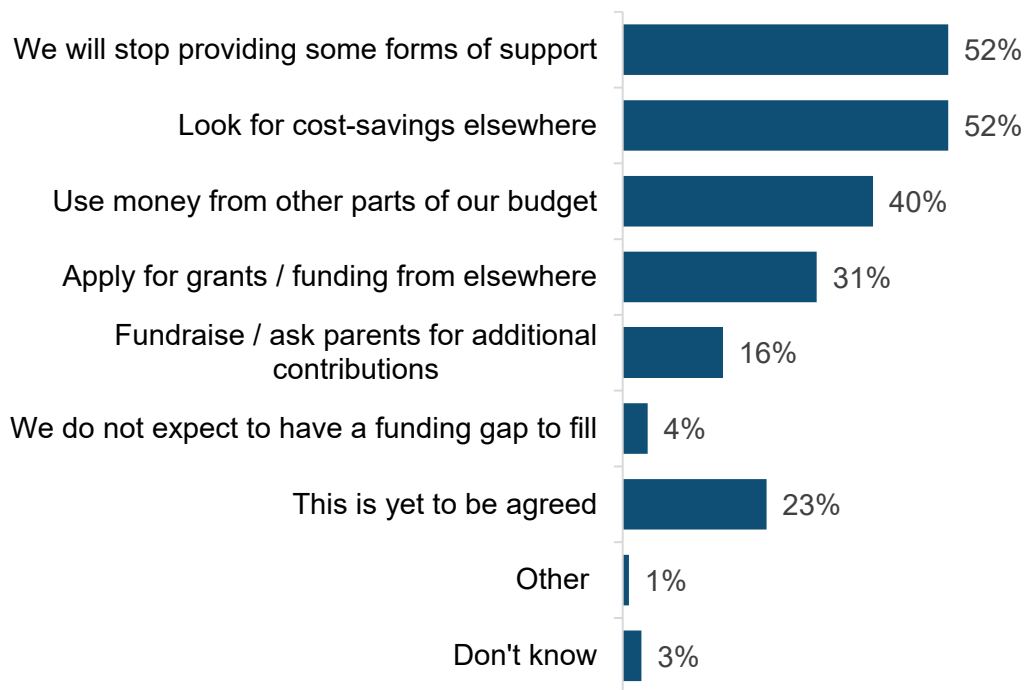
"In September [2024] we're actually losing funding for our extra TA hours. We [will have] lost 4 afternoons of TAs, so it's going to be even worse next year. It's not great for them [TAs] financially but also for schools...we haven't got that support in the afternoon even for lessons like art. It really is going to be difficult." (*Pupil premium lead, primary school*)

Schools with higher proportions of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible were more likely to say they would look for cost-savings elsewhere (51-56% of schools in the four highest quintiles) than schools with lower proportions (44% of schools in the lowest quintile). Similarly, schools with higher proportions of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible were more likely to say they would apply for grants/funding from elsewhere (39% of schools with the highest proportion vs. 26-29% of schools in the lowest three quintiles).

Schools with multiple sources of funding which specifically aimed to support disadvantaged pupils were also more likely to look for cost-savings elsewhere (55%) than schools with only one source of funding (46%). They were also more likely to apply for grants/funding elsewhere (34% vs. 25%), or to use money from other parts of the budget (46% vs. 29%). These were less likely to say they would stop providing some forms of support (50%) than schools which solely relied on the premia funding (58%).

Other common plans included using money from other parts of the budget (40%) and applying for grants/funding from elsewhere (31%) (see Figure 29). Almost one quarter (23%) were unable to share their plans at the time of fieldwork (March-May 2024) as their approach for the end of recovery premium had not yet been agreed. A minority of schools (4%) said that they did not expect to have a funding gap to fill.

Figure 29. Schools' plans to fill funding gap after recovery premium funding ends



RPGAP. What are you planning to do, if anything, to fill the funding gap left by the end of the recovery premium from 2024/25?

Base: All schools (2,152)

In addition to asking about plans to fill the funding gap when the recovery premium funding ends, the survey (conducted in Spring 2024) asked schools about any wider actions they intended to take.

