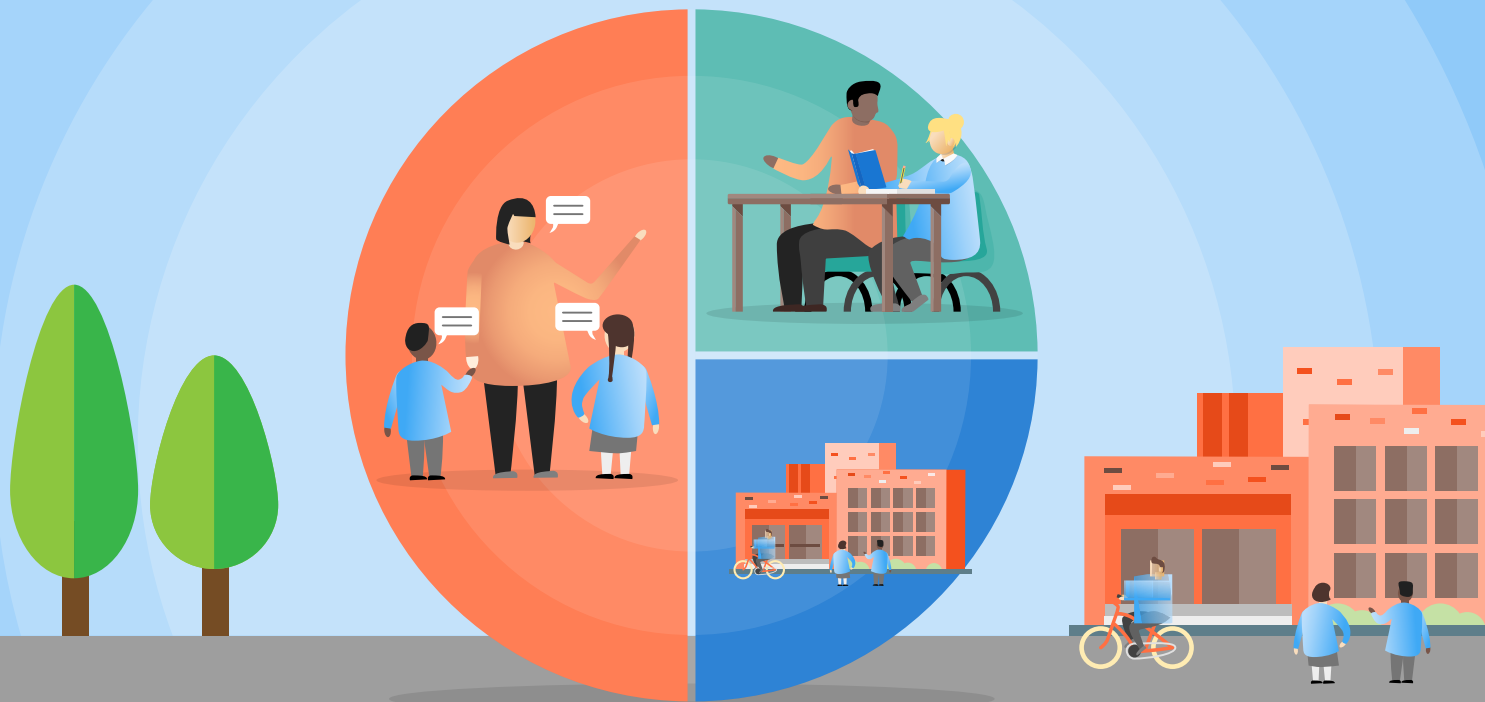


Updated September 2024

The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium





About the Education Endowment Foundation

The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. We do this by supporting schools, colleges, and early years settings to improve teaching and learning through better use of evidence.

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Since 2011, the Pupil Premium has become a welcome—and much-needed—fixture in the English school system. As schools have faced great uncertainty and increased demands on their resources, the Pupil Premium has remained a constant. It has held its unwavering and original focus: to give every socio-economically disadvantaged child and young person the chance to flourish.

At its core, the Pupil Premium was—and still is—a radical policy. Among the day to day pressures and realities of school life it remains the most powerful tool that schools have at their disposal to reduce the entrenched education inequality in England. This is surely a mission that unites everyone working in schools.

