

“Following my criticism of schools last year, it is clear more schools are now taking their responsibilities seriously when it comes to using the Pupil Premium money and our inspectors have found evidence of some very good practice in their recent visits. Crucially, many of these good schools are concentrating on the core areas of literacy and numeracy to break down the main barriers to accessing the full curriculum. They are also focusing on the key stages of a child’s development in their school career. However, some schools still lack good enough systems for tracking the spending of the additional funding or for evaluating the effectiveness of measures they have put in place in terms of improving outcomes.”

Sir Michael Wilshaw

**Note:** This document focuses on the key points in the document, using the language of the document. Case studies have been omitted.

### Spending the Pupil Premium successfully to maximise achievement – the overview (pp3-4)

1 Where schools spent the Pupil Premium successfully to improve achievement, they shared many of the following characteristics. They:

- carefully ringfenced the funding so that they always spent it on the target group of pupils
- never confused eligibility for the Pupil Premium with low ability, and focused on supporting their disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest levels
- thoroughly analysed which pupils were underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics, and why
- drew on research evidence (such as the Sutton Trust toolkit<sup>4</sup>) and evidence from their own and others’ experience to allocate the funding to the activities that were most likely to have an impact on improving achievement
- understood the importance of ensuring that all day- to-day teaching meets the needs of each learner, rather than relying on interventions to compensate for teaching that is less than good
- allocated their best teachers to teach intervention groups to improve mathematics and English, or employed new teachers who had a good track record in raising attainment in those subjects
- used achievement data frequently to check whether interventions or techniques were working and made adjustments accordingly, rather than just using the data retrospectively to see if something had worked
- made sure that support staff, particularly teaching assistants, were highly trained and understood their role in helping pupils to achieve
- systematically focused on giving pupils clear, useful feedback about their work, and ways that they could improve it
- ensured that a designated senior leader had a clear overview of how the funding was being allocated and the difference it was making to the outcomes for pupils
- ensured that class and subject teachers knew which pupils were eligible for the Pupil Premium so that they could take responsibility for accelerating their progress
- had a clear policy on spending the Pupil Premium agreed by governors and publicised on the school website
- provided well-targeted support to improve attendance, behaviour or links with families where these were barriers to a pupil’s learning
- had a clear and robust performance management system for all staff, and included discussions about pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium in performance management meetings

- thoroughly involved governors in the decision making and evaluation process
  - were able, through careful monitoring and evaluation, to demonstrate the impact of each aspect of their spending on the outcomes for pupils.
- 2 Where schools were less successful in spending the funding, they tended to have at least some of the following characteristics. They:
- had a lack of clarity about the intended impact of the spending
  - spent the funding indiscriminately on teaching assistants, with little impact
  - did not monitor the quality and impact of interventions well enough, even where other monitoring was effective
  - did not have a good performance management system for teaching assistants and other support staff
  - did not have a clear audit trail for where the funding had been spent
  - focused on pupils attaining the nationally expected level at the end of the key stage (Level 4, five A\* to C grades at GCSE) but did not go beyond these expectations, so some more able eligible pupils underachieved
  - planned their Pupil Premium spending in isolation to their other planning, for example, it was not part of the school development plan
  - compared their performance to local rather than national data, which suppressed expectations if they were in a low-performing local authority
  - successfully to improve achievement, they shared many of the following characteristics. They:
  - carefully ringfenced the funding so that they always spent it on the target group of pupils
  - never confused eligibility for the Pupil Premium with low ability, and focused on supporting their disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest levels
  - thoroughly analysed which pupils were underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics, and why
  - drew on research evidence (such as the Sutton Trust toolkit<sup>4</sup>) and evidence from their own and others’ experience to allocate the funding to the activities that were most likely to have an impact on improving achievement
  - understood the importance of ensuring that all day- to-day teaching meets the needs of each learner, rather than relying on interventions to compensate for teaching that is less than good
  - allocated their best teachers to teach intervention groups to improve mathematics and English, or employed new teachers who had a good track record in raising attainment in those

subjects

- used achievement data frequently to check whether interventions or techniques were working and made adjustments accordingly, rather than just using the data retrospectively to see if something had worked
  - made sure that support staff, particularly teaching assistants, were highly trained and understood their role in helping pupils to achieve
  - systematically focused on giving pupils clear, useful feedback about their work, and ways that they could improve it
  - ensured that a designated senior leader had a clear overview of how the funding was being allocated and the difference it was making to the outcomes for pupils
  - ensured that class and subject teachers knew which pupils were eligible for the Pupil Premium so that they could take responsibility for accelerating their progress
  - compared the performance of their pupils who were eligible for free school meals with other eligible pupils nationally, rather than all pupils, again lowering expectations
  - did not focus their pastoral work on the desired outcomes for pupils and did not have any evidence to show themselves whether the work had or had not been effective
  - did not have governors involved in making decisions about the Pupil Premium, or challenging the way in which it was allocated.
- 3 Many schools visited were using the Pupil Premium well in some aspects of their work, and examples of those aspects form the second section of this report. A few, however, had thought through all aspects of their spending in great detail. In these schools, carefully targeted spending of the Pupil Premium funding, together with a generally effective approach to school improvement, were starting to lead to clear improvement in the outcomes for eligible pupils.....

#### Targeting the funding well from the outset

- 5 The schools whose strategies had had the most impact on improving outcomes for pupils were those who had given careful thought to how they should spend the Pupil Premium funding. Where schools targeted the funding well, they:
- used their tracking data intelligently to analyse the underachievement of individual pupils but then went beyond this to analyse any patterns in underachievement in the school as a whole
  - took a long term view and did not just concentrate on 'quick wins', trying to stop achievement gaps from widening long before the end of a key stage
  - considered a range of barriers to pupils' learning, including attendance, behaviour, family circumstances and resources to support learning at home or at school
  - knew exactly what the desired outcomes were for each aspect of work that they were planning to fund through the Pupil Premium
  - used research evidence to inform their thinking.

