



Pupil Premium for School Governors and Trustees – Closing the Gap

If you are a School Governor or Academy Trustee, this paper is for you!

This paper is designed to help governors and trustees learn how to support and challenge their schools in narrowing the attainment gap. The gap between your school's average pupil premium pupil attainment and the average non-disadvantaged pupil nationally is the gap we are all trying to close. Publicly funded schools in England get extra funding from the government to help them improve the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils. Narrowing the gap between pupil premium pupils and their peers is not an easy task, but it is a key national priority and particularly so for schools in the South West to create better lives for our disadvantaged pupils.

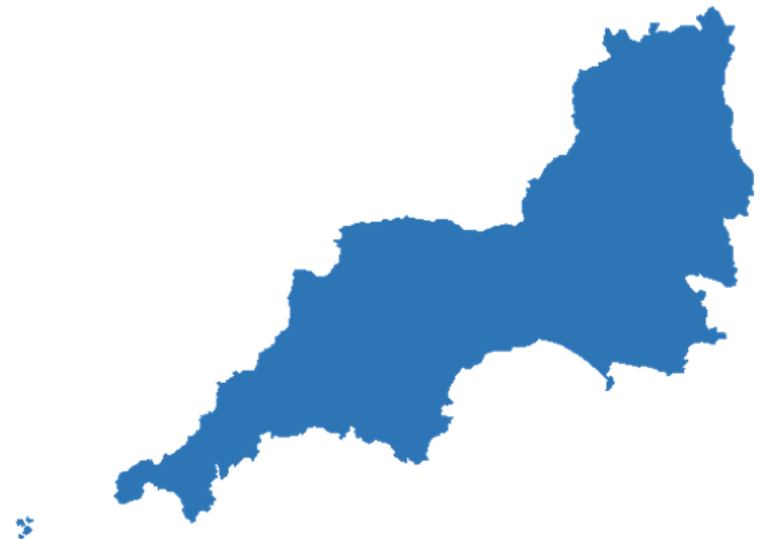
A substantial number of schools have shown that it can be done and that the attainment of pupil premium-eligible pupils can be raised to the national average for non-pupil premium pupils and beyond. The arrival of Covid-19 has only accentuated the problem further with the attainment gap in many cases just getting worse. There is additional information in this [EEF publication](#) which looks at the impact of school closures. To turn this around will require everyone involved to adopt a rigorous approach to how pupil premium funding and catch-up funding is spent and how the spend and results are thoroughly evaluated. As you know, governors have a legal responsibility to discuss how all monies are spent including the [Pupil Premium](#) and [Catch-Up Funding](#), to ensure it is being used effectively and efficiently.

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As far back as 2012 Ofsted produced a report, 'How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement'. In that report they stated that while governors had generally been informed about the Pupil Premium funding and what it had been spent on, they did not always play a full part in making decisions about its allocation, or discussing the impact of the actions taken. Where governors took an effective role in ensuring that the Pupil Premium was used well they:

- Were fully involved from the outset in deciding on the way in which the funding would be allocated
- Required a clear policy to be written about the Pupil Premium, and contributed to its content
- Were committed to ensuring that every pupil, irrespective of starting point or background, achieved their potential, and used this principle to drive every discussion about the Pupil Premium
- Asked challenging questions about how effective each action funded by the Pupil Premium was being in improving achievement
- Told parents what the Pupil Premium was being spent on, and in the best examples, how well this was working

The report demonstrated that whilst the role of governors and trustees is, of course, strategic the importance of asking questions that support, challenge and hold senior leaders to account for how the grant is spent is vital if together we are going to make a difference. So this, in a nutshell is our challenge!





What questions should we be asking?

One of the fundamentals that Ofsted look for at any inspection is how well governors and trustees know their school/s. It may seem an obvious point, but it's really important to establish at the outset which pupils in a school attract Pupil Premium and how much money is available. The next is to understand the data that is available or put another way, what exactly are the needs of pupil premium cohort and the nature of the attainment gap, how big is the gap now and whether the gap is widening or shortening. If the gap is widening, then maybe the actions put into place so far have not worked and need to be re-assessed and if the gap is shortening it should be possible to encourage those things that work and perhaps drop or revise those actions that do not. It is also important to look at average trends over time at your school/s so that any action taken addresses the root cause of attainment gaps over time in different school situations.