Our new and updated guide—and its associated resources and case studies—is designed to support you to use your Pupil Premium funding in ways that make the biggest possible difference for your pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. We hope it can help you to forge a clear path to improving outcomes for your pupils who need it most.

The aim of the Pupil Premium



The Pupil Premium has one central aim: to improve outcomes for all socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. Since its launch in 2011 it has enabled schools to sharpen their focus and resources on this group and their individual needs so that they can flourish.

2.2m

There are 2.2 million pupils in England eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

29%

Over a quarter (29%) of pupils in England are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

£1,480

Eligible primary pupils receive an extra £1,480, secondary pupils get £1,050.

£2.9bn

The Pupil Premium is worth £2.9 billion in total.

Who is this guide for?

This guide, and its accompanying resources, is aimed at senior leaders in primary and secondary schools as well as Pupil Premium leads and anyone responsible for planning, delivering, and monitoring their school's Pupil Premium strategy.

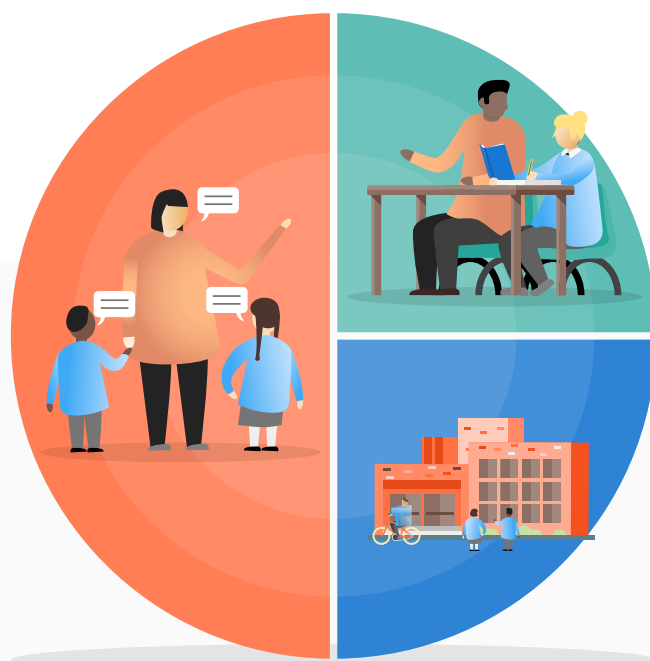
School governors and trustees will also find this guide useful to support and challenge their school leaders to improve outcomes for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.



Introducing the tiered approach to Pupil Premium spending

Taking a tiered approach to Pupil Premium spending helps you balance the essential ingredients of an effective Pupil Premium plan: high quality teaching, targeted academic support, and supporting wider strategies.

It aligns with the [Department for Education's template](#) for creating a Pupil Premium strategy as well as its '[menu of approaches](#)'. This means you can be confident that your approach fulfils the expectations of the Pupil Premium strategy document.



High quality teaching

Making sure an effective teacher is in front of every class, and that every teacher is supported to keep improving, is especially important for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. Investing in high quality teaching for these pupils should be a top priority for Pupil Premium spending. Strategies to support this could include professional development, training, support for early career teachers, and investing in recruitment and retention.

Targeted academic support

We know from a wide body of evidence that targeted academic support can have a positive impact on learning, particularly for those pupils who are not making good progress. An effective Pupil Premium strategy considers how classroom teachers and teaching assistants can provide targeted academic support. Such support could include structured small-group interventions that link to classroom teaching and the curriculum.

Wider strategies

Significant non-academic challenges—such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional learning—can have a negative impact on academic outcomes. Addressing wider barriers to learning is an important part of any Pupil Premium strategy. While many challenges may be common between schools, the specific features of the community your school serves will affect which approaches you prioritise in this category.

The tiered model provides a useful starting point for you to think about how to target your Pupil Premium funding. Many strategies within the tiered model will overlap and the balance between the three categories will vary from year to year as your school's priorities change.

Pupil Premium myth-busting

Myth one

'Only eligible children can benefit from Pupil Premium spending.'

