

# Spotlight on Disadvantage

The role and impact of governing boards in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium.

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## Spotlight on Disadvantage

This research report forms part of a wider *Spotlight on Disadvantage* campaign led by the NGA. This campaign looks to help governing boards raise outcomes for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

If you would like to find out more about this campaign, including the latest developments and project aims, please visit: <https://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/Campaigning/Spotlight-on-Disadvantage.aspx>.

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# Executive summary

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## Key findings

Between February and April 2018, the National Governance Association (NGA) undertook a self-selecting survey of 875 governors and trustees and the thematic analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies. This revealed that governing boards often know their pupil premium pupils well, are heavily involved in championing the needs of pupil premium pupils and work closely with senior leaders to decide how to spend, monitor and evaluate the pupil premium. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement – with the findings revealing some important factors for schools, policy makers and researchers to consider going forward.

### For schools and governing boards the key findings from this project are:

- 1. While the majority of schools are making evidence-driven decisions when spending their pupil premium, some are still too inwards looking.** In particular, when deciding ‘what works’ when spending the pupil premium and monitoring its impact, many survey respondents favoured internal data and the opinions of staff over external sources of data such as academic research and the EEF toolkit.
- 2. Schools should adopt a more holistic outlook when deciding how to spend the pupil premium.** The survey data and analysis of pupil premium strategies show that many schools focus largely on teaching and learning initiatives. This is despite many of the key barriers to attainment identified by schools in the pupil premium strategies requiring more pastoral attention.
- 3. There was clear variation in the quality of pupil premium strategies published on schools’ websites.** Some schools were better at accounting for how the money would be spent, rationalising spending decisions, measuring success, setting out clear monitoring processes and clarifying which group the funding would target.
- 4. Pupil premium usage is not the only determinant of disadvantaged pupil progress and attainment.** The survey data revealed a clear correlation between outcomes for all pupils and outcomes for pupil premium pupils. Geography was also a factor in influencing outcomes for pupil premium pupils.

### In addition, this study also revealed that:

- 1. Pupil premium was viewed positively by governing boards who responded to the survey, but funding pressures are presenting a challenge to its effectiveness.** Many schools fund initiatives through the pupil premium which should generally come out of the school budget, including: improving the classroom environment, improving feedback and hiring additional teachers. To mitigate against this, pupil premium funding needs to be protected in real-terms and accompanied by a more sustainable financial settlement for schools.
- 2. There are research gaps which need to be addressed going forward.** In particular, there is the potential for more research looking at pupil premium strategies and the role of those governing in shaping pupil premium usage. With the literature skewed towards teaching and learning, this project also exposed the need for more research around measuring the impact of pastoral initiatives.

# Background

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The pupil premium is money given to schools to ‘raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and to close the gaps between them and their peers’ (DfE and EFA, 2018).

Schools receive pupil premium funding based on every pupil on roll that is currently in receipt of free schools meals or has been in the last six years, those that have been looked after by the local authority at any point in their lives, and those whose parents currently or have previously served in the armed forces (DfE and EFA, 2018).

Official data shows a persistent (albeit narrowing) gap in attainment between those eligible for the pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils nationally (DfE, 2014; 2018a; 2018b). In terms of progress, the Education Policy Institute (EPI) found that children eligible for the pupil premium were, on average, 4.3 months behind their peers when they first started school and, by the time the cohort sat their GCSEs, the gap between pupil premium pupils and their peers had risen to 19.3 months (Andrews *et al.*, 2017).

## The purpose of this study and research methodology

The governing board is the accountable body for how schools spend the pupil premium. Yet, while there is a wealth of literature on how best to plan for and spend the pupil premium, the extent to which governing boards are involved in these decisions, how they perceive funding for disadvantaged pupils, and the impact governing boards have when they get involved is not clearly outlined in the literature.

To fill this gap, the NGA undertook a self-selecting survey of 875 governors and trustees. This asked participants how their school defines ‘disadvantage’, how their school chooses to spend the pupil premium and the extent to which those governing are involved in the pupil premium spending process. Of the 875 governors and trustees who responded to the survey, 416 provided additional information relating to their key stage 2 (in primary) or key stage 4 (in secondary) progress scores for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium. From this, it was possible to calculate a ‘snap shot’ of the progress gap between pupil premium pupils in respondents’ schools and all non-pupil premium

pupils nationally. This offered a more objective view of what those schools that are more effective at supporting pupil premium pupils have done compared to those that are less effective.

To supplement this data, thematic analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies was also carried out. The strategies selected for analysis covered a wide range of schools, including: equal numbers of primary and secondary schools; schools with different numbers of pupils; schools with different proportions of disadvantaged pupils; and schools with different progress gaps between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils.

## The overlooked but important role of governing boards in spending the pupil premium

The NGA (2014) suggest that, when spending the pupil premium, school staff should lead on the day-to-day implementation of spending decisions but the governing board should be involved in:

1. understanding the best way to spend the pupil premium based on a variety of sources of evidence
2. signing-off on a pupil premium spending strategy based on an informed understanding of the ‘barriers to educational achievement’ facing eligible pupils and what works to overcome these barriers
3. reviewing and amending pupil premium allocation as a result of ongoing monitoring

Furthermore, the governing board, in conjunction with the senior leadership team, should be involved in scoping, signing-off and reviewing a strategy for spending the pupil premium. This should cover: how much funding the school receives; the ‘main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils at the school’; what the school has done to overcome these barriers; how the impact of the pupil premium will be measured; and when the next pupil premium review will take place (DfE, 2017).

Reporting on the extent to which NGA recommendations are followed in practice, the survey conducted as part of this research found that:

- 79.4% of respondents outlined that their governing board was involved in signing-off on a pupil premium spending strategy
- 89.7% of respondents' governing boards were involved in monitoring pupil premium spending
- 66.2% of respondents' governing boards were involved in reviewing and amending the pupil premium spending strategy

In contrast, only 17.1% of respondents said that their school left signing-off the pupil premium strategy to school staff while 9.6% left monitoring the pupil premium to school staff. A larger group, 31.1%, left reviewing and amending the pupil premium to school staff.

The governors and trustees surveyed were also enthusiastic about raising outcomes for pupil premium pupils and were engaged in decisions around spending the pupil premium. In particular, the survey findings suggest that governing boards play a crucial role in championing the needs of pupil premium pupils in governing board meetings. Of the 875 governors and trustees who responded to the survey:

- 86.3% of respondents outlined that their school(s) defined 'disadvantaged' pupils as those 'eligible for the pupil premium'
- 97.5% of respondents said that their governing board understood the demographics of pupil premium pupils to at least some extent
- over half of respondents claimed that outcomes, absence rates and exclusion rates for pupil premium pupils were discussed in every governing board or committee meeting

While the literature on the pupil premium rarely covers governance, these findings reflect other research which highlights the importance of governing board involvement in pupil premium spending. Previous work found that schools with 'weak' leadership were more likely to have large gaps between their least and most disadvantaged peers (Ofsted, 2014), with further research demonstrating an 'overlap' between a positive Ofsted judgement of governance and a positive judgement of progress for pupil-premium pupils (NAO, 2015).

## Insights for schools and governing boards

As well as confirming that governing boards do play an important, and often substantive, role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium, this study also revealed some important findings around how schools can maximise the impact of pupil premium funding.

### Practical insight one

**The best schools are making evidence-driven decisions when spending their pupil premium. However, many schools, including governing boards, are still too inwards looking and can improve practice by consulting a wider range of sources before making spending decisions.**

Despite the positive role played by governing boards as outlined above, the survey data from this research suggests that many governing boards do not rate external sources of evidence as highly as internal sources of evidence when deciding how to spend and monitoring the impact of the pupil premium. As part of the survey, respondents were asked about which information sources governors and trustees valued the most when making decision on spending and evaluating the pupil premium. In this regard, internal data and the opinions of senior members of staff were prioritised over external data, academic research and the EEF toolkit. For example, just 14% of respondents said that the EEF toolkit was extremely important as a source of information, compared to 68% who said that the professional judgement of senior staff was extremely important.

This is an issue given that previous research suggests that schools with the best outcomes for pupil premium pupils are generally those who look outwards for information and ideas. The Department for Education (DfE) found that 30.5% of schools had sourced their most effective strategy from the EEF toolkit, a remarkably high figure given the toolkit's limited usage (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). The DfE also found that 56.6% of headteachers from primary schools which were more successful at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils saw academic research as very important when deciding on initiatives, compared to 47% of headteachers from less successful primary schools (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). A National Audit Office (NAO, 2015) survey further mirrored these themes, finding that over 90% of school leaders who had consulted external sources of evidence found them useful. It is therefore apparent that the tendency for boards to look inwards limits their effectiveness in overseeing pupil premium spending.

## Executive summary

These findings do not mean that internal data is less useful than external data. On the contrary, internal data is vital in monitoring the success of initiatives, especially given the fact that every school's context is slightly different. Nonetheless, internal data needs to be complimented by a wider range of sources to ensure that properly informed decisions are being made, with all options taken into account. Governing boards and senior leaders should be using an eclectic range of internal and external sources to decide upon and monitor initiatives. The key is using evidence to decide what is most likely to work and then adapting this to the specific school's context.

## Practical insight two

The data from this study suggests that schools need to adopt a more holistic outlook when deciding on pupil premium spending. This means that, in the pupil premium spending strategy, teaching and learning initiatives should be accompanied by more pastoral initiatives which are often better at addressing the specific barriers to educational achievement which hold back pupil premium pupils.

The thematic analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies highlighted a 'disconnect' between the barriers and challenges facing pupil premium pupils and the initiatives funded through the pupil premium. Four of the five most commonly identified barriers to pupil premium pupils realising their potential were:

- family life (mentioned in 22/ 36 strategies analysed)
- low attendance (mentioned in 17/ 36 strategies analysed)
- social and emotional barriers to engagement (mentioned in 14/ 36 strategies analysed)
- individual pupil needs, especially pupils identified as having special educational needs, or English as an additional language (mentioned in 10/ 36 strategies analysed)

On the other hand, the three most common strategies in the same pupil premium strategies were:

- targeted interventions to support attainment of specific pupil groups (mentioned in 33/ 36 strategies analysed)
- literacy support (mentioned in 28/ 36 strategies analysed)
- numeracy support (mentioned in 26/ 36 strategies analysed)

As such, some schools do not appear to be tackling the root causes of many of the challenges that they diagnose, identifying pastoral barriers to educational achievement but focusing their pupil premium spending largely on teaching and learning initiatives. This may be because, compounding the issue, much of the literature is skewed towards assessing the impact of initiatives which focus on teaching and learning. While the findings from this research support the notion that the quality of teaching and learning is vital (see practical insight four), schools should adopt a more holistic outlook which recognises the value of both teaching and learning interventions and more pastoral initiatives. In doing so, they will need to carefully combine an awareness of the importance of evidence driven decision making with an acknowledgement that schools should measure what they value rather than simply valuing what they can easily measure.

## Practical insight three

The quality of school practice in managing the pupil premium is highly variable. This highlights that there is significant room for improvement in how schools spend the pupil premium.

As part of the review of the 36 pupil premium strategies, this study looked at schools with good outcomes for pupil premium pupils compared to those where outcomes could be improved. From this comparison, five key themes of more and less effective practice were identified. Overall, the research found that schools with the best strategies:

- accounted for how every pound of their pupil premium budget was spent rather than using rounded numbers or vague estimations
- deployed evidence to justify their spending decisions, with references (for instance) to the EEF toolkit, academic research, internal data and Ofsted reports
- had a clear success criterion for each pupil premium initiative and an idea of what would be achieved through spending the pupil premium
- set out clear monitoring processes for continuously evaluating the effectiveness of spending
- clarified which group (i.e. all pupil premium pupils, just those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those struggling in a specific subject etc.) would receive the funding for each initiative

Of note, looking across all of the pupil premium strategies analysed, schools struggled to provide a rationale for some initiatives compared to others. Schools particularly did not provide a clear rationale for introducing initiatives around: widening the curriculum, sporting activities, recruiting an attendance officer, recruiting teaching staff and recruiting teaching assistants. In contrast, initiatives which were generally accompanied by effective rationales included: staff continuing professional development (CPD), targeted behavioural support and subsidising extra-curricular activities.

This research has demonstrated that there is scope for significant improvement in producing pupil premium strategies and that making these improvements could have a significant impact on raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

## Practical insight four

**Although this research focused predominantly on the governing board's role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium, it has also demonstrated that usage of the pupil premium is not the only determinant of disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment.**

One of the clearest correlations revealed through this research was that schools with high progress for all were very likely to have high progress for pupil premium pupils. This echoes previous work which found that 'statistical correlation between [schools] who do well for FSM [free school meal] children and who do well for non-FSM children is very high' (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2015).

Furthermore, the survey also revealed significant geographical divides in the progress gap. This highlights another important determinant of disadvantaged pupil progress and attainment, a school's location. The findings from this study also correlate with a significant body of literature surrounding the north-south divide (NPP, 2018) and support the research of Mike Treadaway (2017) who has recently argued that the progress gap is heavily dependent on the characteristics of the pupil premium cohort in a given school. These factors, such as ethnicity, create variation in different geographical areas.

