

PUPIL PREMIUM

1. What is the Pupil Premium?

The Pupil Premium is additional funding paid to schools in respect of their disadvantaged pupils (pupils who have been registered for free schools meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years or are looked after continuously by the local authority for more than six months). Schools receive this funding to support their eligible pupils and narrow the attainment gap between them and their peers.

2. But isn't FSM an inaccurate measure of disadvantage?

FSM is the only pupil level measure of deprivation available. The link between FSM eligibility and underachievement is very strong and data on FSM is easily collected and updated annually. The FSM indicator best fits the rationale for the Premium. From 2012-13 the reach of the Pupil Premium was extended to those who have previously been eligible for FSM at any point in the last six years.

3. Isn't it too late to narrow attainment gaps once children start school?

We acknowledge that high quality early years support can have a positive and lasting impact on children's lives. However, evidence is clear that schools have a direct impact on children's attainment as well as influencing the home environment. Life chances are not fixed at age five and schools are independently important for improving children's attainment and narrowing gaps.

Evidence shows that the most effective schools achieve this through a combination of high quality teaching, strong leadership, a relevant and coherent curriculum, a culture of high expectations and targeted catch-up and enrichment activities. Intensive support in the basics (via one-to-one tuition or as a group) can enable children from disadvantaged backgrounds to catch up with their peers. Schools also influence how parents support their child's learning and behaviour as they grow older and their needs develop. They can also help parents understand the breadth of possibilities open to their child and how their child can achieve their aspirations.

4. Do you think the Pupil Premium will really narrow attainment gaps?

It is not the funding itself that will improve attainment gaps, but how schools use it. Some children require additional support to meet their potential, and the Pupil Premium will provide schools with the resources they need to provide that support. Where funding is carefully targeted, UK studies do show an impact on attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils - particularly in English and mathematics.

The Department has drawn together a range of resources schools can use to help inform their decisions about how to spend the Pupil Premium and raise attainment for disadvantaged pupils. The resources can be accessed [here](#).

FUNDING

5. What is level of the Pupil Premium per pupil?

The funding was £623 in 2012-13 and rose to £900 in 2013-14. Disadvantaged pupils are pupils that have been recorded as eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years (Ever 6 FSM) or pupils in care who have been continuously looked after for more than six months by the local authority.

6. How much has the overall Pupil Premium funding increased since it was introduced?

Total funding through the Pupil Premium has increased from £625m in 2011-12 to £1.25bn in 2012-13. It will rise to £1.875 billion in 2013-14.

7. Why have you extended the Pupil Premium eligibility to Ever6 FSM?

Children who have been eligible for FSM at any point in the past generally have poorer academic results than those who have never been eligible for FSM. These pupils therefore should benefit from the additional support the Pupil Premium funding will be able to provide.

8. Why extend coverage to six years?

There is some under-reporting of free school meals (FSM) amongst secondary school pupils. Extending eligibility to those eligible for FSM in the past six years means that a child previously registered in the last year of primary education will remain eligible for the Premium up to Year 11.

The Department consulted on whether to extend coverage to those eligible for FSM in the past 3 years (Ever 3 measure) or the past 6 years. There was stronger support for the wider six year coverage with 44% supporting it compared to 28% for the Ever 3 measure.

9. Have schools lost out financially by the decision to extend the Pupil Premium to Ever6 FSM?

The level of the per pupil Premium has risen this year so every school with FSM pupils will receive more funding for the same number of FSM pupils. We know however that the level of FSM registration falls markedly in secondary schools and our wider coverage tries to address this.

10. Are you providing any estimates of the funding schools will receive in 2013-14?

Yes, indicative allocations are available, setting out what schools might receive based on their existing pupil numbers and the higher £900 per pupil. These are not the actual amounts schools will receive, which will be based in part on their January 2013 pupil numbers. You can access the 2013-14 indicative allocations [here](#).