The Pupil Premium is designed to support schools to raise the attainment of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. However, many of the most effective ways to do this—including improving the quality of teaching for these pupils—will also benefit other groups. That's fine! However, the primary driver behind the strategies you choose should be the needs of pupils that are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Myth two

'The Pupil Premium has to be spent on interventions.'

There's strong evidence showing the impact that high quality interventions can have on the outcomes of struggling students. However, while interventions may well be one part of an effective Pupil Premium strategy, they are likely to be most effective when used alongside efforts to improve whole-class teaching as well as strategies to address wider challenges to learning such as attendance and behaviour.

Myth three

'School level data on its own is enough to make decisions about the best strategies to use.'

Collecting data about the attainment and progress of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium can help schools identify priorities and target additional support. However, school data cannot tell leaders which approaches or programmes are most likely to be effective to address the needs of their students. This is why school leaders should use high quality external evidence to inform their decision-making alongside the expert knowledge they have of the pupils in their care.

Myth four

'Pupil Premium spending is only for lower-performing pupils'

The Pupil Premium is intended to support the life chances of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils and compensate for this disadvantage, which extends to high attainers. So it can—and should—be spent supporting programmes and interventions for eligible students who are high attainers.

A five point plan to sustain an effective Pupil Premium strategy

The delivery of your Pupil Premium strategy should be a carefully staged cyclical process—not a one-off event. An impactful, sustained Pupil Premium strategy forms an integral part of wider school development planning and practice. Setting longer-term objectives will give you the time and space to implement a well-evidenced strategy based on careful diagnosis of the challenges facing your socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. These objectives might include ongoing whole-school change through elements such as recruitment, teaching practice, and staff development.



Our five-point plan can help you plan, deliver, monitor, and sustain an effective Pupil Premium strategy

Step 1	Diagnose your pupils' needs
Step 2	Use strong evidence to support your strategy
Step 3	Develop your strategy
Step 4	Deliver and monitor your strategy
Step 5	Evaluate and sustain your strategy

Step 1

Diagnose your pupils' needs

Gaining a thorough knowledge of your disadvantaged pupils' levels of attainment and progress is the first step to developing an effective Pupil Premium strategy.

You should adopt a rigorous approach to identifying your pupil needs, avoiding the temptation to cherry-pick data that confirms 'hunches'. You should gather and reflect on a wide range of data to build a rich picture.

Once you and your team have assessed the performance of your disadvantaged pupils against national benchmarks, you should examine what could be hindering the attainment and progress of those pupils who are below age-related expectations or any higher attainers who could be extended further. This will involve **diagnosis** of academic challenges, for example, identifying which pupils require additional support to develop literacy skills and in which specific areas.



To do this, you can use a wide range of internal data and information, including:

- attendance data and levels of persistent absence, including internal absence from lessons;
- attainment and programmes data;
- teacher feedback on pupils' levels of engagement and participation;
- behaviour incidences and exclusions data;
- pupil feedback;
- reviews of pupil learning;
- information on wellbeing, mental health, and safeguarding; and
- information on access to technology and curricular materials.

While individually each piece of data may have limitations, together they build a more reliable understanding of what is going on. Insights and perspectives should be gathered from across the school community. As well as generating useful insights, actively engaging people in this way improves implementation through the way it unites values and generates buy-in.

Step 1

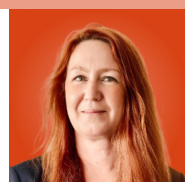
Diagnose your pupils' needs



'At Ashington Academy, high expectations characterise everything we do. We focus relentlessly on high quality teaching, an ambitious curriculum offer, and rich experiences for all underpinned by a commitment to understanding our pupils and their lives.'

'Everything we know about our disadvantaged pupils is recorded in a centralised, live database populated with academic data, attendance records, and pastoral information. Nothing is analysed in a silo: we "connect the dots" to build a comprehensive, individualised picture of each pupil. Analysis is used to indicate areas of need followed by wide-ranging diagnostic assessment. We assess; we never assume, but we always aspire. Focused conversations are also key.'

'We share—and gather—insights from key stakeholders including teachers, parents, and pastoral staff. Collectively, this builds a deeper understanding of barriers faced by pupils. Extensive knowledge informs how—and when—to intervene with subject-specific help, precisely targeted interventions, or wider support relating to attendance and wellbeing.'