As such, geography and school quality are two alternative determinants of disadvantaged pupil progress and attainment which illustrate that we can attribute some, but not all, of the differences in progress gaps between schools to the way in which the pupil premium is used.

## Insights for policy makers and researchers

In addition to insights for governing boards and practitioners, this study also revealed potential avenues for future research and the complex and precarious position of the pupil premium within the current school funding landscape.

## Policy insight one

**Pupil premium is viewed positively, but funding pressures are presenting a challenge to its effectiveness. Pupil premium funding needs to be protected in real-terms and accompanied by a more sustainable financial settlement for schools. This will allow schools to spend the pupil premium effectively and ensure that it is targeted at the right pupils.**

The picture which emerges from this research, and that of others, is that pupil premium needs to be protected, and that this can only be achieved through a more sustainable financial settlement for schools. DfE (2014; 2018a; 2018b) data shows that the attainment gap has been consistently falling at both key stage two and four since the pupil premium's introduction. Importantly, schools think the pupil premium has been vital in bringing about this trend. Indeed, the National Audit Office (NAO, 2015) has found that 75% of secondary schools and over 85% of primary schools felt that pupil premium had boosted pupil attainment.

However, pupil premium's positive impact appears to be threatened by the current funding climate. The survey findings from this project revealed that, although very few respondents actually claimed that their school used the pupil premium to plug the funding gap, only 71.6% of respondents ring-fenced their pupil premium. While there is no legal requirement on schools to ring-fence the pupil premium, this does suggest that many schools may be using the funding to subsidise other spending commitments. Further evidence from this research found a prevalence of initiatives which one might assume should be funded from the school's core budget but were commonly being funded through the pupil premium. This includes: improving the classroom environment, improving feedback and hiring additional teachers. This echoes findings from a recent NFER/Sutton Trust (2018) survey which found that 34% of senior leaders who responded admitted to using pupil premium funds to plug other budget gaps.

Pupil premium is therefore seen as having a positive impact on closing the gap, but the current funding climate is endangering these positive effects. It is important to note that, as part of NGA's consultation response on the national funding formula (NFF), NGA (2017) do not think the pupil premium should be given to schools as a separate grant but, instead, it 'should form part of the total [funding] pot'. As part of this financial package, however, schools 'could still be required to report on how they are supporting the progress and attainment of children entitled to the pupil premium' (NGA, 2017).

## Policy insight two

This study found that there are research gaps which need to be addressed going forward.

This research has contributed to the literature on using the pupil premium effectively and has illuminated the important role played by those governing in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium. However, it has also exposed potentially fruitful avenues for further investigation.

This includes:

- The potential for more research looking at pupil premium strategies. Notably, this is the first significant piece of research to look at pupil premium strategies, despite these documents being publicly available and providing a clear indication of how pupil premium funds are being used on the ground. This research has highlighted that analysing these documents can reveal fascinating trends. Moving forwards, there is the potential for a larger study which could produce conclusions about how pupil premium is being spent nationwide and draw out the differences between varying school types and phases.
- Secondly, this research has exposed the skewing of the literature towards assessing teaching and learning initiatives over more pastoral activities. Looking at the impact of spending the pupil premium on pastoral initiatives, and focusing on the impact this might have upon social-emotional outcomes, would act as a vital counter-balance to the majority of the current research, including this study, which treats either the attainment gap or progress gap as the key measure of how successfully schools are spending their pupil premium allocation.
- Finally, this research has highlighted that most of the literature neglects the role played by those governing in shaping the usage of the pupil premium. In future research, measuring a school's success or failure in improving outcomes for pupil premium pupils cannot be fully understood without incorporating the role of those governing into the study.



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# Introduction

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In England, school governing boards play an important role in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are given the same opportunities to reach their potential as non-disadvantaged pupils.

Importantly, the governing board is the accountable body for how schools spend funding given to schools to 'raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and to close the gaps between them and their peers' known as the 'pupil premium' (DfE and EFA, 2018a). Furthermore, as outlined in the *Governance Handbook* (2017a), those governing also play a wider role in defining the strategic parameters of disadvantage in their school.

Yet while evidence exists to show a positive link between effective support for disadvantaged pupils and strong governance (Ofsted, 2014; Macleod, *et al.*, 2015; NAO, 2015), the extent to which governing boards help shape pupil premium spending, and the wider agenda for supporting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is not clearly outlined in the literature. In addition, it is not yet clear what impact those governing have on improving outcomes for pupils eligible for the pupil premium and what those governing can do to maximise the impact that they have.

This study sought to address this gap in the literature, providing a fresh insight into how school governing boards allocate, monitor and evaluate their pupil premium funds. The aim of the study was to answer the following research questions:

## RQ1

What impact do governing boards have on improving outcomes for 'disadvantaged' pupils in their school and how can this be maximised?

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## RQ2

What are the differences between schools with good outcomes for pupil premium pupils compared to those with poor outcomes for pupil premium pupils?

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## RQ3

What role do those governing play in allocating, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium funding in these different schools?

To answer these questions, a survey of 875 governors and trustees was carried out exploring the role of governing boards in overseeing pupil premium decisions and exploring what those schools with comparatively poor outcomes for pupil premium pupils were doing compared to those with better outcomes. Supplementing this data, 36 pupil premium strategies, published on school websites, were subject to thematic analysis. The aim of this was to understand both the decisions which schools were taking regarding pupil premium spending and the processes which underlay them.

This report provides a summary of the findings from this primary research grounded within previous work conducted in this area. It consists of a literature review covering: an overview of the purpose of the pupil premium; the role of those governing in supporting disadvantaged and pupil premium pupils; 'what works' in terms of spending the funding; and the rationale for this research project. It then offers an overview of the methodology underpinning the primary research, an analysis of the qualitative/quantitative data and a brief discussion picking out the most salient findings from the research.

# Literature Review

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## Background: the purpose of the pupil premium

The pupil premium was implemented by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2011. Schools currently receive (DfE and EFA, 2018b):

- £1,320 for primary schools or £935 for secondary schools for every pupil on roll that has been registered for free school meals (FSMs) at any time in the last six years
- £1,900 per pupil looked after by the local authority at any time in their lives
- £300 for every pupil registered as a 'service child' at any point in the last six years or those 'in receipt of child pension from the Ministry of Defence'

Data shows that, in 2017/18, schools with primary pupils on roll received a mean average of £79,525 in pupil premium funding and secondary schools received a mean average of £166,975 (DfE, 2018c).

Although, for some schools, this amounts to a significant amount of money, the pupil premium currently finds itself situated within the context of tightening school budgets. In 2016, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) claimed that the freeze in school funding per pupil would amount to a real-terms cut of 6.5% by 2019-20 compared to 2015 (Belfield and Sibieta, 2016). Furthermore, even though an additional £1.3 billion of funding was moved into the school budget in July 2017, this will still lead to a 4.6% real-terms cut by 2019 (Santry, 2017). This has led to concerns that, as schools are not legally required to ring-fence pupil premium funding, the money will be used to fill funding gaps rather than financing measures to tackle disparities in outcomes between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2016).

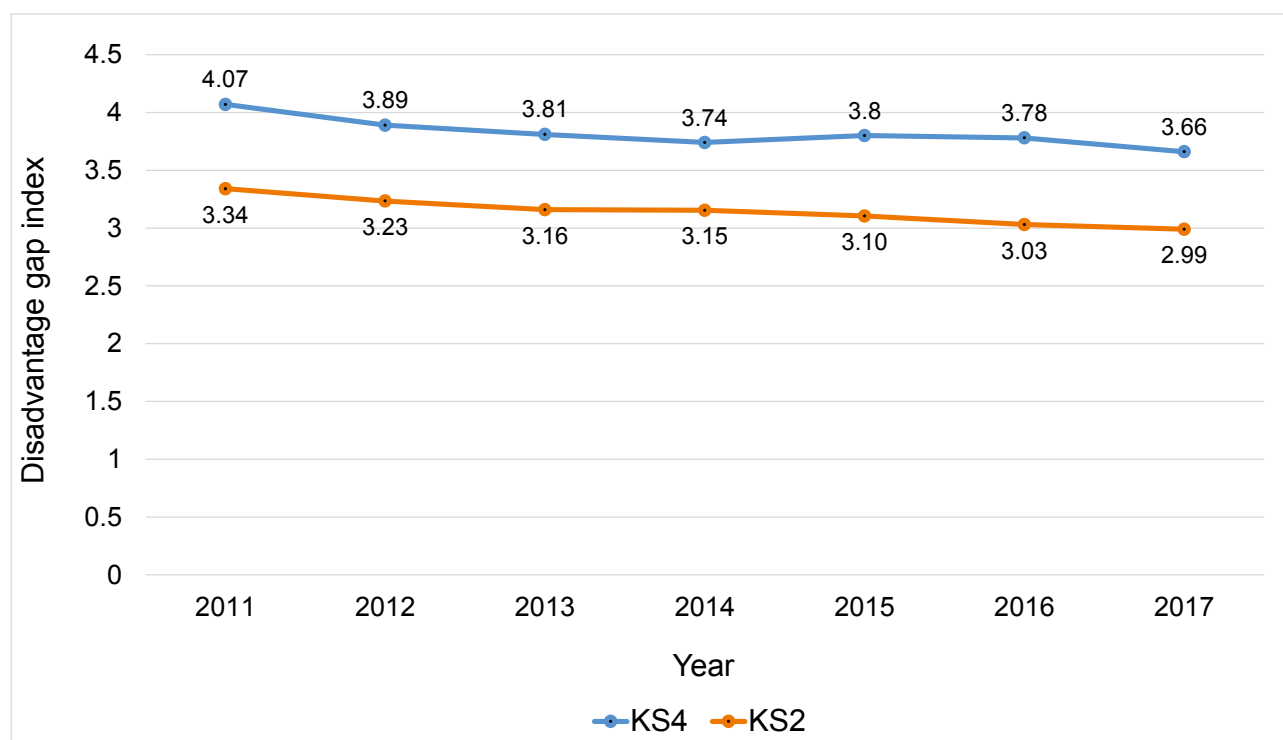
Nevertheless, despite the precarious state of pupil premium within the current funding context, it is still given to schools for a specific and important purpose. Indeed, pupils eligible for FSMs, or who have ever been looked after by the local

authority, have worse educational outcomes than their peers. Up until 2014, the government measured the gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils as the difference between the proportion of eligible and non-eligible pupils achieving a level four or above in reading, writing and maths at key stage 2 and the difference between the proportion of eligible and non-eligible pupils achieving five A\*-C grades, including English and maths, at key stage 4 (DfE, 2014). Department for Education (DfE) data consistently reported a large gap based on this measure. In 2014, 67.4% of pupil premium pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths compared to 83.5% of non-pupil premium pupils. At key stage 4, 36.5% of pupil-premium pupils achieved five or more A\*-C grades including maths and English compared to 64% of non-pupil premium pupils (DfE, 2014).

With primary levels abolished in 2014 and GCSEs now measured in terms of attainment and progress 8, the parameters of the gap have changed. This creates issues in terms of looking at long-term changes to progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils over time. To overcome this barrier, the DfE's new attainment gap measures are now based on the mean 'ranked' GCSE or key stage 2 SATs score of pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils (the score being a product of the new attainment measures). All pupils taking GCSEs or key stage 2 SATs are placed on a scale of zero (lowest performing) to 100 (highest performing) with the gap being the difference between these two groups converted to fit a scale of -10 to 10 (DfE, 2014). A score of zero reflects no difference between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils. In contrast, a positive score reflects that pupil premium pupils have performed worse than their peers whereas a negative score reflects the reverse. Figure one shows the 'disadvantage gap index' for both key stage 2 and key stage 4 since 2011, highlighting a persistent (albeit narrowing) gap in attainment between those eligible for the pupil premium and their peers at a national level.

Looking beyond attainment, data exists to suggest that the progress gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils is similarly persistent. A recent report from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) found that children eligible for the pupil premium were, on average, 4.3 months

**Figure one:** Graph showing the national attainment gap between pupil premium pupils and their peers at KS2 and KS4 between 2011 and 2017.



\*Data taken from national statistics produced by the DfE (2018a and 2018b).

behind their peers when they first started school (Andrews *et al.*, 2017). By the time the cohort sat their GCSEs, the gap between pupil premium pupils and their peers had risen to 19.3 months (Andrews *et al.*, 2017). The focus on the progress gap is particularly useful for exploring how individual schools have closed the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This is because progress measures take into account the starting point of each individual child and thus provide a better indicator of the value added by a single school and diminish the impact of other factors outside of a school's control (DfE, 2018d).

Of course, there are caveats with measuring progress and attainment of pupil premium pupils as a whole. Indeed, it is important to recognise that pupils eligible for the pupil premium often fall within a myriad of other pupil groups which may also affect their attainment and progress. Mike Treadway (2017b), for instance, has found that being eligible for pupil premium has a much greater impact on the progress of White British pupils than it does on those who speak English as an additional language. Furthermore, on a national scale, 'there is an established link between [special educational needs] SEN and deprivation and it is estimated that 30%

of pupils with SEN will benefit from the pupil premium' (NASEN, 2014: 2). Finally, there is also a wealth of evidence to suggest that geographical location, particularly whether a school is located in the North or South of England, affects the type and persistence of the disadvantage facing pupils (Gorard, 2017; NPP, 2018). When measuring the gap in a school, taking into account the different pupil groups which make up the pupil premium cohort, and where the school is located, is important for understanding the impact of being disadvantaged on pupils and whether disparities in outcomes are caused specifically by being disadvantaged or whether other factors are also at play.