The best ways of addressing your pupils' needs are summarised in the Education Endowment Foundation's Pupil Premium Guide and Teaching and Learning Toolkit. These draw on ten years of national and international research into what works best to boost pupil progress and attainment.

There is a wealth of other information available to governors and trustees to help close the attainment gap including advice and guidance from the NGA, The Key, Ofsted, but the starting point is understanding your school. One of the best tools available is the '2020/21 Pupil Premium Report', available from 'The Headteacher's Report' website. A sample of the report is obtainable from the website to download free of charge. The Report also includes Sports Premium and Catch-Up Funding.

What if I want to know more what works and what doesn't? The sources we listed earlier can all give you case studies plus you may want to look at the [EEF Guide for School Governors and Trustees](#), which includes information on pupil premium spending.

Armed with the data, the role for governors and trustees is to support and challenge senior leaders, such as the pupil premium lead teacher, with appropriate questions and we have listed some for you to consider or adapt for your own situation.

- Can you identify from the specific actions in the PP plan the activities that are working to close the gap and those that are not?
- How do we know that every teacher understands their role in enabling disadvantaged children to succeed?
- Do you know which staff are most effective working with certain pupil characteristics and why?
- What have you done to see what works in other schools most effectively and what can you learn from the processes they have in place to address the barriers in your school?
- How well do we know our community? What are the specific challenges being faced by children and families in the area?
- What are the current barriers to improvement? How does the pupil premium strategy align with the school's overall Improvement Plan?
- Have you studied case studies to see what initiatives might work in our school/s?
- How effectively is additional support used? How do we know it is making a difference?
- What is the impact on disadvantaged children of the different elements of our pupil premium strategy – for example tutoring, pastoral support and teacher CPD?
- How is the money being allocated between direct teaching costs and other activities?

Having answers to any or even all of these questions is, of course, not the solution in itself, for constant monitoring is required, so much so that it needs to be a regular feature on every governing body meeting or trustee board meeting agenda.



Finance – how are schools spending their funding?

Finance - we need to discuss how the [Pupil Premium](#) and [Catch-Up Funding](#) is allocated and how it is spent. Knowing this is important particularly for establishing what actions work and which ones don't. It's equally important that any Finance committee looks regularly at how monies are spent and ensures its school allocation is fully spent in any one academic year. Carry forwards are permissible but they need to be justified. In the table below we set out the current funding arrangements with effect from April 2020:

Eligibility	Primary (per pupil)	Secondary (per pupil)
Free School Meals	£1,345	£955
Looked After Children	£2,345	£2,345
Catch-Up Funding for 2020/21 only	£80	£80

When routine inspections restart, Ofsted will make judgements about the quality of education being provided and how school leaders are using their funding and catch-up funding to ensure the curriculum has a positive impact on all pupils, so it is vital that governors and trustees take seriously their role in ensuring that pupil premium and catch-up funding is used effectively.



How well are we doing?

What if I want to know how well my school or trust is doing? You can ask for a review to be undertaken. A **pupil premium review** looks at how your school or trust is spending its pupil premium funding. The purpose of the review is to improve your school's pupil premium strategy, so that you spend the funding on approaches shown to be effective in improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The reviewer, for example a NLG, LLG, NLE, should be appropriately trained and independent with a track record of helping schools make improvements for disadvantaged pupils. The Teaching Schools Council has produced, 'A Guide for Effective Pupil Premium Reviews'. A school or trust may commission a review and you can find a reviewer by completing a governance support form using the link below:



[SW Teaching School CPD Portal](#)
[Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\)](#)
[Teaching Schools Council](#)
[Ofsted](#)

[Education Endowment Foundation Families of Schools Database](#)
[National Governance Association \(NGA\)](#)
[The Headteacher's Report](#)
[The Key for School Governors](#)

Finally, we want to thank you for all the work you have done throughout the pandemic, even in some cases ensuring that children are properly fed. We have endeavoured throughout this paper not to give you extra work rather in the hope that the work you do can be more effective and that as a result your school/s will make a greater difference to your pupils' lives.

Produced by Malcolm Broad MBE (NLG) in association with the TSC South West