Jen Anderson

Assistant Headteacher (Data and Attainment),
Ashington Academy, Northumberland

Step 1

Diagnose your pupils' needs

'We recognise that to effectively tackle pupil absence we need to take the time to really understand the influences affecting pupils' attendance. This is often highly individual and requires a personal approach. One aspect of this is spending time with pupils and their families to explore the "push" and "pull" factors on pupils. We talk through a list of possible things pushing them away from school, which might include literacy difficulties creating a barrier to learning, a dislike of a particular subject, social challenges, worries about social times, or feeling they have fallen too far behind in their work to catch up again. We also consider things that might be keeping them at home, such as caring responsibilities, not wanting to be away from family, feeling poorly or tired, or wanting to use their mobile phone or enjoying playing video games.

'Making the space for these honest, curious, and structured conversations and hearing the perspectives of both pupils and their families helps us to understand better what drives pupil behaviour, and this is the starting point for finding an appropriate and effective response.'



Mark Barlow

Deputy Headteacher, St James School, Exeter



So how can you approach data to understand better the real challenges and opportunities for your pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds?

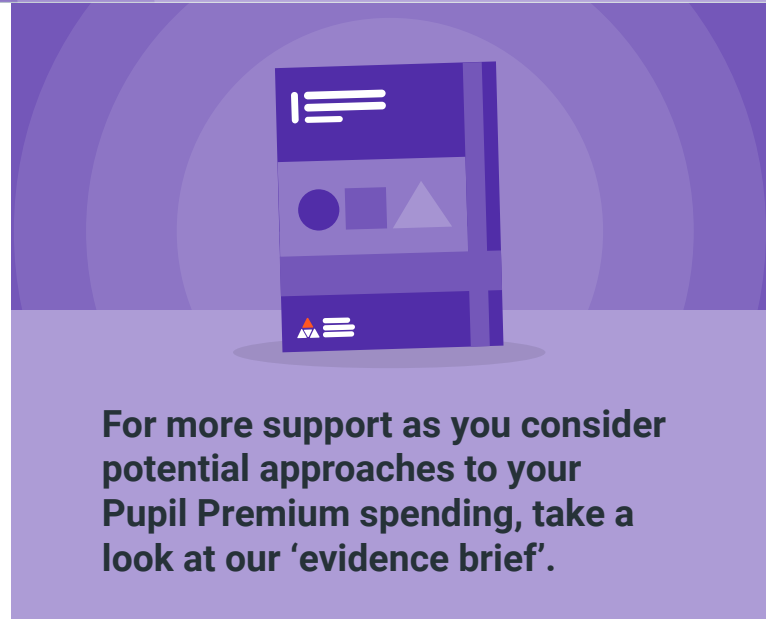
Our **Explore framework** tool—which accompanies the **School's Guide to Implementation** guidance report—is a great place to start.

Step 2

Use strong evidence to support your strategy

An effective Pupil Premium strategy is supported by making use of the best available evidence. This can help you select approaches that are likely to work in your school. You should make use of a broad array of external research evidence to inform your decision-making alongside your expert knowledge of your pupils.

For example, a school might identify a group of pupils in need of targeted reading interventions through standardised assessments. They should seek relevant and robust research evidence on which approaches are most likely to provide appropriate and effective solutions, which could include particular phonics programmes or approaches to support reading fluency.



What is evidence?

'Evidence' is a broad term that means different things to different people. It's important to recognise that research evidence is different from forms of school-based data, such as pupil attainment data or samples of pupils' work.

	Research evidence	School-based data	Other sources of information
Definition	Evidence generated through planned and systematic processes that answer specific questions, often assessing the impact of practices or approaches.	Evidence generated by settings through the collection and analysis of pupil assessments and other sources of data.	Other information concerning schools and teaching that is not generated through the systematic collection and analysis of data.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiments• Case studies• Surveys• Systematic reviews• Interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress and attainment data• Attendance data• Feedback from lesson observations• Samples of pupils' work• Pupil and teacher feedback• Behaviour logs• Pastoral and wellbeing information• Special Educational Needs (SEN) data• Parental and carer involvement and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blogs and social media• Newspapers• Podcasts• Accounts from education professionals (e.g. teachers, school leaders, consultants)

Research can be conducted by academics or teachers, among others, but the resulting evidence differs from other forms of information in that it is generated through planned and deliberate processes for collecting and analysing information in response to clear research questions.