### The role of governing boards in raising outcomes for pupil premium pupils

The data above highlights that narrowing the gaps between pupil premium pupils and their peers is a difficult and significant task. On the one hand, there is an argument to suggest that the governing board should consider how everything the school does impacts upon disadvantaged pupils (Rowland, 2015). However, looking to narrow the role down to its specifics, according to the DfE's (2017a)

*Governance Handbook*, at school level it is the governing board's responsibility to ensure that 'pupil premium funding is being spent on improving attainment for eligible pupils'. In order to comply with statutory and contractual requirements, those governing are also required to oversee and monitor 'the impact of the pupil premium' (DfE, 2017a). Furthermore, the Ofsted (2018) *Handbook* states that judgements will consider 'how effectively leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium, and measure its impact on outcomes for pupils, and how effectively governors hold them to account for this'.

As part of their remit, the governing board should be involved in putting together a strategy for spending the pupil premium. As of 2018, this strategy must be published online and include details concerning how much funding the school receives; the 'main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils at the school'; what the school has done to overcome these barriers; how the impact of the pupil premium will be measured; and when the next pupil premium review will take place (DfE, 2017b). Those governing also have a subtler yet equally important role in understanding disadvantage in a wider sense. The DfE's *Governance Handbook* requires governing boards to 'raise standards for all children ... [including] ... those receiving free school meals and those who are more broadly disadvantaged' (DfE, 2017a).

Looking to isolate the governing boards role in spending the pupil premium, the National Governance Association (NGA, 2014) has identified several broad areas which those governing should be involved in when schools consider spending and evaluating the pupil premium. These are:

1. understanding the best way to spend the pupil premium based on a variety of sources of evidence
2. signing-off on a pupil premium spending strategy based on an informed understanding of the barriers to educational achievement facing eligible pupils and what works to overcome these barriers
3. reviewing and amending pupil premium allocation as a result of ongoing monitoring

Exploring this in more detail, there is a wealth of literature examining the use of evidence in deciding how the pupil premium should be spent and choosing the most effective initiatives when spending the funding. Although this literature scarcely mentions governance, it is nonetheless highly relevant to the role of governing boards and is thus outlined in the next section.

## Understanding 'what works' to raise outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

While there is evidence to suggest that factors other than the pupil premium have a substantial effect on outcomes for eligible pupils, with Rebecca Allen (2015: 22) outlining that 'the statistical correlation between who does well for FSM children and who does well for non-FSM children is very high', many schools put a lot of work into deciding how to spend the pupil premium.

Data from the NFER/Sutton Trust (2018) and the National Audit Office (NAO, 2015) highlights that schools often use internal sources of data to decide 'what works' when spending the pupil premium, with past experience being one of the biggest factors for schools in allocating funding. Furthermore, evidence suggests that sharing best practice between schools has also been a common part of decision making processes (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2018). Nonetheless, schools which make evidence-based decisions seem to do better at closing the gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils, with several research projects finding that schools which spend the pupil premium well also utilise research evidence effectively (Ofsted, 2013). In this context, it is encouraging that the proportion of schools consulting research has grown from 36% to 46% between 2015 and 2018 (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2018).

The key source of research evidence is perhaps the Sutton Trust/Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) toolkit. Usage of this resource is still growing, albeit slowly. 34% of respondents to the annual NFER/Sutton Trust (2016; 2018) survey claimed they used it in 2017-18 compared to 27% in 2015-16. This includes just over half of senior leaders and around a quarter of classroom teachers (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2018). These findings mirror a DfE survey which found that 30.5% of schools had sourced their most effective strategy from the EEF toolkit (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). Nevertheless, the limited usage of the toolkit adds to other concerning evidence about the continued unwillingness of schools to engage in thorough evidence-based decision making. Just 44% of all respondents to NFER/Sutton Trust's 2017-18 survey said that they evaluated different approaches and programmes before deciding which to adopt and this figure has stayed fairly constant throughout the history of the survey (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2018). This was echoed by the DfE (Macleod *et al.*, 2015) which found that 64.3% of schools sourced their 'most effective' strategy internally rather than from outside research, implying that there may still be a deficiency of evidence-led decision making in some areas.

## Choosing the most effective initiatives

Looking beyond the resources used to understand ‘what works’ when spending the pupil premium, research from the DfE has found that the most successful initiatives for raising disadvantaged pupils’ attainment are: paired or small group additional teaching; improving feedback between teachers and pupils; and one-to-one tuition (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). The EEF (2018b) toolkit supports these findings, suggesting that improved feedback produces a high impact, with one to one tuition, small group tuition and individualized instruction producing a moderate impact. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that, while schools are using some approaches which the evidence suggests are effective, such as one-to-one tuition, they are underutilising others such as peer-to-peer tutoring (NAO, 2015).

In addition, researchers cannot agree on the effectiveness of several costly initiatives commonly funded through the pupil premium (NAO, 2015). For instance, the research into the effectiveness of teaching assistants has shown mixed results. A five-year study, published in 2009, suggested teaching assistants had little positive impact on pupil progress (Blatchford *et al.*, 2009). However, the researchers also noted that this was likely be a result of the way in which they had been deployed (Blatchford *et al.*, 2009), with a further follow-up study considering the deployment issue in more depth (Webster and Blatchford, 2012; Sharples *et al.*, 2015).

Learning mentors are another example of an initiative where the literature provides a decidedly mixed picture. On the one hand, case study research produced by Kim Lay (2017) has concluded that learning mentors can improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, echoing the findings of Lisa Russell’s (2007) research, Ofsted (2005) research and a briefing by Jekielek and colleagues (2002). However, the EEF toolkit is significantly more sceptical, judging mentoring to have very low or no impact for a moderate cost (EEF, 2018b).

Similarly, several research reports all stress, to varying degrees, that aspirations ‘have an important part to play in explaining why poor children typically do worse at school’, even after accounting for family background and prior attainment (JRF, 2010: 5; Sharples *et al.*, 2010; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2014). This is despite the fact that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF, 2011) has previously argued that aspirations can be affected by ‘social class, culture and history’ as well as the level of

parental support. Looking across three deprived areas in the UK, the JRF (2011) found evidence to contradict the general assumption that ‘young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds’ necessarily have ‘low aspirations’, suggesting that more research is needed to fully understand the impact of aspirations on disadvantaged groups.

This suggests that, for schools, negotiating the literature, and choosing the right initiatives, is not always a straight forward task – with some disagreement amongst researchers about what does and does not work. Looking beyond this, another trend across the literature is a lack of focus on the impact of non-academic initiatives and a lack of clarity about their effectiveness. This not to say that researchers have completely neglected this area. Ofsted (2013) has previously claimed that schools which target pupil premium funds most effectively consider a range of barriers to learning which include attendance, behaviour and family circumstances. On a more specific level, as well as the studies around aspirations (cited above), the EEF (2018b) toolkit has explored the impact of some pastoral initiatives, such as providing school uniform. Case study research has also shown that providing in-school mental health provision has the potential for a positive effect on outcomes for pupil premium pupils (Treadaway, 2017a). Yet, despite the ‘importance of using the same rigour in evaluating the impact of pastoral interventions as when evaluating academic ones’ (Ofsted, 2013), there has been notably less emphasis in the literature on pastoral initiatives compared to those which focus on teaching and learning. This is despite the fact that barriers outside the classroom have a substantial impact on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (Fellows, 2018).

On a final note, it is important to stress that, regardless of which initiatives are used, schools need to select the correct approaches to meet the needs of their pupils (Rowland, 2018). Furthermore, the DfE (Macleod *et al.*, 2015) found that the most successful schools often target pupil premium funding at specific eligible pupil groups, with Ofsted (2013) similarly claiming that, regardless of how the pupil premium is spent, initiatives are most effective when they are carefully targeted, taught by well-qualified individuals, linked to day-to-day learning and have a clear success criterion. Furthermore, the EEF (2018a) has shown that, regardless of which pupil premium initiatives are used, if they are employed ineffectively they will have minimal impact.

## The need for more research

Despite the wealth of literature around spending and monitoring the pupil premium (outlined above), governing boards have been largely ignored in this work. As a result, recognition of their input in the process is scarce. This is despite the fact that Ofsted (2013) found that maximising the impact of pupil premium funding required active involvement from governors/trustees in decision making and in providing effective challenge. Following this up, researchers analysed 151 Ofsted reports between January and December 2013 (Ofsted, 2014). Here, they noted that those schools judged 'good' or 'outstanding' had governing boards who were aware of their role in monitoring the use of their school's pupil premium funding (Ofsted, 2014). These strongest governing boards take strategic responsibility for ensuring that the funding improves teaching and support for eligible pupils in the school (Ofsted, 2014). They know how the funding is being spent, hold leaders to account for expenditure and assess how effectively the funded activities contribute to raising the attainment of eligible pupils (Ofsted, 2014). Similarly, researchers found that those with 'weak' leadership were more likely to have large gaps between their least and most disadvantaged peers (Ofsted, 2014). Quantifying this relationship, the NAO (2015) analysed a

series of Ofsted reports between September and December 2014 to determine how well those governing held schools to account for pupil premium spending (NAO, 2015). The report found overlap between a positive judgement of governance and a positive judgement of pupil progress.

Nevertheless, while the above makes a strong case for involving governing boards in pupil premium decision making, it does not address what governing boards actually do in terms of supporting disadvantaged pupils, spending the pupil premium and evaluating the impact of the funding – hence the purpose of this study. The current research is unclear as to how involved those governing really are; with the DfE (Macleod *et al.*, 2015) finding that 93.1% of schools had received support from governors/trustees when planning to provide for disadvantaged pupils, whereas the 2017/18 annual NFER/Sutton Trust (2018) survey found that only 10% of schools considered 'consulting the school's governing body' as being a factor in deciding which initiatives would be funded through the pupil premium. This inconsistency is likely compounded by the fact that the current literature either explores what senior leaders or teachers perceive the impact of the governing board to be, instead of asking those governing directly about their role.





# Methodology

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A mixed-methods design was used to address this gap in the literature (Robson and McCartan, 2017). As outlined previously, this research consisted of a survey of governors and trustees (phase one) and a desktop analysis of published pupil premium strategies (phase two).

Phase one was a two-part survey. NGA's extensive network was used to recruit a large number of participants, with the survey administered online through SurveyMonkey and data analysis conducted through SPSS. It is important to note that those who responded to the survey were self-selecting meaning that this study is unlikely to be generalisable to all schools in England (Robson and McCartan, 2017). Part one asked participants how their school defines 'disadvantage', how their school chooses to spend the pupil premium and the extent to which those governing are involved in the pupil premium spending process.

Overall, 875 individuals responded to part one of the survey. 42.2% of survey respondents were chairs of governing boards, 23.7% were vice chairs or committee chairs, 26.5% were governors/trustees with no formal position on the board and 5.4% were executive leaders. 66.7% of respondents governed in primary, nursery, infant or junior schools with just over a quarter governing in secondary, lower, or middle schools. Less than 10% of respondents governed in special schools, all-through schools and pupil-referral units. In terms of school type, 63.4% of schools were maintained by the local authority, with 13.9% of respondents governing in a single academy trust and 22.6% governing in a multi-academy trust. Geographically, 50.8% of respondents came from the south of England, with 8.5% of these from London. A further 27.3% came from the West Midlands, East Midlands or East of England and 23.8% came from the North West, the North East or Yorkshire & Humberside.

Part two of the survey asked respondents to share information from the *Find and Compare Schools in England* database. This included data around the progress of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in their school(s), the number of pupils on roll and the percentage that receive the pupil premium. The aim of this was to give a

'snap-shot' of the progress gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils and the percentage of free-school meal (FSM) pupils in participants' school.

416 of the 875 respondents completed part two of the survey. Of these, 267 governed in primary schools, 114 in secondary schools and 35 in mixed or alternative provision. The mean average size of primary schools in the sample was 266 pupils, with a mean average of 70 pupils registered for FSMs at any point in the past six years in each school. The mean average size of secondary schools in the sample was 1,015, with a mean average of 231 pupils registered for FSMs at any point in the past six years in each school. In terms of overall progress in the sampled schools, all primary pupils had progress broadly in line with the overall national average of +/- 0.00 in maths (+0.01), reading (+0.18) and writing (-0.02). Similarly, all secondary schools included in the sample performed broadly in line with the overall national average (-0.03) in terms of progress 8 (-0.12). Pupil premium pupils made less progress than their peers in all measures across the sample. In primary schools, pupil premium pupils made, on average, -0.66 progress points in writing, 0.50 progress points in reading and -0.30 progress points in maths. On the other hand, in secondary schools, pupil premium pupils achieved an average progress 8 score of -0.39.