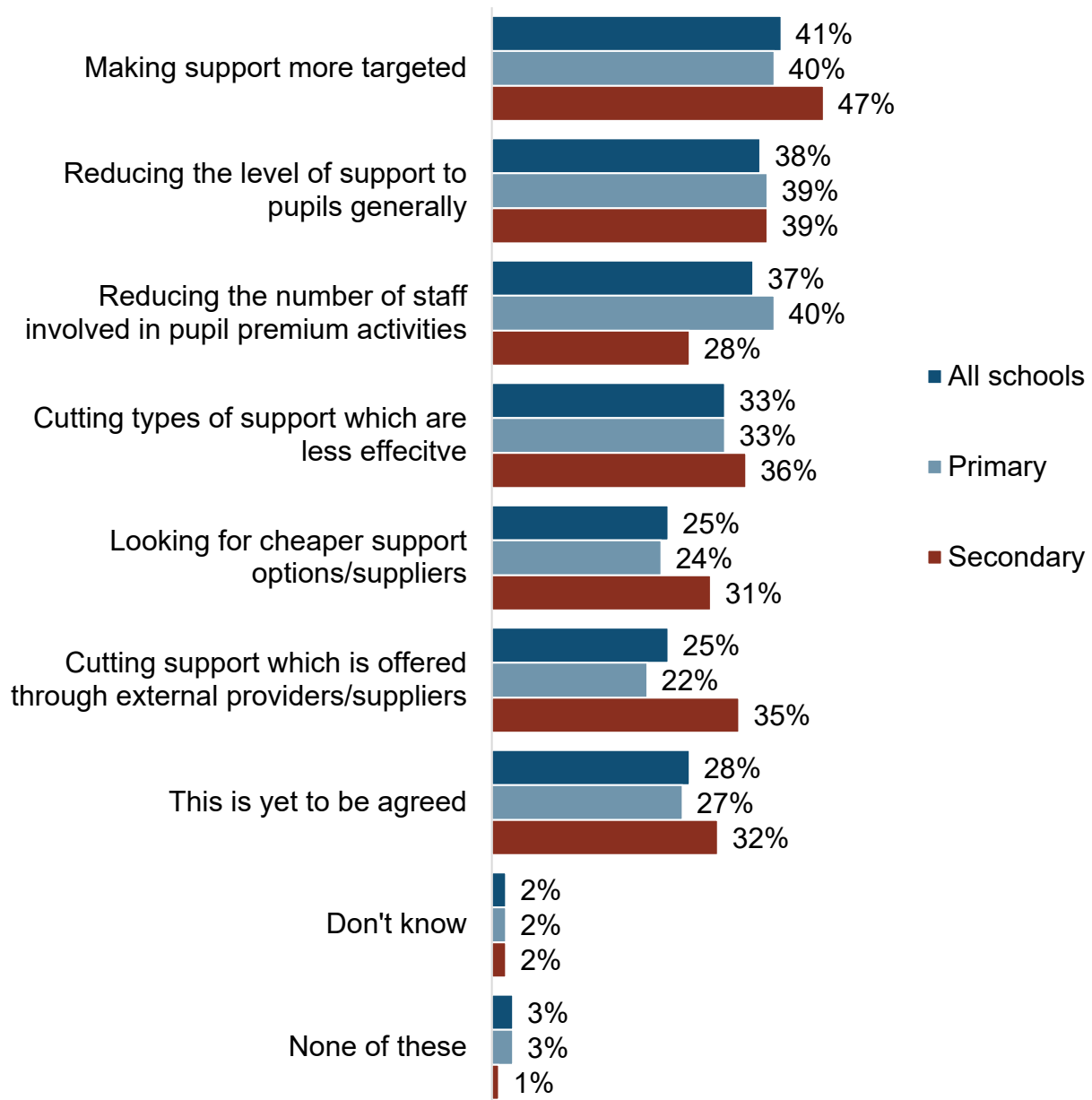
Across all schools, the most common plans to manage the end of recovery premium were to make support more targeted towards pupils who need it most (41%), reduce the level of support to pupils generally (38%) and reduce the number of staff involved in pupil premium activities (37%). Again, more than a quarter of surveyed schools said that their plans were yet to be agreed (see Figure 30). Secondary schools were slightly more likely than primary schools to have not yet agreed what they plan to do when recovery premium funding ends (32% vs 27%).

Primary schools were more likely to have planned to reduce the number of staff involved in pupil premium activities as a result of the end of recovery premium (40%) than secondary schools (28%). In contrast, secondary schools were more likely to have planned to make support more targeted to pupils who need it most (47%) than primary schools (40%), to cut support offered through external suppliers (34% vs. 22%), or to look for cheaper support options/suppliers (31% vs. 24%). Secondary schools were also more likely to have not yet agreed their plans (32% vs. 27%).