Research evidence can provide knowledge from numerous settings, teachers, and other practitioners to help identify promising approaches to inform decision-making around how to make the most of time and resources.

Keeping up to date with high quality research evidence can feel challenging. When making strategic school improvement 'best bets', identifying credible sources and reflecting on them critically is crucial.

Use strong evidence to support your strategy



What makes a good piece of evidence?

Three pointers are useful to consider the relevance and robustness of evidence:

01 Independence

Is it possible that that the research was biased in any way or was the practice or programme tested by someone other than the person delivering it? e.g. A product developer evaluates their own literacy tool with very positive results.

02 Relevance

Which schools and pupils were involved in the research and how similar are they to your own school and context? e.g. An approach researched and developed in primary school may not translate well to a secondary school context.

03 Purpose

What research activity generated the evidence you are looking at and does it justify the claims made? e.g. A case study might exemplify a school's experience but will not provide evidence for whether an approach improves pupil learning.



For more detailed support on engaging with research evidence, explore our concise guide.

Use strong evidence to support your strategy

Our website also hosts a range of evidence-based resources to help inform your decision-making.

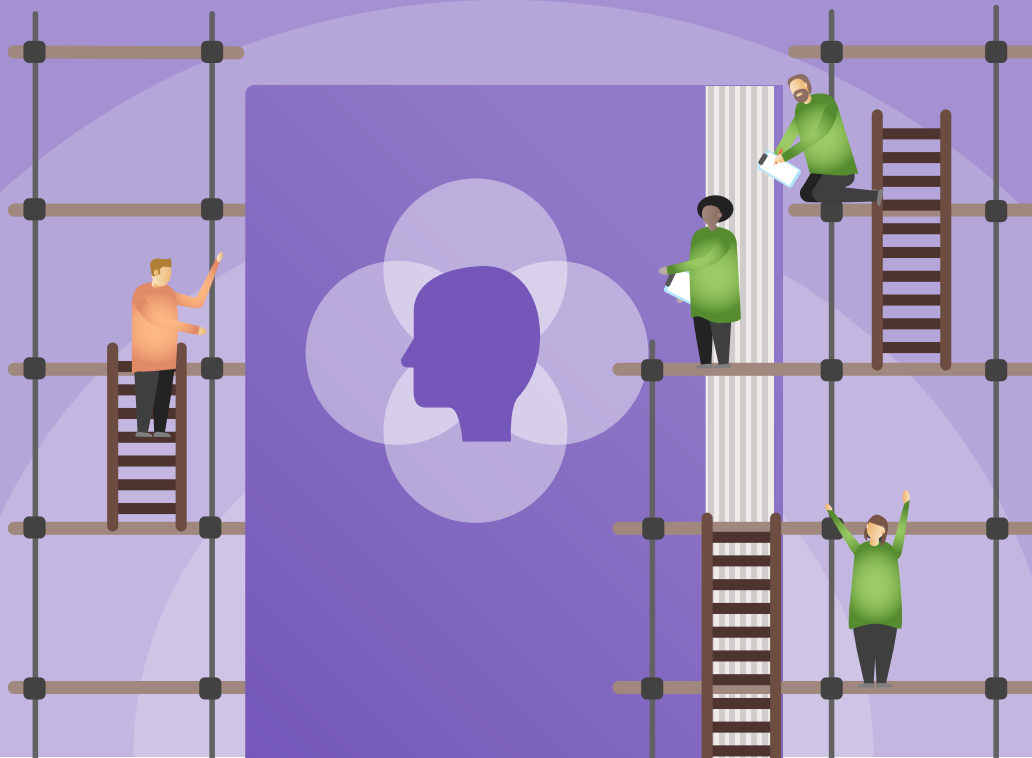
The Teaching and Learning Toolkit	A summary of thousands of quantitative and experimental research studies conducted in schools comparing the average impact and costs of different approaches to teaching and learning.
Guidance reports	Practical advice, recommendations, and tools taken from systematic reviews of research evidence to help schools develop practice on a wide range of topics.
Evidence brief: Using research evidence to support your spending decisions	Signposts to relevant research evidence and practical resources for each approach in the Department for Education’s ‘menu of approaches’.
Programme evaluations	Findings from our evaluations that test the impact of high-potential programmes and approaches in England. Our Promising Programmes list is a summary of programmes we’ve tested that have shown promising results on pupil attainment.
Blogs	Concise and accessible summaries of findings from research evidence and other sources showing how research can be applied in schools.
Early Years Toolkit	A summary of the best available research evidence on key areas for learning and development for two to five-year-olds.
Early Years Evidence Store	Support to help you put evidence-informed approaches into practice, including vignettes and videos to help understand what these look like in action.