In analysing this data, one difficulty was choosing how to measure the progress gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils. While the 'disadvantage gap index' is a useful measure nationally (pages 2-3), it is not possible to apply this measure at a school level. One alternative approach is to explore the 'in-school gap' between pupil-premium and non-pupil premium pupils. However, this measure has been widely discredited due to the fact that, in schools where both pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils have poor outcomes, there is likely to be a misleadingly small gap (Gorard, 2016; Allen, 2015). Another measure, which the DfE now report in the school league tables, is between pupil premium pupils in a school and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally. Nevertheless, this measure also has issues. In those schools which achieve high outcomes for all pupils, a large gap

## Methodology

would still be present if pupil premium pupils performed 'in-line' with the national average even if they were well behind their peers. Currently, researchers and analysts are working towards building a more accurate statistical measure of the gap which overcomes these caveats. For the purpose of this study, however, comparing the progress made by pupil premium pupils in respondents' schools against the 'national average' for non-pupil premium pupils at key stage 2 and 4 will provide a more accurate picture of what schools with good outcomes for pupil premium pupils are doing compared to focusing on the 'in-school' gap which may be skewed by underperforming schools.

Using the data provided by respondents in the survey as a sampling frame, a 'purposive sample' of 36 pupil premium strategies was taken based on the size, type and phase of schools and how successfully the school had closed the progress gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils (Robson and McCartan, 2017). Overall, 18 strategies were taken from primary schools and 18 from secondary schools. Within these groups, half of the strategies came from schools with notably small gaps between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils,

while the other half came from schools with notably large gaps. The aim of this phase was to provide further evidence of what those schools with small gaps are doing compared to those with larger gaps. Document analysis templates were put together to group different 'initiatives' and 'challenges' identified in the pupil premium strategies into themes. When interpreting the data, it is important to note that similar initiatives and challenges were grouped together based on the joint verdict of two researchers; a process which potentially introduced a small degree of bias into the study.

Finally, the project was carried out in line with the British Educational Research Association's (2014) ethical standards. All phase one participants were required to give informed consent. Furthermore, their data is being held in line with data protection regulations and they are not identifiable in this report. Phase two was carried out using information in the public domain. However, to mitigate against organisational harm, the data has subsequently been anonymised.



# Phase one: survey findings

## How governing boards perceive disadvantage and the purpose of the pupil premium

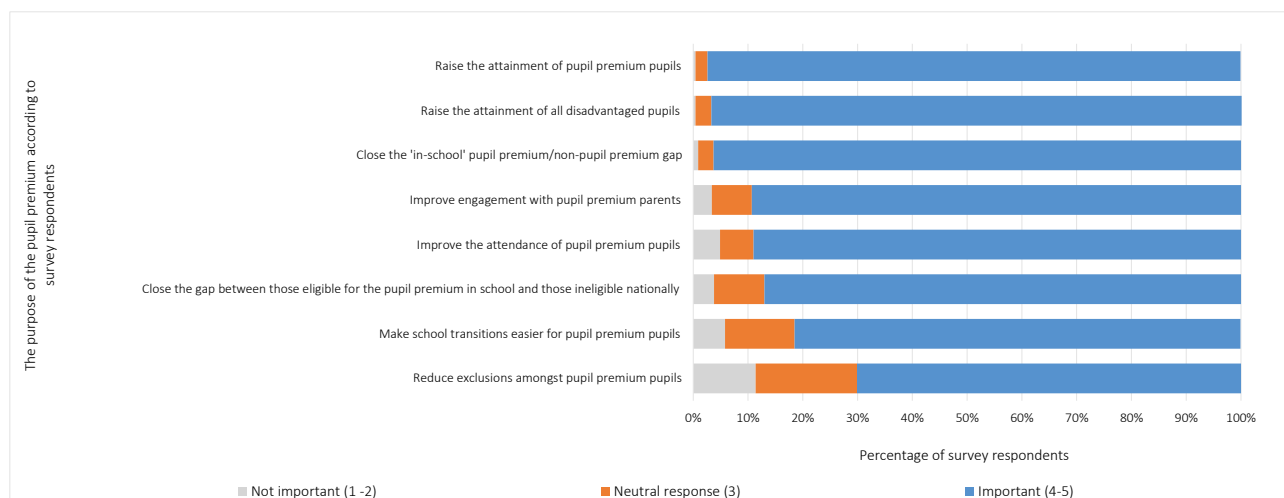
In exploring the survey findings, a useful starting point is to consider how governing boards perceive ‘disadvantage’ and what they see as the ‘purpose’ of the pupil premium. Overall, 86.3% of survey respondents outlined that their school(s) defined ‘disadvantaged’ pupils as those ‘eligible for the pupil premium’ with 13.6% using a different definition. Of these, only three respondents did not agree with labelling any pupils as disadvantaged, with a further five outlining that all groups were disadvantaged to some extent. Beyond those eligible for the pupil premium, the most common definitions of disadvantage in the survey were:

- any child identified in-house as needing additional support (37 cases)
- children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (18 cases)

- those who speak English as an additional language or who are from a minority ethnic background (eight cases)
- pupils with a challenging home life (eight cases)
- those with prior attainment issues (seven cases)
- those with social, emotional and mental health needs (seven cases)
- pupils identified through a school's own socio-economic calculations (six cases)

A few respondents also noted that pupils with safeguarding concerns (three cases), significant medical needs (two cases), young carer responsibilities (two cases), attendance issues (one case) or those from travelling families (one case) should be considered disadvantaged. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the majority of respondents defined ‘disadvantage’ as ‘those eligible for the pupil premium’, 45.9% still allocated additional funds above and beyond the pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils in their school.

**Figure two:** What governors and trustees think the pupil premium should be used for (participant ranking of each category from 1-5 in terms of its importance as an outcome of pupil premium spending).



**Phase one: survey findings**

Exploring what governors and trustees thought about the purpose of pupil premium spending, the survey asked respondents to rank a series of statements pertaining to the purpose of the pupil premium from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). The data, summarised in figure two, shows that respondents felt that the pupil premium had a range of purposes. Although nearly all respondents noted the purpose of the pupil premium as being to raise attainment for pupil premium/all disadvantaged pupils, the majority of respondents also noted that the pupil premium should also be used to engage with parents, improve attendance of eligible pupils, make school transitions easier and reduce exclusions.

Of particular note, although still scoring highly, closing the gap between pupil premium pupils and all pupils nationally scored comparatively low compared to the other categories. This is despite the caveats associated with this gap and the fact that this is the measure reported in the school league tables (pages 7-8).

### Governing board involvement in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium

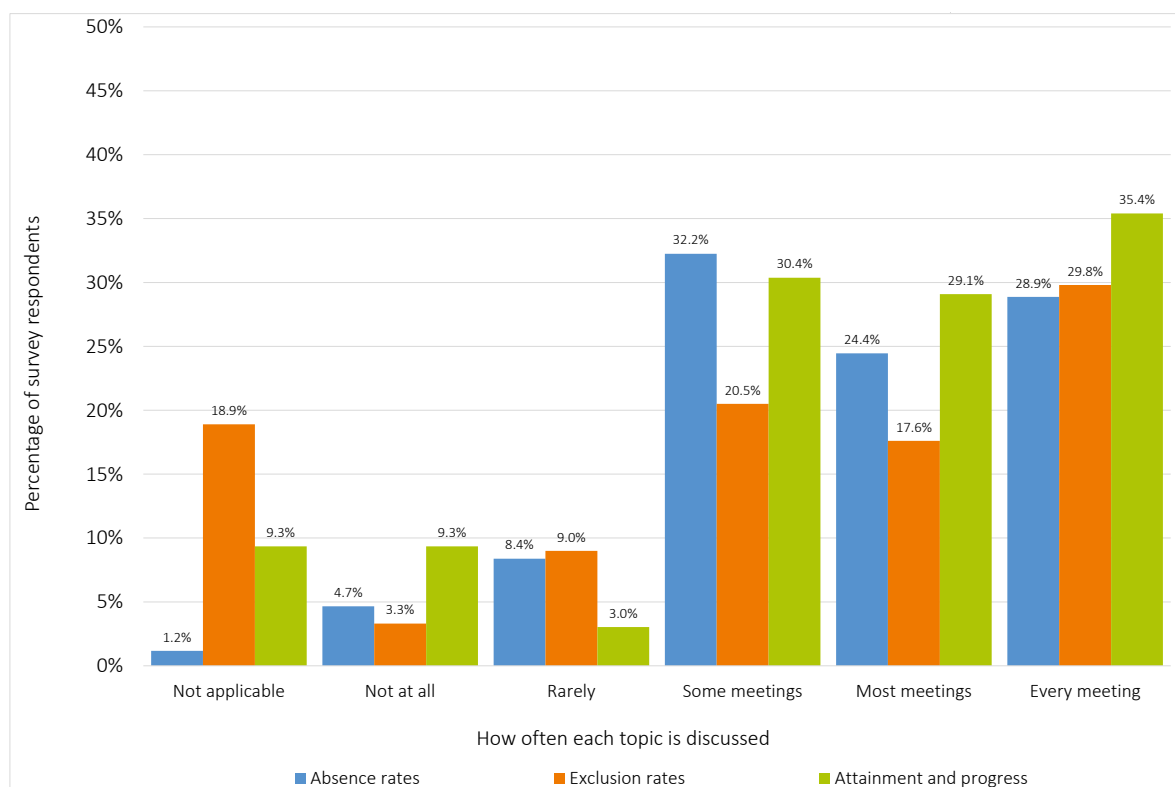
Moving on to explore the governing board’s role in pupil premium spending, 71.6% of survey respondents noted that their school ring-fenced the pupil premium keeping it

separate from other sources of funding. Furthermore, 93.5% of respondents outlined that their school had a plan for how their school was going to spend the pupil premium which was reviewed yearly in 37.8% of cases or more than yearly in 54.9% of cases.

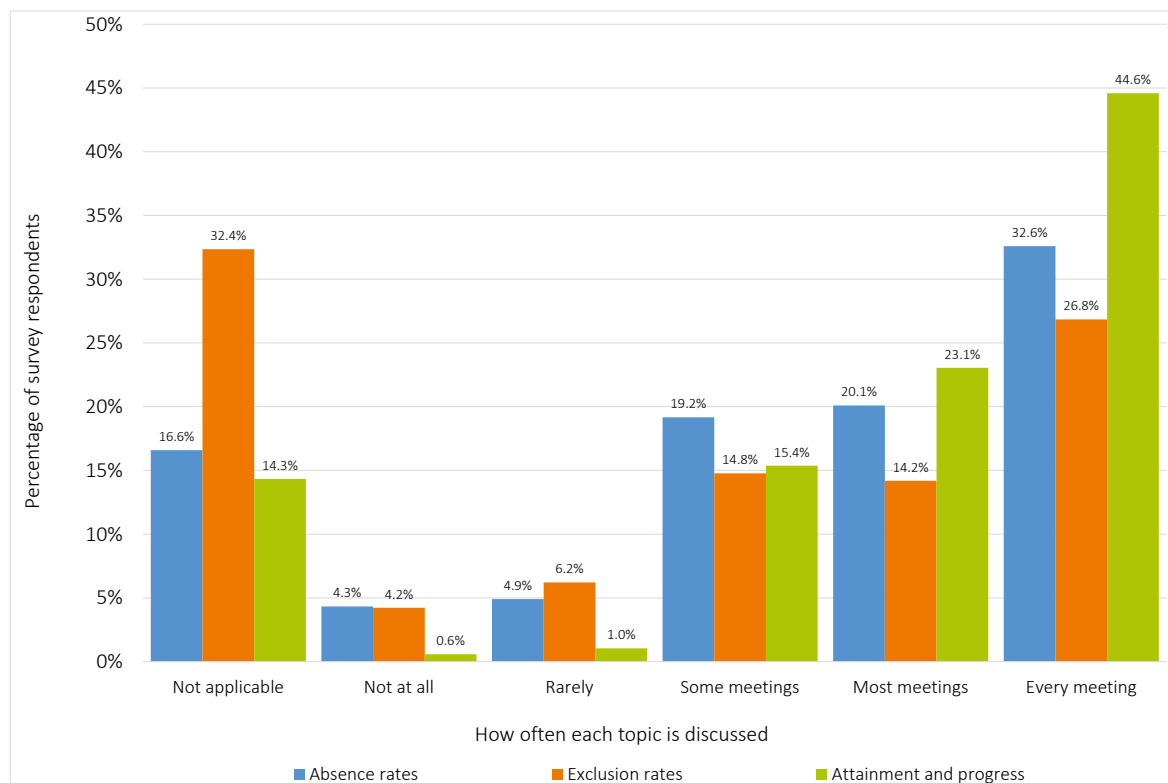
Encouragingly, 97.5% of respondents reported that their governing board understood the demographics of pupil premium pupils ‘to some extent’ or to a ‘great extent,’ with only 1.5% reporting that their governing board knew very little or nothing about the pupil premium cohort in their school. Furthermore, the majority of survey respondents reported that their governing board was heavily engaged in supporting and monitoring pupil premium pupils, with just over three-quarters noting that their school(s) appointed a governor or trustee who was responsible for the pupil premium.

Figures three and four also show that the majority of governing boards discussed pupil premium pupils during full governing board and committee meetings, with the attainment and progress of pupil premium pupils being discussed in most/all governing board and relevant committee meetings in over half of schools. Very low numbers of respondents spoke about pupil premium pupils ‘rarely’ or ‘not at all’ in governing board/committee meetings.