Additionally, schools with the highest percentage of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible were more likely to have planned to cut support offered through external providers/suppliers (30% of the highest quintile) than schools with the lowest proportion of pupils recorded as FSM-eligible (21% of the two lowest quintiles). This is consistent with earlier findings

which show external organisations were more likely to be responsible for delivering support in schools with higher levels of FSM.

Figure 30. Schools' plans in relation to the cessation of recovery premium funding, by school phase



RPPLAN. Which of the following, if any, are you planning to do as a result of the end of the recovery premium from 2024/25?

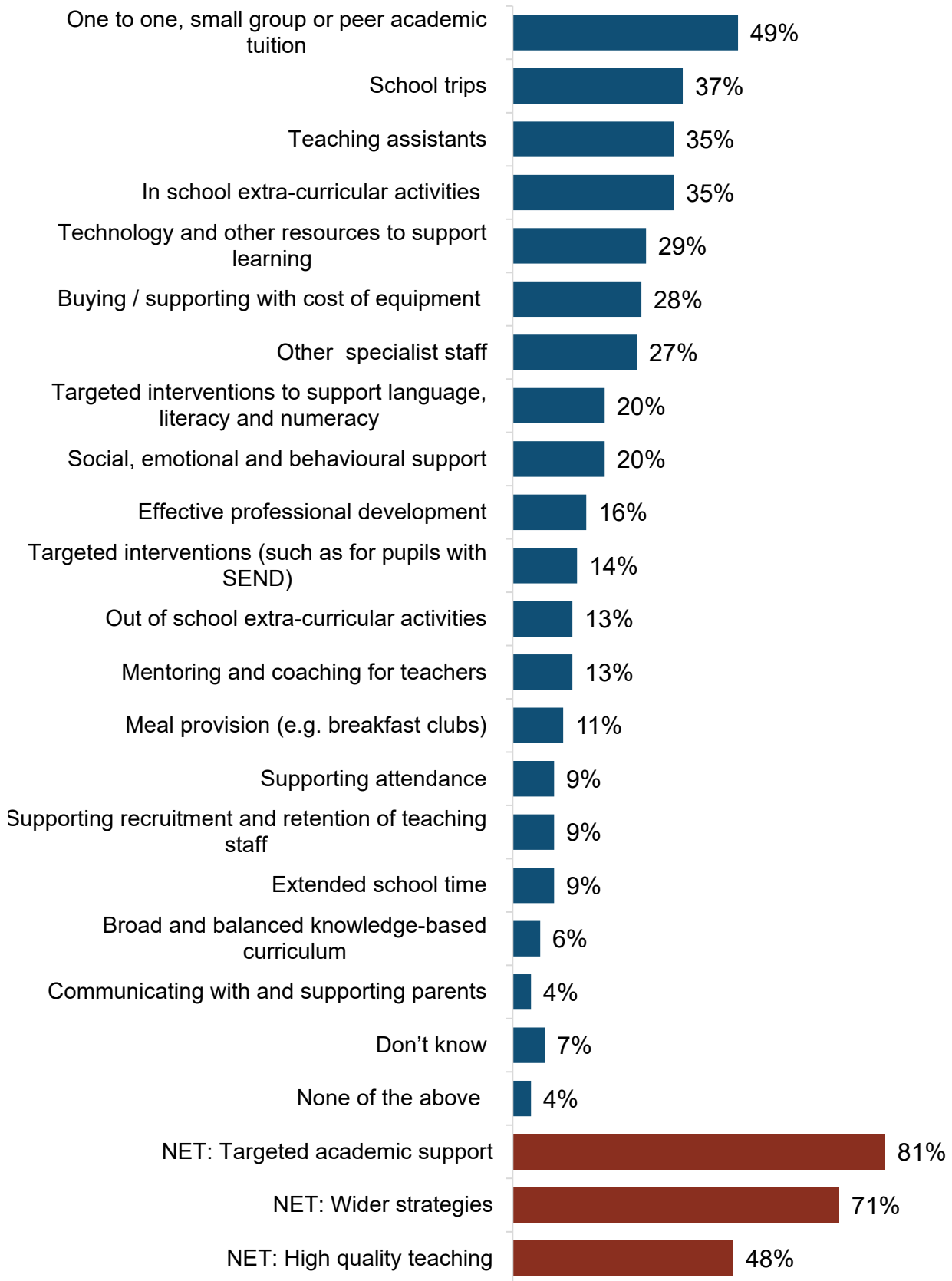
Base: All schools (All schools: 2,152; Primary: 1,642; Secondary: 358)