More support and guidance on engaging with research evidence can be found here.

Step 2

Use strong evidence to support your strategy



Get support from your local Research School

The Research Schools Network is a national network of schools that support the use of research evidence to inform teaching practice.

Research Schools work with other schools in their area to help them use evidence more effectively. You can contact your local Research School for support when developing your Pupil Premium strategy:

www.researchschool.org.uk



Supported by the Education Endowment Foundation

Step 3

Develop your strategy

The Department for Education recommends a longer term, three-year approach to Pupil Premium planning but still requires schools to review and publish an updated strategy statement every academic year before 31 December. Its [Pupil Premium guidance](#) page includes worked examples of Pupil Premium strategies.

You should combine evidence—both from school-based data to identify priorities and through critical evaluation of external research evidence—to identify promising approaches. Your professional judgment and knowledge of your context will inform how transferable these approaches are to your setting. This step in the process is an opportunity to reflect on how the different sources of evidence come together as you develop your strategy. Schools are required to ensure that approaches in their strategy align with those listed in the [DfE 'menu of approaches'](#).



Questions to consider

- Is funding allocated to evidence-informed strategies that align with the DfE 'menu of approaches'? What evidence have we drawn on and why?
- How does our strategy align with other strategic school improvement documents such as our school improvement plan?
- Do approaches to develop high quality teaching for Pupil Premium pupils sit at the heart of our plans?
- How will we consult governors, academy trust leadership, and trustees, if applicable, when developing our strategy?
- How can we involve people in developing our strategy (for example, subject leads, SENCo, teaching and learning lead, parents, pupils)?
- How do aspects of our strategy align with the existing beliefs, assumptions, and practices of staff? Do any of these need challenging or development in order to enable success and ensure staff and values are united around the change?
- Does the approach require changes to processes or structures, such as timetables or team meetings?

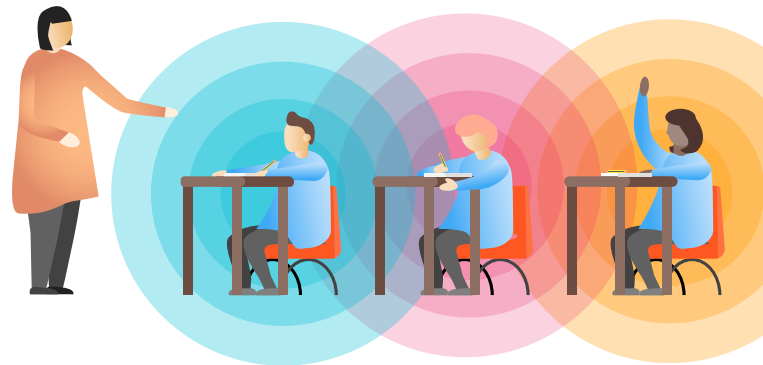


Step 4

Deliver and monitor your strategy

Delivery is a critical stage of implementation of your Pupil Premium strategy, which follows careful exploration and preparation. As new initiatives are put into practice, it's important to provide support for staff so that they can take ownership of them and deliver them successfully.

An integral part of delivery is the continual monitoring of the progress of the strategy so that the approach can be adapted when and where appropriate. This process of reflection enables a strategy to be embedded and improved within the reality of the context in which it is taking place.



Find out more in our guidance report on implementation.