#### Effective intervention classes and individual tuition to improve achievement in English and mathematics

- 6 Many schools used intervention classes and individual tuition to help to improve pupils' skills and their rate of progress in English and mathematics. Where intervention classes or individual tuition were used successfully they:
- were carefully targeted to specific pupils to improve particular aspects of their skills or knowledge in reading, writing, communication or mathematics
  - were taught by well-qualified specialist teachers, or well-trained and highly-competent teaching assistants, depending on the skills being taught
  - were time limited, not a way of life
  - were linked well to day-to-day teaching
  - had clear success criteria
  - did not have a negative impact on pupils' learning in any other area of the curriculum because the time when they took place was carefully planned
  - were frequently evaluated and alterations were made quickly where strategies were not working.

#### Ensuring that teaching assistants help to raise standards

- 7 Employing new teaching assistants or extending the roles of those already in post were common ways for the schools visited, especially primary schools, to spend some of the funding. As previous Ofsted work has indicated, the indiscriminate use of teaching assistants can represent very poor value for money, with little or even negative impact on learning. 6 School leaders and governors need to be careful about spending their resources on teaching assistants and be clear about what they want to achieve. ... Where the teaching assistants who were employed using Pupil Premium funding were most effective in helping to improve pupils' achievement, schools had:
- ensured that they thoroughly understood their role in helping to improve achievement
  - trained their teaching assistants well to fulfil this role, and kept the training up to date
  - extended or revised the teaching assistants' hours to enable them to work with teachers to plan and review pupils' learning
  - placed the teaching assistants where data indicated that they were most needed to help pupils to catch up, rather than spreading them evenly among classes
  - deployed the teaching assistants well to maximise their strengths with different subjects and age groups.

#### Minimising barriers to learning and achievement

- 8 Where schools had successfully begun to narrow the gaps in achievement between pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium and their peers they had often thought carefully about what barriers to learning pupils were experiencing, and how to remove or at least minimise them. Schools that had done this well had:
- thought about each pupil in the context of their home circumstances, asking themselves, for example, whether they needed to work closely with parents or support parents in

some way in order to ensure that the pupil could succeed in school

- considered whether poor behaviour, high exclusions or low attendance were stopping individual pupils from achieving as much as they could
- reflected on ways in which they could better support older pupils to study independently outside of the school day
- worked to improve pupils' social and emotional skills where these were barriers to learning
- ensured that low expectations were not a barrier to achievement by considering the potential of individuals and not settling for more-able pupils only reaching expected levels for their age just because they were eligible for the Pupil Premium.

### Meeting individuals' particular needs

9 Schools often spent smaller amounts of the funding on meeting the specific needs of individuals, to keep them on track, prevent them from underachieving or broaden their horizons. Other schools considered how they could support the development of individuals' particular talents and skills. When they did this well they did one or more of the following and then took carefully targeted action. They:

- used their broad knowledge of pupils and their families to identify potential barriers to individual pupils attaining their goals
- realised when talented pupils might not fulfil their potential in a particular subject or skill because of a lack of opportunities outside of school, or a lack of family finances
- recognised when pupils were at risk of underachieving because of particular circumstances
- carefully identified the gaps in the experiences that poorer pupils had compared to their more affluent peers, and the impact that this might have on their future
- considered how funding could be used to extend pupils' experiences and skills beyond their academic gains.

### The active involvement of governors

10 While governors had generally been informed about the Pupil Premium funding and what it had been spent on, they did not always play a full part in making decisions about its allocation, or discussing the impact of the actions taken. Where governors took an effective role in ensuring that the Pupil Premium was used well they:

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

- told parents what the Pupil Premium was being spent on, and in the best examples, how well this was working.

### Effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of spending

11 When schools effectively monitored and evaluated the impact of their Pupil Premium spending this made a considerable difference to the effectiveness of the actions they were taking. Where schools monitored the impact of their spending effectively and efficiently they:

- brought together all the evidence available to them to make judgements about what was going well and what needed to change, including data, pupils' work, observations, case studies, and pupils' and staff's views
- did not wait until the end of an initiative or intervention to see if it was working
- made changes to their planned strategies according to what they learned from their monitoring and evaluation information
- took as rigorous an approach to evaluating the impact of pastoral interventions – those related to attendance, building confidence, improving behaviour, working with parents – as they did to academic ones.

### Carefully planned summer schools with a clear purpose

12 Secondary schools can bid for additional funding from the Pupil Premium fund to run a summer school, as well as receiving their usual Pupil Premium allocation. Generally, summer schools appeared to be at an early stage of development and overall were not seen to be making a meaningful impact for disadvantaged pupils. Schools were not always clear about the intended outcomes of the summer school or which specific pupils the activities were intended to benefit. The best aspects of the summer schools identified from the visits were that secondary schools had sometimes:

- ensured that the aims of the summer school were clear from the outset and used these aims to guide the formulation of a relevant programme
- worked closely with their feeder primary schools to ensure that the 'target audience' of pupils was correctly identified and contacted
- included opportunities for the development of basic skills as well as for social skills in the summer school programme
- carried out a full evaluation of the summer school which measured the short and medium term impact on its stated aims, and had plans to measure the longer term impact during the course of the year
- involved primary schools in the planning and delivery of the programme and shared with them an evaluation of the project subsequently.

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