**Figure three: Showing how often absence rates, exclusion rates and the attainment/progress of pupil premium pupils is discussed at full governing board level.**



**Figure four:** Showing how often absence rates, exclusion rates and the attainment/progress of pupil premium pupils is discussed at committee level.



Beyond this, the only topic seemingly neglected by those governing was the destinations of pupil premium pupils, with the governing board looked at destinations data for pupil premium pupils in only 39.7% of cases.

In terms of the information those governing received during meetings, 66.7% of respondents noted that their governing board received information about pupil premium pupils in the form of reports from the lead executive, 59.1% received reports from senior staff with responsibility for the pupil premium and 58.3% obtained information from Analyse School performance (or equivalent).

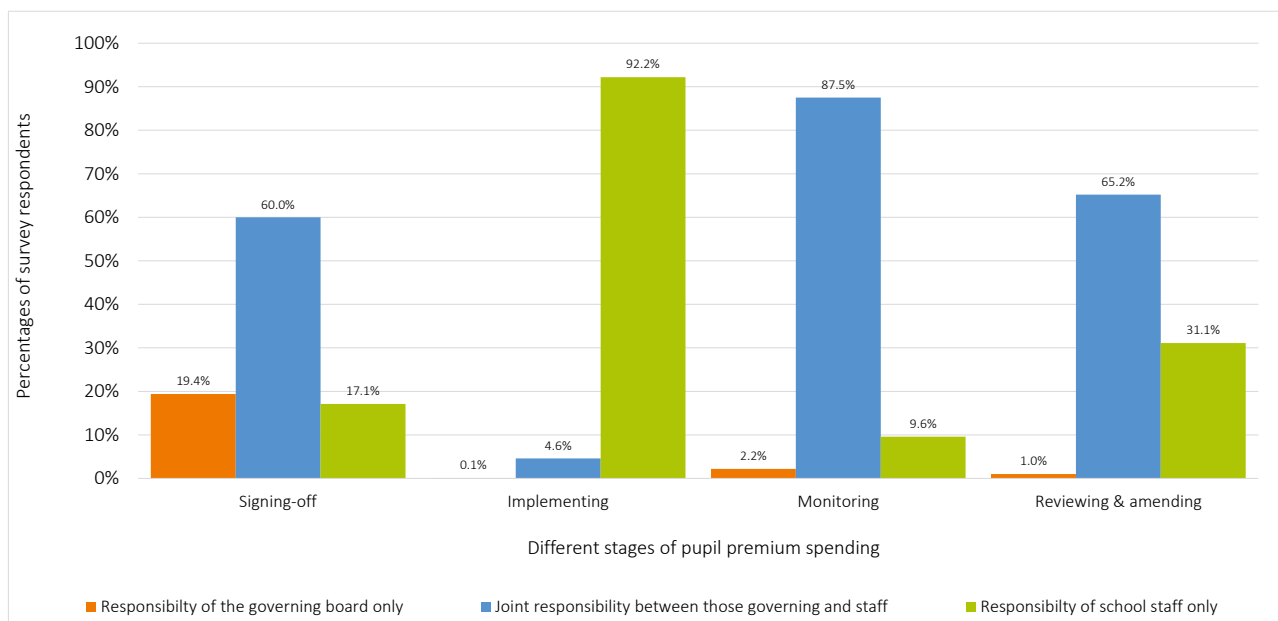
School size had an impact on how those governing received information about pupil premium pupils, with larger schools (mean number of pupils = 557) more likely to receive information from a staff member responsible for the pupil premium and smaller schools (mean number of pupils = 452) more likely to receive reports from the lead executive.

## Understanding the strategic and operational split when spending the pupil premium

As outlined previously, as well as knowing pupil premium pupils well and discussing/challenging on their behalf in board meetings, those governing also play a role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium.

One of the most challenging aspects of this is understanding where the remit of the governing board ends and that of senior leaders begins. While many of those that responded to the survey agreed on the governing boards remit for spending and reviewing pupil premium funding, as demonstrated in figure five, there was some disagreement concerning the involvement of those governing and senior leaders in researching initiatives, signing-off on a spending plan and monitoring the impact of the pupil premium throughout the year.

Figure five: Chart showing governing board involvement in different stages of pupil premium spending.



The data also shows a split between whether those governing should be involved in altering pupil funding once a plan has been put in place. Over the course of a spending cycle, the majority of schools did change how the pupil premium was spent, relying on either ongoing senior leadership monitoring in 66.0% of cases and/or joint discussions between those governing and senior leaders in 58.6% of cases. Only 27.8% altered funding as a direct result of ongoing governing board monitoring of the impact of pupil premium funding, with a further 7.7% of respondents altering the pupil premium plan for a different reason.

While this data is useful in terms of understanding the role of those governing in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium it does not reveal anything about the ‘impact’ of governor/trustee involvement. Exploring this further, figures six and seven show the average progress gap in the schools sampled compared to all non-pupil premium pupils nationally broken down based on whether the governing board was involved in researching initiatives, signing-off on a spending strategy, monitoring the impact of the pupil premium and altering spending. When interpreting the data, it is important to note that, in some cases, the progress differences are very small.

The data shows that, on average, those primary schools surveyed had a smaller progress gap where staff led on researching what works, deciding what initiatives to use when spending the pupil premium, monitoring the impact

of the pupil premium and reviewing/amending the spending strategy, compared to those where the governing board was also involved in these decisions. However, there was a smaller progress gap in primary schools where the governing board was involved in signing-off on the pupil premium strategy compared to those primary schools where the governing board was not involved. In contrast, amongst the secondary schools surveyed, those which involved the governing board in all of the areas outlined above had, on average, a smaller progress gap than those which delegated this responsibility to school staff only. It is important to note, however, that most of these findings were not statistically significant meaning that it is not possible to be sure that the trends in the data did not occur by chance.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, amongst the secondary schools sampled, the difference between involving and not involving those governing in signing-off the spending plan was statistically significant.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that, at least amongst those secondary schools included in this sample, governing board involvement in signing-off the spending strategy did make a positive difference.

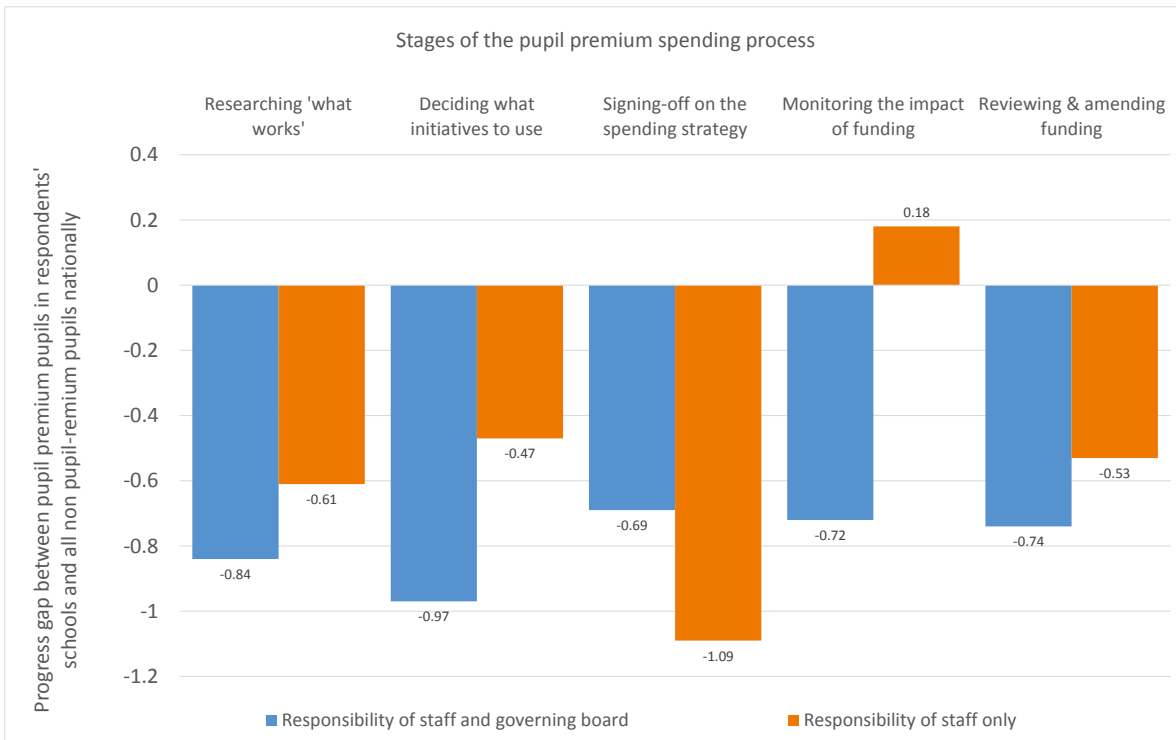
### What information governing boards value when spending and monitoring the pupil premium

Overall, the data shows that, for the majority of schools surveyed, governing boards are heavily involved in planning for, monitoring and reviewing pupil premium spending. As such, understanding what information governing boards value most when spending and monitoring the pupil premium is vitally important.

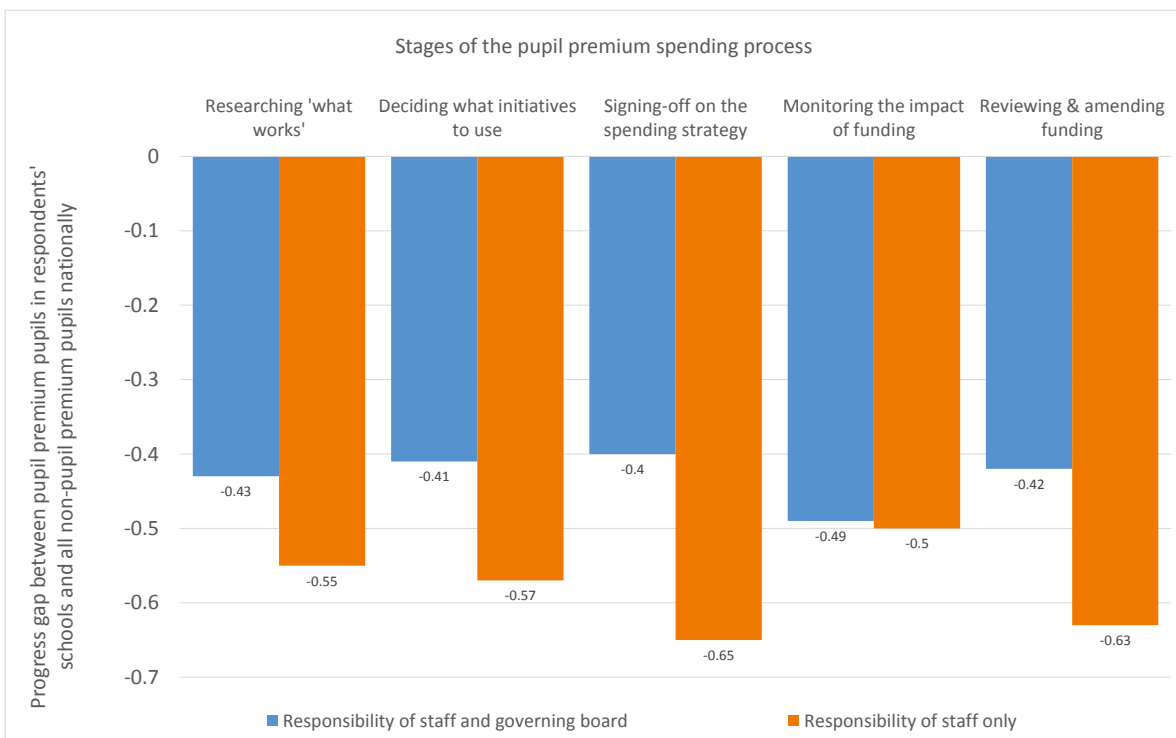
1 Based on a series of independent t-tests at the  $p = 0.05$  level.

2 Independent t-test comparing the difference in means between those secondary schools that involved governing boards in signing-off on the pupil premium spending strategy ( $M = -0.40$ ;  $SD = 0.49$ ) compared to those that did not ( $M = -0.65$ ;  $SD = 0.57$ ). This finding was statistically significant;  $t(88) = 2.107$ ,  $p = 0.038$ .

**Figure six:** Chart showing the average progress gap in maths, reading and writing at KS2 between respondents schools and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally, broken down by the governing board involvement in different stages of pupil premium spending.



**Figure seven:** Chart showing the average progress 8 gap between respondents schools and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally, broken down by the governing board involvement in different stages of pupil premium spending.