The survey asked schools which planned to cut some types of support which activities they were most likely to cut. Schools were most likely to cut one-to-one, small group or peer academic tuition (49%). As previously shown in (Table 2), schools that spend recovery premium and pupil premium separately were most likely to fund one-to-one, small group or peer academic tuition through recovery premium. Therefore, it is

unsurprising that this type of support was most likely to be cut when recovery premium funding ends, as schools would no longer have a dedicated funding stream to pay for it. Other types of support which schools were likely to cut included school trips (37%), teaching assistants (35%) and in school extracurricular activities (35%) (see Figure 31).

Overall, forms of targeted academic support were most likely to be cut, with 81% of respondents saying they would be most likely to cut at least one type of targeted academic support. Types of support linked to high quality teaching, such as a broad and balanced knowledge-based curriculum were least likely to be cut (48%). Secondary schools were more likely to cut one to one, small group or peer academic tuition (63%) than primary schools (47%), whereas primary schools were more likely to cut teaching assistants (42% vs. 13% of secondary schools) and meal provision such as breakfast clubs (12% vs. 7% of secondary schools).

Figure 31. Types of support that schools may cut or reduce



RPPLAN2. Which of the following types of support that the school currently offers through pupil premium or recovery premium funding are you most likely to cut?

Base: All schools who plan to remove some types of support (955)

The qualitative interviews asked school and trust leaders to reflect on the impact of the end of the recovery premium. Leaders in schools with fewer pupils registered as FSM-eligible and leaders working in trusts tended to be more positive about the ending of recovery premium. These participants tended to feel that their school or trust had had sufficient time to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the emotional impact and attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers had been sufficiently responded to. However, even amongst schools with low proportions of pupils registered as FSM-eligible, participants overwhelmingly held the view that the ending of recovery premium would have negative effects on the level of support they were able to offer their disadvantaged pupils. Based on the quantitative research, only 5% of schools in the quintile with the lowest proportions of pupils registered as FSM-eligible said that they did not expect to have a funding gap to fill as a result of the end of the recovery premium.

Trust leaders in the qualitative research had a similar view to school leaders when asked about how they will cope with the end of recovery premium. They discussed how schools would need to decrease or stop delivering specific support. Trust leaders also discussed how their role may change slightly in their schools due to the end of recovery premium. For example, one trust leader discussed how their trust will start taking a more holistic view of the primary schools in their trust and aim to pool resources across schools, especially schools that are geographically close together. They will use their trust development link worker to do this work and align activities across schools.

Key findings

This chapter reflects on the findings presented in the report and highlights considerations for the ongoing design, delivery and evaluation of pupil premium.

The value of pupil premium

Premia-funded support was viewed as a key element of schools' offer for disadvantaged pupils

Pupil premium is not intended to cover all support schools may want to provide to their disadvantaged pupils. However, premia funding was widely viewed as providing support that allows disadvantaged pupils to achieve their academic potential. In many cases schools relied on multiple sources of funding to support disadvantaged pupils but, without the premia funding, schools would have to cut some forms of support.

Schools reported that premia funding had an important impact on pupils' outcomes

Almost all schools felt the premia funding had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, particularly on overall wellbeing, attainment and attendance. This was especially the case in schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils where there were overall higher levels of funding in the school and, as a result, increased capacity for support.

Schools were positive about the impact of the recovery premium funding. However, misunderstandings about the ways the funding could be used led to concerns that the potential uses were too restrictive. There was also a perception among some schools that recovery premium funding would have been more effective if it had been available over a longer timeframe.

Schools reported that improvements to wellbeing and attendance underpinned improvements in attainment

Schools commonly reported poor pupil wellbeing and attendance, both of which were seen to hinder pupils' readiness to learn. Activities to improve wellbeing were reported to also improve confidence, behaviour and attendance. Alongside targeted activities to promote attendance, these interventions increased the proportion of pupils in the classroom who were ready and able to learn. Schools also reported that the improvements in behaviour improved the learning experience for other pupils in the class.