11. What is the aim or purpose of the Premium for service children? Is it to improve their progress and attainment?

In the main, service children achieve very well at school. However, schools have reported that there are additional needs relating to service children's emotional and social well-being. In the past, extra support often had to be accommodated from within their existing budgets. Schools will be able to use the Service Premium to fund this additional pastoral care, if they feel that is appropriate.

12. If looked after children attend different schools in the course of the year, will Pupil Premium funding follow them?

This is possible, and will be for local authorities working with schools to decide how best to allocate the funding.

13. Will some schools face cuts to fund the Pupil Premium?

The Pupil Premium is in addition to the schools budget. Underlying school funding has been protected at flat cash per pupil over the spending review period, meaning that it will rise in line with pupil numbers. The Pupil Premium will provide an extra £2.5 billion a year by 2014-15.

14. When will schools actually receive their Pupil Premium funding?

The Premium is paid to local authorities in quarterly installments. It is then for local authorities to decide when they pass the funding onto schools. The EFA pays Pupil Premium funding directly to Academies.

15. Why is the Pupil Premium allocated on a flat rate basis?

Providing all pupils who are currently known to be eligible for FSM with a fixed and equal amount of funding this year ensures that the system is simple and transparent. Teachers, local authorities and parents can easily understand how much each child is receiving.

More detailed FAQs about Pupil Premium funding can be accessed [here](#).

IDENTIFYING DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

16. How will head teachers know who their Ever 6 FSM pupils are?

The Department has provided an initial download of pupils' FSM histories via the [Key to Success website](#) which follows individual pupils as they transfer between schools. For this reason it is important that, where the functionality exists, schools take the opportunity to upload the Key to Success website onto their systems.

The data is available in two formats: a partial Common Transfer File (CTF) which can be used to update pupil records within Management Information Systems (MIS) with historical FSM eligibility; and also a CSV (Comma-Separated Value) spreadsheet for easier data analysis. [Full guidance](#) on the download is available on this page.

17. How can head teachers identify their looked after pupils?

Each local authority has a Virtual Head whose role it is to champion the educational needs of the children looked after by the authority and to track and monitor their attainment as if those children attended a single school. They will be able to assist schools in identifying their looked after pupils.

ACCOUNTABILITY

18. How are schools accountable for how they use the Pupil Premium?

Head teachers are free to decide how best to use the Premium to support their Ever6 FSM and Looked After pupils and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. The Department does not want to micro-manage schools, but it does expect them to use the Pupil Premium appropriately and to be accountable for the decisions they make.

A number of measures have been introduced to secure accountability, including:

- Performance tables that clearly show the attainment of FSM and LAC pupils compared to their peers;
- Increased attention to whether schools are using their Pupil Premium effectively as part of Ofsted inspections (see also Ofsted reports on Pupil Premium use in schools); and
- schools are [required to publish online](#) specific information about the Pupil Premium so that parents and others have access to meaningful and appropriate information;
- From September 2013, schools that are identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement, and where disadvantaged pupils do particularly poorly, will be required to work with an outstanding leader of education with a track record of narrowing attainment gaps to draw up new Pupil Premium spending plans. Ofsted will look at these plans when monitoring progress and re-inspecting the school. Schools that do not demonstrate improvement risk being judged 'inadequate'.

The Department has commissioned an independent evaluation led by TNS BMRB. The evaluation report will be published in spring 2013.

19. Why are schools asked to report Pupil Premium allocation, spend and impact by academic year?

Schools have been asked to report by academic year as this is more meaningful for parents. Whilst the grant allocation is made on the basis of financial years, schools plan teaching and other support and conduct assessments over the academic year.

The allocation of funding by financial rather than academic year means that schools have to calculate the funding for each academic year. As schools will not know their full funding costs or provisional allocations for the latter half of the academic year, they can report on their known funding up to the end of the financial year and update the published information as the full figures become available.