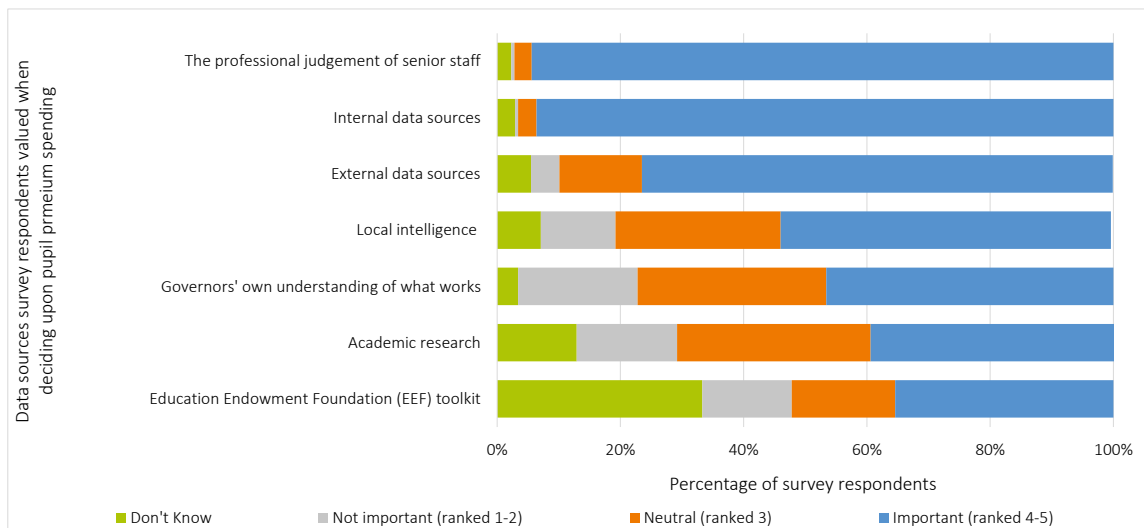
**Phase one: survey findings**

Exploring this further, several rating scales were also included in the survey which asked respondents to outline what information they valued the most when making a decision on spending the pupil premium. The results of these rating scales are summarised in figures eight to nine. For each scale score, respondents were asked to rank each statement/initiative from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). The data shows that, when deciding how the pupil premium should be spent, and monitoring its impact, those governing particularly valued the judgement of staff and internal sources of data (such as reports on attendance, attainment/progress etc.) above other sources of information. Furthermore, although data from analyse

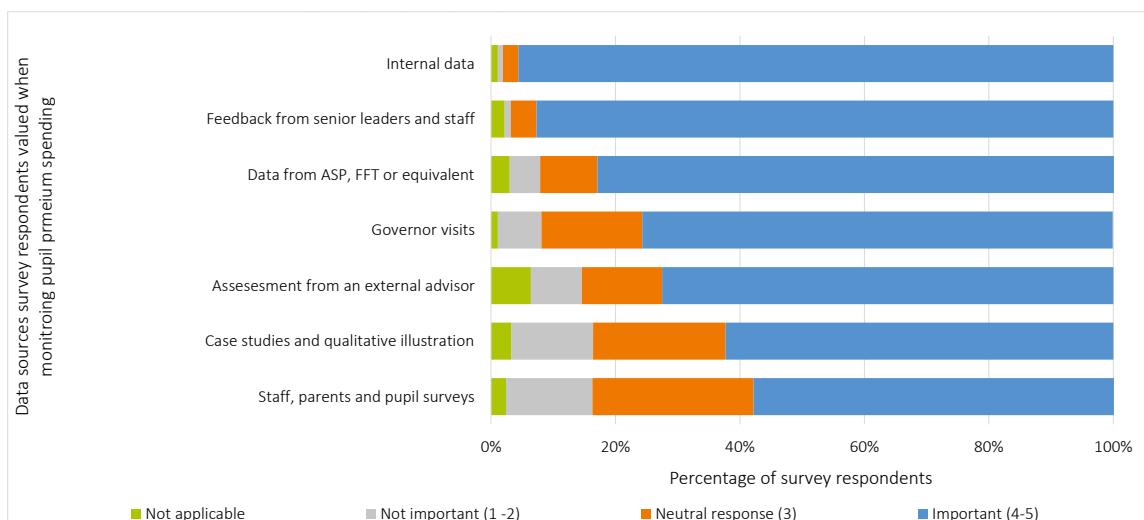
school performance was highly regarded in both deciding upon and monitoring the impact of pupil premium initiatives, respondents had mixed views on the governing board's ability to pass judgement on pupil premium spending (either through governor visits or their own understanding of what works).

Of note, in deciding what initiatives to use, respondents were split as to the usefulness of local intelligence, academic research and the EEF toolkit and, when monitoring the impact of funding, respondents also placed relatively less value on the importance of case studies and surveys.

**Figure eight: Which initiatives those governing valued the most when making decisions about how to spend the pupil premium (participant ranking of each from 1-5).**



**Figure nine: Which initiatives those governing valued the most when monitoring pupil premium spending (participant ranking of each category from 1-5).**





## What initiatives make a difference to the progress of pupil premium pupils?

Moving on to look at specific initiatives, the survey also asked an ‘open question’ about which initiatives respondents felt made the biggest difference in terms of improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in their school. In total, 733 respondents provided an answer to this question. The initiatives frequently mentioned by respondents included:

- targeted intervention support, either on a one-to-one/small group level
- training for teaching staff
- improving attendance
- subject specific interventions – particularly in English and maths
- providing breakfast clubs for pupils
- engaging with parents

Encouragingly, although only 4.8% of survey respondents reported that their school used the pupil premium to ‘offset budget cuts elsewhere’, a high proportion used the pupil premium to fund initiatives which, arguably, should have been funded through the schools core budget. This included: 26.5% of respondents using the pupil premium to hire additional teachers, 29.7% using the funding to improve the classroom environment and 33.7% using the funding to improve feedback.

Respondents also reported spending additional money beyond the pupil premium on an eclectic range of support. The most favoured initiatives included:

- subsidising school trips and activities for disadvantaged pupils
- allocating additional funding for pupils with special, educational needs and disabilities or those that spoke English as an additional language
- additional interventions and one-to-one support
- additional funding for pastoral needs (specifically welfare, uniform, clothing and food)
- breakfast/after-school clubs

For some schools, additional funding was provided whenever ‘necessary’ based on the needs of the individual child.

As well as exploring the subjective opinions of respondents, the survey also revealed what initiatives those schools with small progress gaps between pupil premium and non-pupil

premium pupils implemented compared to those with larger gaps. Figures ten and eleven, show the average progress gap between pupil premium pupils and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally in each school that did/did not use a specific initiative.

Explaining these trends, the data shows that those primary schools included in the survey that used the pupil premium to fund peer-to-peer tutoring, extending the curriculum, additional teachers, one-to-one tuition, funding for trips and early intervention schemes clearly made, on average, better progress than those schools that did not use these initiatives. In contrast, the data seems to suggest that pupil premium pupils in those schools that implemented initiatives around improving feedback or improving the classroom environment had, on average, worse progress outcomes than those schools which avoided these types of initiatives. It is important to note that the ‘differences’ between using/not using an initiative were not statistically significant in any case, meaning that it is not possible to be sure that these trends did not occur by chance within the sample.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, in the secondary schools surveyed, those that used peer-to-peer tutoring as an initiative had, on average, a smaller progress gap between pupil premium pupils and all non-pupil premium pupils. Interestingly, however, in contrast to primary schools, those secondary schools that funded improved feedback and extending the curriculum had better progress outcomes for pupil premium pupils compared to those that did not. The ‘differences’ between those secondary schools that did, and those that did not, fund a specific initiative were not statistically significant in the majority of cases.<sup>3</sup> However, the difference between those secondary schools that did implement peer-to-peer tutoring, compared to those that did not, was statistically significant.<sup>4</sup> This means that the difference in progress between using/not using peer-to-peer tutoring, as reported in figure eleven, was unlikely to have occurred by chance amongst those secondary schools that responded to the survey.

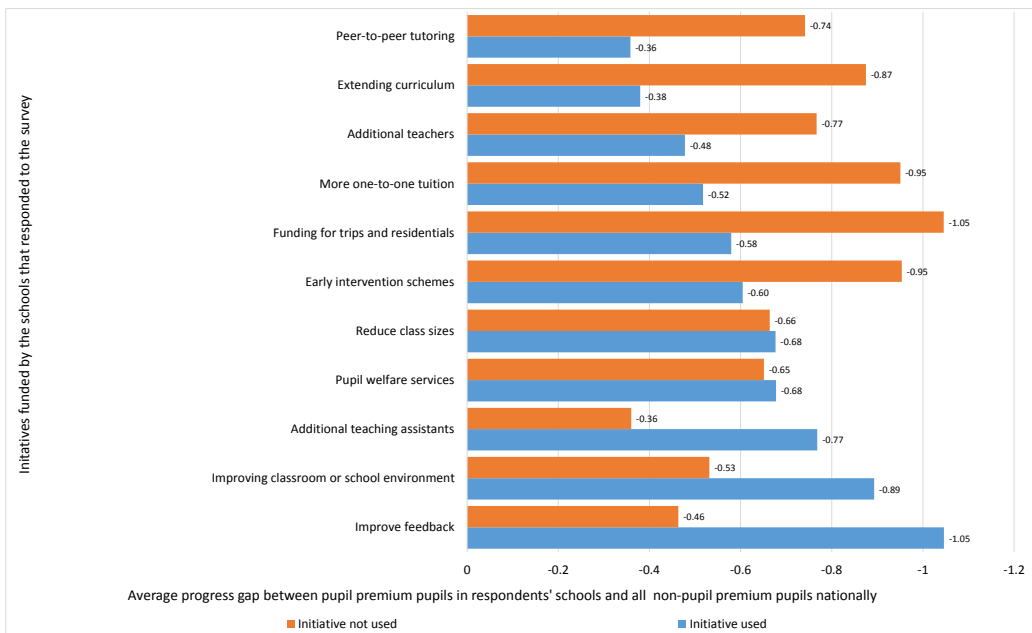
Statistical significance does not, however, reveal anything about cause and effect. Therefore, it is not possible to know from this data alone whether implementing peer-to-peer tutoring was the factor which improved outcomes for pupil premium pupils in respondents’ schools or whether there was another underlying cause. Exploring this further, figure twelve shows that peer-to-peer tutoring seemed to be used by those schools that, on average, had a high number of pupil premium pupils on roll. Taking this into account, it is likely that there were a myriad of factors at play, other than simply the ‘effectiveness’ of the initiative, which meant that those schools sampled that implemented peer-to-peer tuition had a smaller progress gap than those that did not.

<sup>3</sup> Based on a series of independent t-tests at the  $p = 0.05$  level.

<sup>4</sup> Independent t-test comparing the difference in means between those secondary schools that funded peer-to-peer tutoring ( $M = -0.34$ ;  $SD = 0.56$ ) compared to those that did not ( $M = -0.63$ ;  $SD = 0.56$ ). This finding was statistically significant;  $t(118) = 2.757$ ,  $p = 0.007$ .

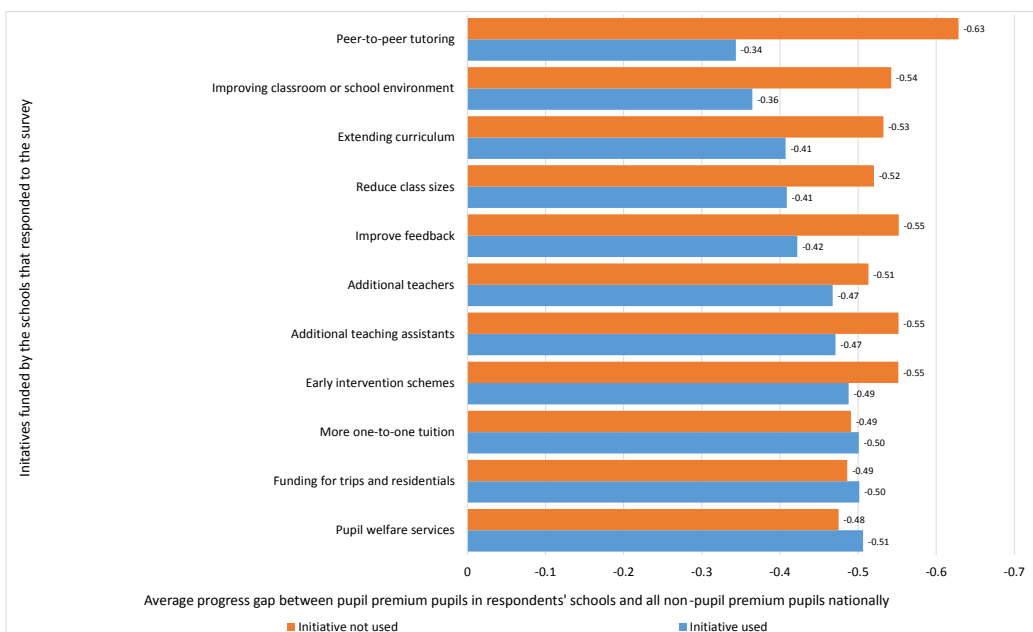
Phase one: survey findings

Figure ten: Chart showing the average progress gap in maths, reading and writing at key stage 2 between pupil premium pupils in the secondary schools sampled and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally, broken down by different types of initiative used.