Effective planning approaches

Approaches to planning and using the premia were driven by high-quality data and evidence

The premia guidance encourages schools to use high-quality evidence to inform their pupil premium strategy. Schools' descriptions of their planning and implementation processes suggest that, in line with this guidance, they take a highly data-driven approach. The guidance issued by DfE, and resources published by EEF, were particularly valued. There were numerous examples of good practice among schools using a range of different evidence sources, including assessment and attainment data and financial evidence to inform their planning.

Collaborative decision-making was key to planning

Schools commonly took a collaborative approach to making decisions for the support they planned to deliver through discussions and feedback from staff in team meetings, and collecting input from school governors, trust staff and school business and finance managers. School leaders also worked alongside other local schools within networks to provide each other with recommendations, particularly in relation to school trips and external organisations.

Schools drew on their deep knowledge of their pupils to plan effective support

In addition to drawing on external guidance and evidence, schools relied on their internal expertise and deep knowledge of their pupil cohort to inform their support strategies. Because of this, most schools did not feel that additional guidance or support to target disadvantaged pupils would enable more effective planning and delivery. However, among special schools there was a desire for more specific guidance from DfE that reflected the needs of their pupils. There was a particular need among special schools for support in identifying high-quality interventions from external providers.

Effective monitoring and delivery

Schools used a wide range of data sources to monitor support delivery

Schools regularly reviewed their strategy statements throughout the year. This allowed them to identify progress against their plans, to identify what was working well and where their plans needed to be adjusted. As with their approaches to planning, the survey data suggests that schools took a heavily data-driven approach to the review process, drawing on a variety of metrics to review delivery.

Schools adapted to pupil needs throughout the year to deliver effective support

Schools felt that changes to their planned support were inevitable due to changing pupil numbers and needs throughout the school year. However, overall, school leaders felt there was limited scope to keep premia funding aside to respond to these changing needs. Some schools, particularly those with more premia funding, kept a small amount of the premia aside to respond to unexpected costs as they arose throughout the year. However, overall, school leaders did not feel that they were able to keep funding aside to respond to changing needs and relied on other funding sources when changes arose.

Well trained staff, strong links with providers and parental engagement were key to effective implementation of support

Key facilitators to effective delivery included having well trained staff to deliver support, strong links with external providers and high levels of engagement and buy-in from families. On the other hand, common barriers included staff absence and recruitment issues and a lack of pupil and parent engagement. Special schools experienced additional challenges when implementing funded support such as difficulty sourcing external providers who were trained and had the ability to provide support to pupils with additional needs.

Appendix 1: Theory of change

The section below shows the Theory of Change for the pupil premium and recovery premium funding, accompanied by the assumptions and risks. This was created by the evaluation team based on the policy objectives.

Contextual factors

Affecting how schools plan and use funding:

- pupil premium sometimes used to fill gaps in school budget
- pupil premium value and % of pupil premium pupils changes slightly each year
- the purchasing power of pupil premium has fallen in recent years
- other funding programmes are available which cover some activities that schools fund through pupil premium
- staff have the time to engage with evidence, planning etc.
- the quality of school leadership and staff varies, and turnover can be high
- trusts are involved with schools' pupil premium strategies and spending decisions
- outcomes may not be realised as some interventions are time limited

Affecting implementation and outcomes of funding:

- pupil factors such as SEN and EAL, degree of disadvantage, and pupil starting points will influence pupil premium approaches and outcomes
- differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils
- place factors (including rurality, deprivation, unique challenges, and access to services)
- cost of living and impact of the pandemic may have impacted school readiness (e.g. pupils start schools with delayed language development, interpersonal skills etc)

Theory of change

Pupil premium and recovery premium theory of change

Actor: DfE and EEF

Inputs

- DfE provides pupil premium funding (PP)
- DfE provides recovery premium funding (RP) until 2023/24 only.
- EEF provides time and resource.

Activities

- DfE publishes PP and RP guidance.
- DfE delivers webinars and case studies.
- EEF publishes PP and RP guidance and tools.
- EEF facilitates training, events, and communications to support schools.

Actor: Trusts, schools, school leaders, staff and governors

- Trust time and resource.
- Schools provide time and resource (to plan, implement and monitor PP and RP activities).
- Governor time and resource (to read PP statements and hold schools to account).

Activities

- Trusts support schools to plan, implement and monitor activities.
- Schools spend PP funding on appropriate training and support activities.

