

Pupil premium

A guide for governing boards

Updated October 2021



The expert organisation for school
governors, trustees, clerks and
other governance professionals

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National Governance Association

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and clerks of state schools in England.

We are an independent, not-for-profit charity that aims to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning.

We represent the views of governors, trustees and clerks at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies.

Introduction

The pupil premium is additional funding given to schools to narrow attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. It is paid for all pupils who claim free school meals, or who have claimed free meals in the last six years. For the academic year 2021-2022, pupil premium eligibility has temporarily been extended to pupils with no recourse to public funds. Pupil premium plus is paid for every pupil who has left local authority care through adoption, a special guardianship order or child arrangements order. The service premium is paid for every pupil with a parent serving in the forces or who is retired on a Ministry of Defence pension.

Data taken from the school census, which indicates the number of eligible pupils in each school, is used to allocate pupil premium funding.

Pupil premium rates

The Department for Education (DfE) decide the rates for pupil premium which are [published](#) each year and allocated on a per-pupil basis. The rates for 2021-2022 (based on the October 2020 census) are:

- Primary pupils - £1,345
- Secondary pupils - £955
- Pupil premium plus pupils - £2,345
- Service premium pupils - £310

Pupil premium makes up a significant proportion of income in some schools. Governing boards are responsible for ensuring that pupil premium funding is spent effectively and in a way that improves the attainment of eligible pupils.

This guide explains how school leaders and governing boards:

- Determine the most effective ways their school can use the pupil premium.
- Agree, implement and monitor pupil premium spending and evaluate its impact.
- Demonstrate accountability through transparent reporting of pupil premium decisions.

We recommend that this guide is read alongside the pupil premium [information and guidance](#) for school leaders published by the DfE.

Pupil premium within a multi academy trust (MAT)

Academy committees (local governing bodies) in a MAT should refer to this guide alongside their [scheme of delegation](#) to determine their level of responsibility for pupil premium and establish which powers reside with them. Refer to your governance professional if you require further advice.

1. The governing board's role

School leaders are best placed to assess their pupils' needs and decide how to use pupil premium funding to improve attainment.

The governing board is responsible for ensuring that the spending is targeted at the right pupils and has an impact on their attainment and progress. Pupils who are targeted will include those who receive the funding, and pupils who don't but will benefit from the support and intervention that the funding is spent on. Governing boards fulfil this responsibility by:

- Looking into the barriers to learning faced by pupils eligible for pupil premium.
- Using data, information and research to both support and challenge the school's approach to targeting pupil premium funding.
- Contributing towards and approving the school's strategy for spending the pupil premium.
- Monitoring the implementation of the pupil premium strategy – ensuring that the funding is used in identifiable ways and assessing its impact on attainment and progress. This may result in adjustments to the strategy and spending decisions over time.

2. Deciding how pupil premium is spent

School leaders will consider a number of factors when deciding how their school's pupil premium funding should be spent. An understanding of the school's context, together with knowledge and experience of what works, contributes significantly to decision-making. The DfE encourages schools to take a longer-term approach to planning how to use pupil premium (for example, over a three-year period).

Plans to spend money in areas such as improving teaching, extended support, and tailored interventions, should be explained to the governing board. Subsequent discussion and questioning should assure the board that the right approach is being taken and is based on:

2.1 Understanding barriers to learning

Governing boards need their school leaders to convey their understanding of what the barriers to learning are, and how they know this. Information and data relating to the following areas can help identify barriers to learning:

- Behaviour, incidents and exclusions.
- Attendance, persistent absence and punctuality.
- Safeguarding, wellbeing and mental health.
- Language and communication.
- Analysis of home circumstances (the extent to which there is less support at home).

All staff and the governing board should be aware of the characteristics of pupil premium eligible pupils (and the pupils most likely to benefit from the funding), how they benefit and how underachievement is targeted throughout the school, not just at lower attaining pupils.

2.2 Using data to inform spending decisions

School leaders should present internal information and data to the governing board in such a way that makes clear:

- Variations in progress and attainment between pupils eligible for the premium and other pupils.
- Trends, patterns and potential barriers to learning.
- Strengths and weaknesses across the school.
- Strategies that target under achievement throughout the school.

This should help governing boards understand what is consistently preventing pupils from achieving their full potential, which pupils are affected, and therefore where pupil premium spending needs to be targeted.

2.3 Using external data to verify spending decisions

We recommend that governing boards use the following data to verify what has been provided by school leaders:

- Analyse School Performance (ASP) – be aware that ASP data is unavailable for 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Fischer Family Trust [FFT dashboard](#). For information on how to use the dashboard, see our [Knowing your School briefings](#).
- The [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) Families of Schools Database](#), which compares a school with others that have similar pupil characteristics.

The DfE [guide to school performance data](#) further explains how governing boards can use these sources of data.