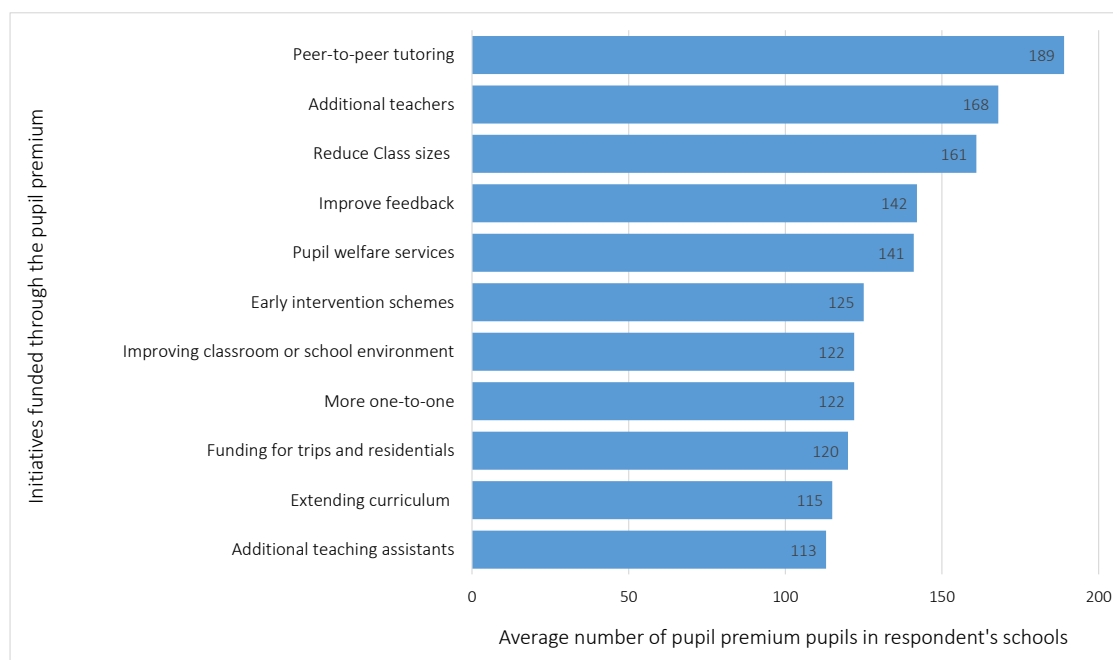
\*A score of +/- 0.00 would reflect being in line with all non-pupil premium pupils nationally. A positive score would indicate progress outcomes, on average, 'above' all non-pupil premium pupils nationally. A negative score indicates progress outcomes, on average, 'below' all non-pupil premium pupils nationally.

Figure eleven: Chart showing the average progress 8 gap between pupil premium pupils in the secondary schools sampled and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally broken down by different types of initiative used.



\*A score of +/- 0.00 would reflect being in line with all non-pupil premium pupils nationally. A positive score would indicate progress outcomes, on average, 'above' all non-pupil premium pupils nationally. A negative score indicates progress outcomes, on average, 'below' all non-pupil premium pupils nationally.

**Figure twelve:** Chart showing the average number of pupil premium pupils on roll in those schools surveyed that used each initiative listed.



## What else works?

Looking beyond what schools, and governing boards in particular, can do to support pupil premium pupils the data also suggests that geographical location and achieving high progress for all pupils potentially impacts on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

**Figure thirteen:** Table showing the average progress gap between respondents schools and all non-pupil premium pupils nationally across each region for schools included in the sample.

Region	Progress gap		Number of participants	
	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary
East of England	SUPP*	SUPP*	1	9
South West	-0.91	-1.23	18	18
South East	-0.44	-0.78	37	68
Yorkshire and Humberside	SUPP*	SUPP*	7	9
North East	SUPP*	SUPP*	8	8
North West	-0.59	0.08	12	22
London	0.18	0.87	15	25
East Midlands	SUPP*	-1.29	6	17
West Midlands	-0.47	-1.35	14	27

\* Suppressed results relate to data drawing upon less than ten responses.

Phase one: survey findings

While the data does show statistically significant regional differences in outcomes for pupil premium pupils (and, therefore, the differences in progress were unlikely to have occurred by chance amongst the schools that responded to the survey), it is important to note that the sample was disproportionately skewed towards the south of England and London – with 44.9% of respondents from these areas.<sup>5</sup> As such, very small numbers of respondents in the East of England and the North provided progress information for their disadvantaged pupils. This makes it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from this data.

Finally, the survey data revealed a high correlation between the progress of all pupils and the progress of pupil premium pupils (see figures fourteen and fifteen) for both primary and secondary schools.

This data points to the importance of quality teaching and learning in schools and suggests that pupil premium pupils are more likely to achieve better outcomes if all pupils in the school are performing well.

Figure fourteen: Scatter graph showing the correlation between the progress of all pupils across maths, reading and writing at KS2 and those pupils eligible for the pupil premium.

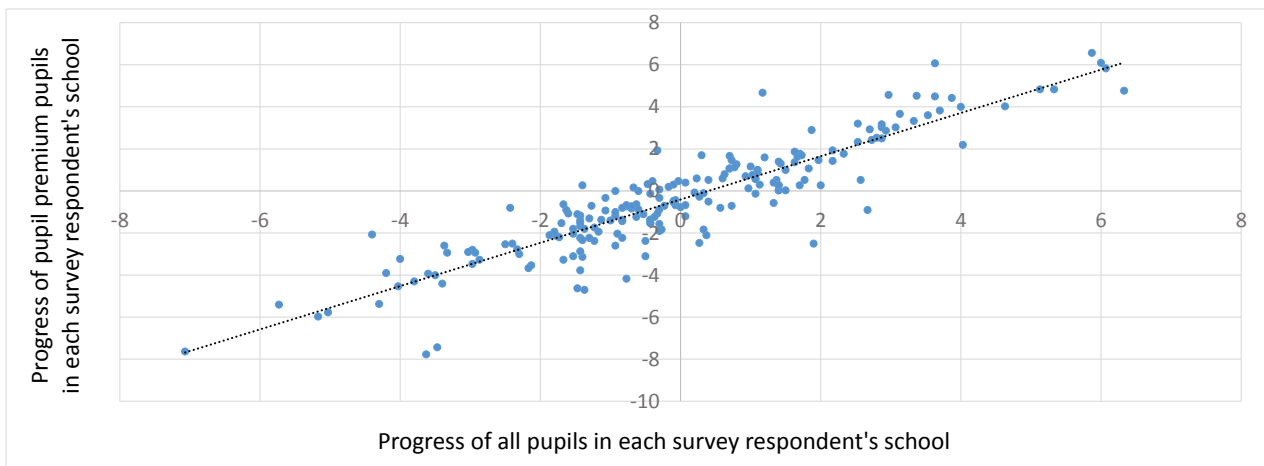
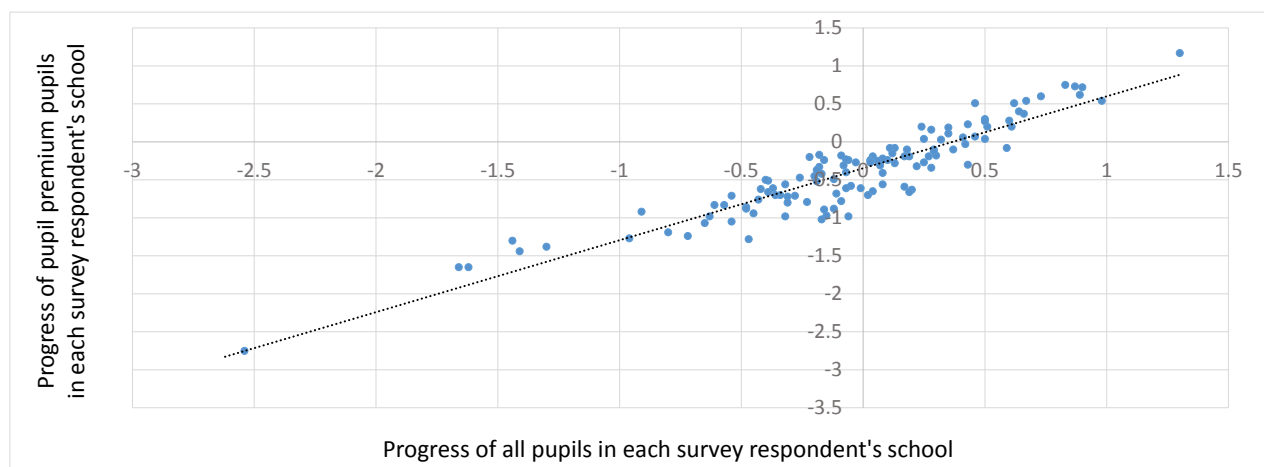


Figure fifteen: Scatter graph showing the correlation between the progress 8 scores of all pupils at KS4 and those pupils eligible for the pupil premium.



5 One-way ANOVA comparing the progress gap between pupil premium pupils in respondents' schools and all non-pupil-premium pupils nationally, broken down by various regions as reported in figure thirteen. This finding was statistically significant for primary [F (9, 194) = 2.766, p = 0.005] and secondary [F (8, 111) = 5.666, p = 0.000] schools.

# Phase two:

## Analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies

Another useful insight into how schools spend the pupil premium can be found across the 36 pupil premium strategies analysed in phase two of this study.

As outlined on page four, schools are legally required to publish a strategy on their website covering (DfE, 2017b):

- how much pupil premium funding their school receives
- the ‘main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils at the school’
- what the school has done to overcome these barriers
- how the impact of the pupil premium will be measured
- when the next pupil premium review will take place

Analysis revealed that a popular approach to putting together these strategies consisted of using a model template produced by the National College for Teaching and Leadership and the Teaching School Council (NCTL and TSC, 2018).

### The ‘disconnect’ between the barriers to educational achievement and the initiatives chosen

When choosing initiatives, schools should spend the pupil premium in a way that addresses specific barriers to educational achievement. However, analysis of the pupil premium strategies revealed somewhat of a ‘disconnect’ between the barriers to educational achievement identified in schools and the initiatives used to overcome these barriers. Across all of the 36 pupil premium strategies analysed, the challenges to educational achievement facing pupil premium pupils were identified as:

- family life (22 cases)
- low attendance (17 cases)
- social and emotional barriers to engagement (14 cases)
- individual pupil needs, especially pupils identified as having special educational needs, or English as an additional language (10 cases)

The barrier ‘low attainment and progress amongst pupil premium pupils’ was also identified in 29 of the 36 pupil premium strategies analysed. Arguably however, this is not a barrier in itself, but an outcome of other social, emotional, economic and cultural barriers which pupil premium children often face. Speech and language issues were identified as a challenge facing pupil premium pupils in four of the primary schools sampled but none of the secondary schools. In contrast, school strategic issues (three cases), poor behaviour (four cases) and limited access to equipment and uniform (four cases) were issues found exclusively in the secondary school strategies analysed. Interestingly, 14 of the 22 strategies which identified ‘family life’ as a barrier to educational achievement where in the top third of schools sampled in terms of having the narrowest progress gap. Importantly, despite the barriers to educational achievement identified in the pupil premium strategies (outlined above) being aimed more towards pastoral needs, the initiatives implemented were more focused on improving teaching and learning. Across all of the strategies analysed, the three most commonly identified initiatives were:

- targeted interventions to support attainment of specific pupil groups (33 cases)
- literacy support (28 cases)
- numeracy support (26 cases)

Other teaching and learning based initiatives common throughout the strategies included: paying for teaching assistants (20 cases), reading support (20 cases), mentoring (16 cases), strategies for improving non-cognitive skills (16 cases) and revision support (15 cases). This is not to say that all of the initiatives used were teaching and learning based. On the contrary, schools commonly used the pupil premium to subsidise: school trips (22 cases), internal extra-curricular activities (22 cases), parental engagement schemes (19 cases) and important equipment (15 cases).

Nevertheless, as is clear from the number of teaching and learning initiatives used compared to the number of pastoral barriers identified, it was common for schools to outline pastoral barriers to education but disproportionately implement teaching and learning initiatives with little clarity around how the two are linked.

### Effective ways to structure the pupil premium strategy

As well as revealing a 'disconnect' between the barriers to educational achievement identified and the initiatives implemented, analysis of the 36 strategies revealed a correlation between a school's success in closing the gap and the structure of their pupil premium strategy. Exploring this in detail, three cases were selected from the sample to illustrate these findings:

- **School A:** A secondary school in the West Midlands with a small 'in-school' progress gap of just 0.15 between the progress 8 scores of pupil premium eligible and pupil premium ineligible pupils, compared to 0.51 nationwide.
- **School B:** An innovative middle school in the East Midlands.
- **School C:** A primary school in the South-East, with a small 'in-school' progress gap in reading between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils of 3.8, compared to 1 nationally, a gap in writing of 2.8, compared to 0.6 nationally, and a gap in maths of 3.7, compared to 0.9 nationally.

These examples will be used to explore five key themes below which distinguish between the most and least effective ways of structuring pupil premium strategies.

#### 1. The importance of providing specific figures for each initiative used.

One important theme identified is the need to accurately calculate the cost of each initiative. On the one hand, school B provided specific figures for each initiative broke down to the nearest pound. This stood in stark contrast to school C which spent £5,000 on improving feedback, without clarifying where exactly the money was going and £10,000 on recruiting a pupil premium lead who appeared (although again the statement was ambiguous) to be the existing assistant headteacher. Throughout school C's strategy, twelve of sixteen initiatives were rounded to the nearest £1,000, with the other four to the nearest £100. This suggests that the school had not accounted for every pound spent.