- School leaders access DfE and EEF resources.
- School leaders identify challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils and assess their needs.
- School leaders access high quality evidence.
- School leaders create a PP and RP strategy.
- School leaders monitor, evaluate and adapt PP plans.
- Governors consulted on PP statements.

Outputs

- Schools publish a strategy statement on their website.
- Schools provide a range of approaches to benefit disadvantaged pupils.
- School leaders routinely monitor, evaluate and update their PP strategy.
- School staff engage with approaches.
- School staff deliver high quality teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies.

Short term outcomes

- School culture is more inclusive and encouraging of disadvantaged pupils.
- Schools monitor data for disadvantaged pupils more frequently and effectively.
- More equal distribution of high-quality teaching staff across schools.
- Increased expertise supporting disadvantaged pupils among school staff.
- Increased access to approaches and resources to support disadvantaged pupils.

Medium term outcomes

- Schools are more confident monitoring progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- More confident designing strategies to support disadvantaged pupils.
- Improved teaching quality for all pupils.

- More confident delivering strategies to support disadvantaged pupils.

Long term outcomes

- School spending on disadvantaged pupils is more efficient and effective.
- School intakes are more likely to welcome and include disadvantaged pupils.
- Schools use monitoring data effectively.
- Improved knowledge of the relevant evidence among school leaders.
- High-quality evidence is embedded in school leaders' decision-making.
- School staff are more likely to work in disadvantaged schools or areas.
- School staff stay in post longer when working in disadvantaged schools or areas.

Impacts

- More effective approaches for supporting disadvantaged pupils are embedded in schools' practice.
- More equal distribution of disadvantaged pupils across schools.
- Upskilled school workforce able to effectively support disadvantaged pupils.
- More equal distribution of high-quality teaching staff across schools.

Actor: Pupils

Activities

- Pupils participate in high quality teaching, targeted academic support and receive non-academic support.

Short term outcomes

- More pupils receive high quality teaching and participate in targeted academic support or other wider strategies.

- Higher levels of pupil participation in the programmes and approaches funded through PP.

Medium term outcomes

- Increases in disadvantaged pupils' cultural capital and access to extra-curricular opportunities.
- Increases in pupil confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. Increased aspiration among disadvantaged pupils.
- Improvements in pupil's learning behaviours.
- Higher levels of pupil participation in classroom learning.

Long term outcomes

- Improved confidence, self-esteem, wellbeing and learning behaviours.
- Greater aspiration among disadvantaged pupils.
- Increases in all-pupil attainment with bigger increases in the PP cohort.
- Narrower attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Impacts

- A larger proportion of disadvantage pupils enter stable employment as adults
- Reduction in the number of pupils who go on to be not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Actor: Society

- Reduced inequality in access to high quality education.
- Reduced inequality in academic outcomes.
- Reduced unemployment rate.

Theory of change assumptions

Inputs

- Funding enables schools to support disadvantaged pupils.
- PP eligibility criteria is targeted at the right pupil cohorts.
- Parents and schools are aware of FSM sign up processes and the PP grant.
- Enough parents sign up for FSM that they can use PP as a proxy for the most disadvantaged pupils.

Activities

- Schools are aware of and read DfE guidance and EEF evidence.
- Schools accurately identify disadvantaged pupils.
- Schools access EEF/high quality evidence.
- Schools spend the PP grant in line with PP guidance.
- There is variation in the effectiveness with which schools spend PP.
- Schools treat PP funding as a separate funding pot rather than combining with their central budget.
- Schools are likely to plan how to use PP and RP in similar ways or for similar aims.
- Evidence based approaches are better than non-evidence-based approaches.
- Schools are best placed to decide how to spend PP to support their students and therefore PP use varies between schools.
- Schools adhere to conditions of receiving PP.

Outputs

- Conditions of the grant, including the statement template, encourage schools to develop strategies for their disadvantaged pupils.
- Schools follow the 5-step approach when planning PP strategies.
- Schools spend funding in line with the Menu of Approaches.
- Schools implement approaches effectively.

- Schools follow their proposed PP strategies.
- Schools have the capacity and means to monitor and review approach efficacy.