20. What are the reporting requirements for schools receiving the Service Premium?

The general requirement for schools to publish online details of their Pupil Premium allocation, spend and impact includes funding provided in respect of children of armed forces personnel, known as the Service Premium.

There is no requirement to report separately on the Service Premium, or indeed on individual children. In meeting this reporting duty schools will need to observe their continuing responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998 to ensure that individuals or groups of individuals, including children funded through the Service Premium, cannot be identified.

PUPIL PREMIUM AND OTHER PUPILS

21. There are many underperforming groups so why have you mainly targeted the Premium at pupils known to be eligible for FSM?

The Pupil Premium has been targeted at pupils from low income homes using known eligibility for free school meals (FSM) as a proxy, since the evidence is clear that poverty is the single most important factor in predicting a child's future life chances.

Starting in April 2012 we widened the coverage of the Premium to include those eligible for FSM at any point in the last six years (known as the Ever 6 FSM measure). We estimate that this will include an extra 555,000 pupils.

22. What about pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)?

Around 40 per cent of pupils with SEN are known to have been eligible for Free School Meals during the last six years and will therefore benefit from the Pupil Premium. This is in addition to existing funding to support children with SEN.

The Department is radically reforming the current system for identifying, assessing and supporting children and young people who are disabled or have SEN and their families. The Children and Families Bill, published on 5 February 2013 sets out a range of measures on how we will do this so that the system extends from birth to 25, giving children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions and ensuring that needs are properly met.

The [Achievement for All](#) (AfA) contract with the Department is being extended to build on the programme's success to include additional groups of pupils who may not have SEN, including pupils eligible for Free School Meals and looked-after Children. In extending the AfA contract to cover wider group of vulnerable & disadvantaged pupils we are targeting those pupils who also attract additional funding from the Pupil Premium.

You can access a wide range of information, advice and materials about caring for or working with disabled children and young people or those with SEN in England [here](#).

23. What about under-performing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils?

Attainment gaps are a complex issue and the under-performance of a specific ethnic group may be due to a combination of factors including: attendance, socio-economic factors, parents' education, behaviour and bullying.

The Pupil Premium is at the heart of our strategy for to raise the life chances of pupils from deprived backgrounds whatever their gender or ethnic group. The Premium will guarantee additional funding for schools with deprived children, and ensure that the poorest children, wherever they live, are able to receive the most support.

FREE SCHOOL MEAL REGISTRATION

24. How should schools encourage parents to register their child's eligibility for free school meals (FSM)?

There are a number of practices schools can adopt to encourage parents to register their children. In particular, schools should consider letting parents know:

- that registering their child as eligible for FSM will bring more money to the school to help their child achieve;
- what the school will spend the Pupil Premium on, so they are encouraged to apply;

- what, if any, other benefits may be available for children registered as eligible for FSM, i.e. help with the cost of music lessons or school trips;
- that registering for FSM is confidential and their peers, and their child's peers, need not know they have applied; and
- what registering for FSM involves and what it means for their child, including the fact that taking up the meal is recommended but optional.

Options for communicating these messages to parents include:

- sending letters to parents explaining FSM, its link to the Pupil Premium and how to apply – sending more than once to ensure all parents see it;
- adding reminders to register for FSM in any regular newsletters or e-bulletins to parents;
- texting all parents asking them to contact the school office if they receive benefits, as they may be able to help secure extra funding for the school;
- ensuring reception teachers or parent liaison staff are talking to new parents about signing up for FSM when they carry out home visits;
- encouraging teaching assistants / parent liaison staff / learning mentors to have confidential conversations with parents about registering their children as eligible for FSM, particularly if they have English as an additional language, or lower levels of literacy;
- placing information about FSM and the Pupil Premium on your website;
- holding discreet and informative school assemblies on FSM and the Pupil Premium, giving pupil's confidence that, if they register as eligible, it will be kept confidential.