2.4 Using research to inform spending decisions

School leaders should be able to point the governing board to research that supports their decisions on pupil premium spending. From academic year 2021-2022, schools **must** demonstrate how their spending decisions are informed by research evidence, referring to a range of sources.

We recommend that the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) [pupil premium guide](#) and toolkit is used as a primary source. The guide recommends pupil premium investment is focused on a small number of initiatives that balance the following principles:

- Improving teaching (such as through investing in teacher CPD) so that an effective teacher is in front of every class, and every teacher is supported to keep improving.
- Targeted academic support (including one-to-one or small group intervention) on those who are not making good progress across the spectrum of achievement.
- Initiatives designed to address significant non-academic barriers to success that are relevant to the school and its context (such as attendance, behaviour and social and emotional support).

Schools may also wish to refer to research published in 2015 by [National Foundation for Educational Research](#) (NFER) into how schools are raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

3. Pupil premium strategy statement

All maintained schools and most academies (check your funding agreement) are required to publish a pupil premium strategy statement on their website. The purpose of the statement is to explain the decisions made by school leaders and governing boards regarding how pupil premium is spent and the intended impact of these decisions.

The strategy statement also serves as an action plan that governing boards can monitor.

From academic year 2021-2022, all schools must use the [templates available from the DfE](#) to publish their pupil premium strategy. The information provided on the template should explain:

- The school's pupil premium allocation for the current funding year.
- How the school intends to use its pupil premium funding (specific activities, strategies, initiatives).
- The rationale for allocating the funding to specific areas including the barriers they will help to overcome.
- The intended impact of allocating the funding in this way.
- The effect of the previous year's pupil premium funding on eligible pupils and more widely.

While the school's leadership team are responsible for writing the strategy using the required templates, the process of compiling it should be collaborative and involve the governing board. Governors and trustees should be able to see how the strategy is focused on raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils and how it is aligned to the vision and [strategic priorities](#) for their school or trust.

4. Monitoring the impact of spending

Monitoring pupil premium spending against the agreed strategy should enable the board to:

- Establish whether the funding is having a positive impact on eligible pupils.
- Challenge and support school leaders to make informed decisions about revising the strategy and future spending decisions.
- Demonstrate their accountability ([see section 5](#) of this guide).

While there is no set monitoring process, the governing board (or delegated committee) should receive regular reports from school leaders (once a term, for example) that cover the current context (number of eligible pupils, previous performance, spending to date) and an assessment of spending against the intended outcomes/impact referred to in the strategy. For example:

Initiative/intervention	Success criteria	Spending to date	Impact to date	Evidence
School breakfast club	Improving attendance and readiness to learn for the most disadvantaged pupils	£10,000	Improved attendance and punctuality of targeted pupils	<i>Reference to attendance data against target</i>

The governing board should look at internal progress and attainment (see [section 1](#)) for pupil premium eligible pupils as evidence that the funding is having the intended impact, and to inform their questions to school leaders about the strategy.

4.1 Appointing a link governor or trustee for pupil premium

Appointing link governors/trustees to specific areas of responsibility can be a useful way for governing boards to monitor these areas while making use of an individual's experience and skill set. Linking a governor/trustee to pupil premium does not remove the governing board's collective responsibility, rather it should complement the monitoring process. [Read more about the role of link governors and trustees here.](#)

A governor/trustee linked to pupil premium would be expected to maintain an overview and take an active role in any governing board or committee discussion regarding spending and impact. Their contribution should be informed by their evaluation of relevant data, routine discussions with key members of staff and case studies that demonstrate impact.

Pupil premium e-learning

NGA Learning Link provides access to interactive, online e-learning including a [module](#) on how governing boards fulfil their responsibilities relating to pupil premium. Learning link subscribers can log in via the NGA website to complete the module.

4.2 Questions to ask about pupil premium

The following are examples of the type of questions that governors and trustees might ask about the pupil premium in full governing board meetings, committee meetings or on [monitoring visits](#).

Consider how you might use these examples to construct your own questions, informed by the barriers to learning at your school or trust, and the strategies and interventions for overcoming them.

- How many pupils are eligible for pupil premium?
- How much pupil premium does our school(s) receive?
- How is this funding allocated?
- How does the attainment and progress of our pupil premium eligible pupils compare with other pupils and groups of pupils in the school or trust?
- What are the main barriers to learning for our pupil premium eligible pupils?
- How do we identify the support needed by particular groups of pupil premium eligible pupils (such as looked after children and pupils with SEND)?
- What is our ambition for the attainment and progress of pupil premium pupils?
- How are we engaging stakeholders, parents, staff and the pupils themselves, to share our ambition for what all pupils can achieve?
- What specific outcomes are we aiming to achieve with our pupil premium funding? (raising attainment, accelerating progress, improving attendance, increasing opportunities)?
- How does our strategy for spending pupil premium funding and our interventions compare with successful schools elsewhere?
- Are all staff aware of which pupils are eligible for pupil premium and our strategy for supporting disadvantaged pupils?
- How are staff developed and supported to effectively implement our pupil premium strategy – are they receiving specific CPD?
- What evidence do we have to show that our pupil premium strategy is working and having an impact (for example, progress data for pupil premium eligible pupils)?
- Does the pupil premium strategy and information presented on the website give a clear account of how the money is being spent and the difference it is making?