Outcomes

- Staff engage with the school's PP strategy.
- The pupils in need of support are targeted by the PP strategy and approaches.
- Approaches are appropriate and accessible for pupils
- Pupils and staff engage with approaches.
- Parents support pupils to engage with activities.
- The approaches have the intended effect for the target pupils.
- Relating to RP: The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes is mitigated.
- Timelines for outcomes will vary depending on what schools choose to target and the effectiveness of their approaches.

Impacts

- The approaches can reduce the disadvantage gap.
- The disadvantage gap can be reduced and learning loss recovered.
The attainment gap closes through accelerated progress among disadvantaged pupils, rather than non-disadvantaged pupils performing less well.

Potential unintended consequences

- Teachers disengage with PP activities or wider workload because of additional pressure to deliver PP activities.
- Pupils disengage from education because of dislike of PP activities
- Attainment gap widens.

Expected change mechanisms

Please note that these mechanisms are not presented in order.

- Strategy statements require schools to articulate a plan to support disadvantaged pupils, which leads to improved implementation of support.
- School leaders access DfE guidance which improves understanding of how to make best use of PP funding.
- Statements allow governors, parents, trusts etc to hold schools to account, which improves support quality.
- The whole school approach means that training and support provided to school staff improves teaching quality and ability.
- Improvements in teaching quality lead to increased pupil engagement, improved learning outcomes and improved ability to succeed in exams and assessments.
- The wider holistic support offered by schools improves confidence, social skills and cultural capital.
- Improvements in pupil wellbeing lead to improved learning outcomes as pupils are better able to concentrate on learning activities.
- Use of high-quality evidence improves school leaders' knowledge of sources, and ability to recognise, high-quality evidence. This leads to increased use of high-quality evidence in other areas of school decision-making.
- Increased confidence working with disadvantaged pupils and working in disadvantaged communities leads to increased staff happiness and wellbeing working in these environments. This leads to increased tenure length and increased willingness to apply for roles in schools perceived to be in 'difficult areas'.
- Increased aspiration among pupils leads them to increase their effort at school and leads to increased attainment.

Appendix 2: Evaluation questions

- a) How do schools spend PP and RP funds and why?**
- What activities have been funded by PP and RP?
 - Who is it spent on?
 - Why is it spent in that way?
 - Is it split between the 3-tiers recommended by EEF?
 - How and why does actual spend differ from planned spending and EEF recommended approaches?
- b) How are PP and RP spending decisions made and why?**
- What factors influence how decisions are made?
 - Who makes decisions?
 - What is the role of contextual factors in influencing these decisions?
 - How do plans relate to wider disadvantage strategies?
 - What diagnostic tools are used to identify pupils to support?
 - Is reading ability used to decide PP spending? [*This is a Ministerial interest*]
 - How do schools use evidence and strategy statements in decision making?
- c) How are PP and RP strategies implemented and why?**
- How are specific programmes implemented and why?
 - What are barriers to and enablers of effective implementation?
 - How and why do strategies vary?
 - What elements of best practice are there?
 - Are there differences in implementation from what is recommended by EEF?
- d) How and why do schools use relevant data, and DfE/EEF guidance and research evidence?**
- How do schools monitor and use data?
 - How are guidance and evidence used and why?
 - What can be improved, and how could schools be further supported to administer their PP-RP?
 - What are best practices of using evidence?
- e) What are the differences between PP and RP spending, decision making processes, and implementation, if any?**
- How and why do schools distinguish between RP and PP?
 - What are the differences between PP and RP usage?
 - How have schools addressed COVID-19 recovery?

- What are attitudes towards additional funding to address increased needs?
- f) What are the differences between how different types of schools spend PP-RP, make decisions to spend PP-RP, and implement their PP-RP strategies?**
- How do contextual factors and school/pupil characteristics influence PP-RP usage?
 - What are the differences in spend, planning, and implementation by type/phase/size of school, region, urban/rural designation, % FSM pupils, SEND/AP, and/or performance measures?
 - What case studies can be drawn from these groups with similar or different characteristics and processes?
- g) What are the perceived effects of PP and RP on pupils and outcomes?**
- What are the perceived impacts of PP-RP?
 - Have there been any unintended consequences?
 - Who appears to benefit the most?
 - What are perceived as school benefits and pupil benefits?
 - What are the mechanisms by which PP-RP have an effect?
- h) How do schools plan to use PP funding in the future and take account of the ending of RP, and why?**
- How do schools prioritise need and plan budgets?
 - What is the expected impact of RP ending?
 - How will schools use PP in the future, why?



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