Schools should let parents know that in simply registering their child as eligible for FSM the school receives additional funding that will be used to help their child achieve to the best of their ability. They should also remind parents of the nutritional and financial benefits of their children eating the free meals.

Further information on improving the dining room environment to encourage children to eat their free meals can be found on the [Children's Food Trust website](#).

25. What can local authorities do to help increase registration for free school meals?

We have made registration easier for Local Authorities by developing an Online Free School Meal Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), which provides a simple “yes” or “no” answer to eligibility inquiries. The ECS was developed by DfE to reduce burdens on schools to check eligibility, make application much simpler for parents and reduce stigmatisation. We are encouraging local authorities to increase their use of this resource.

Local authorities (LAs) can help by including the link between Pupil Premium funding and FSM registration in their communications, and by making the process for registering for eligibility for, and applying for, FSM as easy as possible. Action that LAs can take now includes:

- encouraging parents, through council newsletters or magazines, to register their child as eligible for FSM to get additional funding for their child's school;
- making explicit on forms and communications that registering for FSM brings additional funding to schools;

- informing parents of any other benefits that registering for FSM provides, i.e. help with the cost of music tuition or school trips;
- making clear on forms and communications for parents that registering their child for FSM will also attract Pupil Premium funding, and that while it is recommended their child eat the meal – they should register regardless of whether or not they want a meal;
- signposting parents, via your website home page, to further information about Pupil Premium funding for their child's school and free school meals; and
- reviewing and simplifying application forms and including a phone number so parents know who to contact for help.

Local authorities could also consider:

- ensuring that eligibility information for FSM pupils leaving primary school is passed on to their new secondary school so that they continue to be registered;
- using the FSM eligibility checking service add-on package, which helps parents register their child for FSM more easily; and
- creating a text service for parents to register their child for FSM.

Local authorities should also encourage schools to urge parents to register their child as eligible for FSM and support schools in doing so. In particular, LAs should remind schools that their Pupil Premium allocation each year is determined by the number of FSM pupils they have on roll on January census day.

If you provide information to your schools about pupils registered as eligible for free school meals, you should make clear whether this is based only on parents who have registered on the basis that they want their child to have a free school meal. Schools need to be aware that this information does not necessarily include all their eligible pupils.

26. Is there a deadline for free school meal registration?

Pupil Premium figures are based on the number of FSM pupils on each school's roll on January school census day. Whilst parents can register their child as eligible for FSM at any time in the year, we recommend particularly encouraging parents to sign up in time for the census date to ensure the school gets its full allocation, and therefore the full benefit, of the Pupil Premium.

You can ask your local authority how long it will take them to confirm the eligibility of pupils in the run up to the census. This will allow you to determine a last date for registration, which you can then communicate to parents, encouraging them to sign up in time.

27. How do we target parents for whom English is an additional language, or who have low literacy levels?

Where you have parents for whom English is an additional language, or who have lower levels of literacy, it may be useful to rely less on written communication. You could talk directly to parents, such as at parents' evenings, when they are collecting their children from school or, if necessary, over the phone. Teaching assistants or parent liaison staff can hold these conversations if they have a closer relationship with the parents.

28. What if parents do not want their child to eat the free meals?

The Government is committed to providing nutritious school meals to all pupils including free meals for the most disadvantaged children. However, although taking up the meal is recommended, it is optional. Parents should be encouraged to register their child as eligible for FSM, regardless of whether they want a meal. Schools and LAs should make sure they are reassured that this can be done confidentially, and understand that this will bring extra funding to the school to help support their child. Where relevant, parents should also be told of any other benefits registering might bring e.g. help with the cost of school trips.

Free school meals provide a nutritious meal to children from low-income families at no cost. Evidence suggests that eating a healthy hot meal at lunchtime assists children's concentration and performance at school. If schools follow Children's Food Trust good practice in registering pupils as eligible for FSM, and providing a suitable dining environment, they can help pupils feel comfortable in eating their free meals.