#### 2. The importance of including a rationale for the interventions funded through pupil premium.

The large majority of strategies attempted to offer a rationale for the interventions funded through the pupil premium. However, for some schools, such as school C, this amounted to nothing more than a statement of the action being taken with, at best, an explanation of the strategies aims. For example, school C planned to recruit an attendance officer and widen their curriculum but they did not explain what benefit this would have. In contrast, in school A's strategy, the school justified spending by drawing upon data from NFER research, the EEF toolkit, recent Ofsted reports on the pupil premium and the school's own impact data. School B also adopted a more innovative model by utilising the EEF toolkit's five most effective strategies for raising standards. Each strategy was given a colour and then each specific action was tied back to the EEF recommendations through colour-coding.

Interestingly, looking across all of the pupil premium strategies analysed, schools struggled to provide a rationale for some initiatives compared to others. In particular, schools did not provide a clear rationale for introducing initiatives around: widening the curriculum, sporting activities, recruiting an attendance officer, recruiting teaching staff or recruiting teaching assistants. In contrast, initiatives which were generally accompanied by effective rationales included: staff CPD, targeted behavioural support and subsidising extra-curricular activities. These often cited research from the Sutton Trust/EEF and other academic sources, with some schools also justifying initiatives based on whether they had worked in previous years.

#### 3. Having a clear success criterion and an idea of what would be achieved through spending the pupil premium.

While some schools put in place clear success criteria for what they wanted the pupil premium to achieve, others were markedly vague. For instance, one school defined its success criterion for an initiative as 'rapid and sustained progress' while another intended that its children 'compare favourably or are higher' than the national average. This lack of clarity impeded the purpose of the success criterion as being there to offer a clear and transparent basis for evaluating an initiative's effectiveness. In contrast, school B took advantage of attainment and progress data in their school to calculate the gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils in each subject. Crucially, this data was then directly tied into the analysis of specific actions, through justifying why they were needed and evaluating their success.

Looking again across all of the pupil premium strategies analysed, the data suggests that some initiatives appeared to be more suited to quantitative measures of success, such as attainment and attendance, while others generally relied on non-quantitative measures, such as attempts to improve aspirations and ambitions.

#### 4. Having a clear monitoring processes in place.

Most strategies featured a specific column which dealt with monitoring an initiative's success. This practice is found in the template produced by the NCTL/TSC (2018). The quality of practice was perhaps at its most variable in this area. For instance, school A provided a detailed account of the process that would be followed, including time frames and individuals responsible. Other schools often failed to describe processes, set time frames or allocate individual responsibility. Certain monitoring process consisted of vague statements such as monitoring 'annually' or 'on-going as required' for entire initiatives costing significant amounts of money.

#### 5. Clarifying which group the funding would be targeting.

Finally, the analysis revealed that pupil premium strategies need to be clear on which pupil group each initiative is intending to benefit. Some strategies analysed did this effectively. School B, for instance, included a column in their strategy specifying which pupils an intervention would be targeting. Many schools using the NCTL/TSC (2018) model also noted which group would be targeted by adding this information to the 'description' of each chosen action. In contrast, school C's strategy did not clarify which pupils would benefit from specific initiatives. For example, £35,000 was intended to be spent on widening the curriculum through subject specialists delivering teaching in areas including music, PE and RE. Nevertheless, it was unclear whether this would benefit all pupils in the school or if it was reserved solely for pupils eligible for the pupil premium.

# Discussion and conclusion

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Drawing upon a survey of 875 governors and trustees and an analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies, this research set out to understand the governing board's role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium.

Overall, the governors and trustees surveyed as part of this study were heavily engaged in signing-off on a pupil premium spending strategy, monitoring the impact of the funding and reviewing/amending it in light of emerging trends. Furthermore, survey respondents were enthusiastic about raising outcomes for pupil premium pupils and generally played a crucial role in championing the needs of pupil premium pupils in governing board meetings.

While the literature on the pupil premium rarely covers governance, these findings reflect other research which highlights the importance of governing board involvement in pupil premium spending. Previous work found that schools with 'weak' leadership were more likely to have large gaps between their least and most disadvantaged peers (Ofsted, 2014), with further research demonstrating an 'overlap' between a positive Ofsted judgement of governance and a positive judgement of progress for pupil-premium pupils (NAO, 2015).

As well as confirming that governing boards do play an important, and often substantive, role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium, this study also revealed some important findings around how schools can maximise the impact of pupil premium funding. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

## Insights for governing boards and practitioners

- 1. The best schools are making evidence-driven decisions when spending their pupil premium. However, many schools, including governing boards, are still too inwards looking and can improve practice by consulting a wider range of sources before making spending decisions.**

Despite the positive role played by governing boards as outlined above, this research highlighted that many governing boards are 'inwards looking' when making decisions about pupil premium spending. The survey data suggests that many governing boards do not rate external sources of evidence as highly as internal sources of evidence when deciding how to spend and monitoring the impact of the pupil premium. As part of the survey, respondents were asked about which information sources governors and trustees valued the most when making decisions on spending and evaluating the pupil premium. In this regard, internal data and the opinions of senior members of staff were prioritised over external data, academic research and the EEF toolkit. For example, just 14% of respondents said that the EEF toolkit was extremely important as a source of information, compared to 68% who said that the professional judgement of senior staff was extremely important.

This is an issue given that previous research suggests that schools with the best outcomes for pupil premium pupils are generally those who look outwards for information and ideas. The DfE found that 30.5% of schools had sourced their most effective strategy from the EEF toolkit, a remarkably high figure given the toolkit's limited usage (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the DfE also found that 56.6% of headteachers from primary schools which were more successful at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils saw academic research as very important when deciding on initiatives, compared to 47% of headteachers from less successful primary schools (Macleod *et al.*, 2015). A National Audit Office (NAO, 2015) survey further mirrored these themes, finding that over 90% of school leaders who had consulted external sources of evidence found them useful. It is therefore apparent that the tendency for boards to look inwards limits their effectiveness in overseeing pupil premium spending.



These findings do not mean that internal data is less useful than external data. On the contrary, internal data is vital in monitoring the success of initiatives, especially given the fact that every school's context is slightly different. Nonetheless, internal data needs to be complemented by a wider range of sources to ensure that properly informed decisions are being made, with all options taken into account. Governing boards and senior leaders should be using an eclectic range of internal and external sources to decide upon and monitor initiatives. The key is using evidence to decide what is most likely to work and then adapting this to the specific school's context.

**2. The data from this study suggests that schools need to adopt a more holistic outlook when deciding on pupil premium spending. This means that, in the pupil premium spending strategy, teaching and learning initiatives should be accompanied by more pastoral initiatives which are often better at addressing the specific barriers to educational achievement which hold back pupil premium pupils.**

The thematic analysis of 36 pupil premium strategies highlighted a 'disconnect' between the barriers and challenges facing pupil premium pupils and the initiatives which the pupil premium was being used to fund. Indeed, the schools analysed as part of this study did not appear to be tackling the root causes of many of the challenges that they diagnosed; focusing their pupil premium spending disproportionately on only teaching and learning. This may be because, compounding the issue, much of the literature is skewed towards assessing the impact of initiatives which focus on teaching and learning.

While the findings from this research support the notion that the quality of teaching and learning is vital, schools should adopt a more holistic outlook which recognises the value of both teaching and learning initiatives and more pastoral initiatives. In doing so, they will need to carefully combine an awareness of the importance of evidence-driven decision making with an acknowledgement that schools should measure what they value rather than simply valuing what they can easily measure.

**3. The quality of school practice in managing the pupil premium is highly variable. This highlights that there is significant room for improvement in how schools spend the pupil premium.**

As part of the review of the 36 pupil premium strategies, this study looked at schools with good outcomes for pupil premium pupils compared to those where outcomes could be improved. From this comparison, five key themes of more and less effective practice were identified. Overall, the research found that schools with the best strategies:

- accounted for how every pound of their pupil premium budget was spent rather than using rounded numbers or vague estimations
- deployed evidence to justify their spending decisions, with references (for instance) to the EEF toolkit, academic research, internal data and Ofsted reports
- had a clear success criterion for each pupil premium initiative and an idea of what would be achieved through spending the pupil premium
- set out clear monitoring processes for continuously evaluating the effectiveness of spending
- clarified which group (i.e. all pupil premium pupils, just those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those struggling in a specific subject etc.) would receive the funding for each initiative

Of particular note, looking across all of the pupil premium strategies analysed, schools struggled to provide a rationale for some initiatives compared to others. Schools particularly did not provide a clear rationale for introducing initiatives around: widening the curriculum, sporting activities, recruiting an attendance officer, recruiting teaching staff or recruiting teaching assistants. In contrast, initiatives which were generally accompanied by effective rationales included: staff continuing professional development (CPD), targeted behavioural support and subsidising extra-curricular activities.

This research has demonstrated that there is scope for significant improvement in producing pupil premium strategies and that making these improvements could have a significant impact on raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

#### 4. Although this research focused predominantly on the governing board's role in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium, it has also demonstrated that usage of the pupil premium is not the only determinant of disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment.

One of the clearest correlations revealed through the survey was that schools with high progress for all were very likely to have high progress for pupil premium pupils. This echoes previous research which found that the 'statistical correlation between [schools] who do well for FSM children and who do well for non-FSM children is very high' (NFER/Sutton Trust, 2015).

Furthermore, the survey also revealed significant geographical divides in the progress gap. This highlights another important determinant of disadvantaged pupil progress and attainment, a school's location. The findings correlate with a significant body of literature surrounding the north-south divide (NPP, 2018) and support the research of Mike Treadaway (2017b) who has recently argued that the progress gap is heavily dependent on the characteristics of the pupil premium cohort in a given school. These factors, such as ethnicity, have different trends in different geographical areas.

As such, geography and school quality are two alternate determinants of disadvantaged pupil progress and attainment which illustrate that some, but not all, of the differences in progress gaps between schools can be attributed to the way in which the pupil premium is used.

### Insights for policy makers and researchers

In addition to insights for governing boards and practitioners, this study also revealed potential avenues for future research and the complex and precarious position of the pupil premium within the current school funding landscape.

#### 1. Pupil premium is viewed positively, but funding pressures are presenting a challenge to its effectiveness. Pupil premium funding needs to be protected in real-terms and accompanied by a more sustainable financial settlement for schools. This will allow schools to spend the pupil premium effectively and ensure that it is targeted at the right pupils.

The picture which emerges from this research, and that of others, is that pupil premium needs to be protected and that this can only be achieved through a more sustainable financial settlement for schools. DfE (2014; 2018a; 2018b) data shows that the attainment gap has been consistently falling at both key stage two and four since the pupil premium's introduction. Importantly, schools think the pupil premium has been important in bringing about this trend. Indeed, the National Audit Office (NAO, 2015) found that 75% of secondary schools and over 85% of primary schools felt that pupil premium had boosted pupil attainment.

However, pupil premium's positive impact appears to be threatened by the current funding climate. The survey findings from this project revealed that, although very few respondents actually claimed that their school used the pupil premium to plug the funding gap, only 71.6% of respondents reported ring-fencing their pupil premium. While there is no legal requirement on schools to ring-fence the pupil premium, this does suggest that many schools may be using the funding to subsidise other spending commitments. Further evidence from this research found a prevalence of initiatives which one might assume should be funded from the school's core budget but were commonly being funded through the pupil premium. This includes: improving the classroom environment, improving feedback and hiring additional teachers. This echoes findings from a recent NFER/Sutton Trust (2018) report which found that 34% of senior leaders who responded to a survey admitted to using pupil premium funds to plug other budget gaps.

Pupil premium is therefore seen as having a positive impact on closing the gap, but the current funding climate is endangering these positive effects. It is important to note that, as part of NGA's consultation response on the national funding formula (NFF), NGA (2017) do not think the pupil premium should be given to schools as a separate grant but, instead, it 'should form part of the total [funding] pot'. As part of this financial package, however, schools 'could still be required to report on how they are supporting the progress and attainment of children entitled to the pupil premium' (NGA, 2017).

#### 2. This study found that there are research gaps which need to be addressed going forward.

This research has contributed to the literature on using the pupil premium effectively and has illuminated the important role played by those governing in spending, monitoring and evaluating the pupil premium. However, it has also exposed potentially fruitful avenues for further investigation.

This includes the potential for more research looking at pupil premium strategies. Notably, this is the first significant piece of research to look at pupil premium strategies, despite these documents being publicly available and providing a clear indication of how pupil premium funds are being used on the ground. This research has highlighted that analysing these documents can reveal fascinating trends. Moving forwards, there is the potential for a larger study which could produce conclusions about how pupil premium is being spent nationwide and draw out the differences between varying school types and phases.

Secondly, this research has exposed the skewing of the literature towards assessing teaching and learning initiatives over more pastoral activities. Looking at the impact of spending the pupil premium on pastoral initiatives, and focusing on the impact this might have upon social-emotional outcomes, would act as a vital counter-balance to the majority of the current research, including this study, which treats either the attainment gap or progress gap as the key measure of how successfully schools are spending their pupil premium allocation.

Finally, this research has highlighted that most of the literature neglects the role played by those governing in shaping the usage of the pupil premium. In future research, measuring a school's success or failure in improving outcomes for pupil premium pupils cannot be fully understood without incorporating the role of those governing into the study.



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