5. Being accountable for spending

Being accountable for pupil premium spending is more than a compliance activity. It is an opportunity for the governing board to demonstrate the high aspirations and ambition it has for all pupils and explain the difference that the school's planning and teaching is making.

5.1 Publishing information on the school's website

Governing boards are responsible for ensuring that their school meets the DfE requirement to publish their pupil premium statement (see [section 3](#)).

This is an important responsibility and should be managed and kept under review through the governing board's cycle, supported by the governance professional (clerk to the board).

5.2 Ofsted inspection

Ofsted inspections will consider the governing boards' oversight of pupil premium spending when assessing how well it fulfils its responsibility to oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure that its money is well spent.

Ofsted will also consider the impact of the school's curriculum on the most disadvantaged pupils. This includes pupil premium eligible pupils but is not limited to that group. Inspectors will gather evidence on how pupil premium spending decisions are made and the intended impact. They will also consider the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils based on published outcomes data.

Governors and trustees should be prepared to discuss the school's pupil premium strategy in their meeting with inspectors. The discussion may be specifically related to pupil premium and as part of a wider conversation about how the board monitors and addresses any subjects and pupils who aren't achieving (in that the curriculum isn't setting them up for the next stage). However, inspectors will not ask schools to provide any documents, data or plans in relation to the pupil premium other than its pupil premium strategy.

Preparing for Ofsted

NGA's [Ofsted guidance](#) provides further information on the Ofsted inspection process, advice on what governing boards can expect, and how to prepare for an inspection.

6. Minimising the impact of COVID-19

Governing boards should review their school's strategy for using pupil premium funding in light of COVID-19 disruption, seeking assurance from their school leader that the plan is still the right one targeted at the right pupils. It may be that the funding needs to be distributed in a different way that reflects the increase in social, emotional and health issues that impact upon pupils' learning.

Discuss the pupil premium strategy with school leaders to help build an understanding of:

- How your school intends to reduce the impact of partial school closure on the achievement and progress of all pupils.
- How this will be monitored and assessed (considering the reliability of data).
- The number of pupils who now count as disadvantaged.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the attainment gap.
- Their barriers to learning.

When building strategic plans, governing boards and school leaders should give thought to:

- The research, proven practice and local networks the school can draw on.
- Balancing academic catch-up with the wider pastoral and family support needed to address circumstances that affect behaviour, attendance, attitudes to learning, mental health and wellbeing.
- Which policies need to be reviewed, updated and aligned with the overall school strategy in light of COVID-19.
- The support and CPD that all staff (including school leaders) require to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- How plans to spend recovery premium funding ([see section 6.1](#)) and pupil premium will support identified priorities.
- The financial planning and resource implications of new or revised strategic priorities.

This discussion is unlikely to result in significant changes being made to the school improvement plan or strategy, nor should it create unnecessary planning work.

6.1 Recovery premium funding

In February 2021, the government announced one-off recovery premium funding for the academic year 2021-2022. The funding builds on the pupil premium and is intended to help disadvantaged pupils catch-up for lost learning. This follows the catch-up funding provided to schools during the previous academic year.

How much recovery premium funding will schools receive?

The recovery premium is allocated on the same basis as pupil premium. Schools will receive the funding in four tranches over the course of the 2021-2022 academic year.

- Mainstream schools will receive £145 per pupil (from reception up to year 11).
- Special schools will receive £290 for each place.

How should recovery premium be spent?

Like the pupil premium, schools can spend recovery premium in the way they consider most effective. The [EEF pupil premium guide](#) can also be applied to recovery premium funding. The guide helps schools spend their funding using an evidence-based approach – it includes targeted support strategies such as small group tuition as well as developing the quality of teaching and addressing non-academic barriers to learning.

Monitoring recovery premium

The DfE has provided [guidance](#) for schools which further details recovery premium allocation and expectations. Governors and trustees are expected to extend their current pupil premium monitoring routines to scrutinise school plans to use the recovery premium. This includes ensuring recovery premium spending is detailed within the pupil premium statement.

Governing boards should also ensure appropriate transparency for parents. Schools are required to publish (on their website) details of how they intend to spend recovery premium funding and how they will assess its impact on attainment.

Thank you for reading this guide. If you have any feedback you'd like to share, please email kcfeedback@nga.org.uk.

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