Questions to consider

- Does the strategy provide the necessary professional development, protected time, and support for staff to deliver the approach successfully?
- What information will we gather to monitor the progress of approaches? Are usable systems in place for monitoring?
- How will we respond to implementation data—for example, on how teachers are engaging with the initiative—to tailor and improve approaches?
- Is there a shared understanding of how monitoring can be used positively to drive improvement? Are there opportunities for staff (and other stakeholders) to be part of the ongoing process of reflection and improvement?
- How can we use existing data systems to understand whether the programme is being delivered as intended by the developers?
- What specific resources, equipment, and administrative support will be needed?

Step 4

Deliver and monitor your strategy

‘We know that high quality teaching is the key to improving pupil outcomes. That is why we heavily invest time and money into effective professional development for our staff. Inset days and staff meetings are a crucial time to develop and enhance teaching practice. We know this time is precious and so it’s incredibly important that we use it wisely. Very careful consideration is taken when mapping out staff meetings across the year. We focus on fewer things and getting them right.

‘For example, this year we are implementing reading comprehension strategies. In initial staff meetings, we helped colleagues understand the rationale behind our decision in changing how reading is taught across school—and the intended impact for our pupils. We built knowledge of reading comprehension strategies whilst being mindful of managing cognitive load. We set manageable goals from one staff meeting to the next of elements to try with their own classes. Time was given in further staff meetings to develop teaching techniques—to model and rehearse techniques whilst also providing the opportunity to learn and support each other.

‘This careful mapping of staff meeting time is highly valued by staff, helping unite us on our common goal—to provide the very best education for our pupils.’

Rachel Morgan

Deputy Headteacher, Regent Farm First School, Newcastle Upon Tyne



‘I currently lead a primary school in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Birmingham. This means that having a laser-like focus on my Pupil Premium strategy is of the utmost importance, ensuring that all pupils reach their potential is at the heart of what we do.

‘Using the five-point plan gives school leaders a tool to work in collaboration with their team. It acts as a strategic road map and each step gives your team a common language and processes with which to create a dynamic strategy for change.

‘This EEF guide helped to structure our professional conversations around our priorities whilst focusing us in on a journey which is common to all who lead. This is the power of the guidance, helping us all to work in an evidence-informed way whilst not losing sight of the pupils, parents, and community we serve.’



Tracey Adams

Headteacher, Christ Church C of E Nursery and Primary School, Birmingham

Step 5

Evaluate and sustain your strategy

An effective Pupil Premium strategy needs clear goals underpinned by the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes needed to reach them. To make sure these are realised, it's important to support ongoing evaluation of their impact on your pupils' attainment as well as on wider barriers to learning.

As initial momentum fades and competing priorities emerge, implementation may weaken and fade too. New approaches should be continually supported and monitored beyond the early stages. Strategies that help sustain an approach include revisiting and adapting implementation plans, refreshing professional development, and ensuring that improved outcomes are clearly visible to staff and the school community.

A Pupil Premium strategy is more likely to be effective if school leaders plan how to sustain it from the outset and monitor practice in an annual cycle. Strategies that have been effective one year may not continue to be effective into another. When strategies have been effective you should still focus on engaging existing and new staff—including by providing necessary training—so that there continues to be a shared understanding of how the strategy is being delivered.

Questions to consider

- What information will we gather to evaluate the impact of approaches?
- How can we provide flexible and motivating leadership as challenges emerge?
- What training or follow-on support is needed for staff beyond initial training?
- As new priorities emerge, is sufficient support in place to protect and maintain the implementation effort?
- Are a range of staff involved and engaged with the ongoing delivery and improvement of the strategy so that we aren't over-reliant on individuals?
- Before deciding whether to continue, scale up, or stop an approach, have we reviewed the previous implementation effort and outcomes achieved so far?





‘At Pembroke Park, we have achieved a significant improvement in attendance by ensuring everyone has eyes on monitoring and evaluating. This is often the part that drops off and we can end up doing things “just because”—without being entirely sure of the impact. Personally, I am a huge fan of a spreadsheet so we have trackers set up to monitor our impact rigorously and regularly. We celebrate with our families when things are on the up and intervene swiftly when they wobble. By having a sharp eye on impact, we can be wholly confident that we are doing all we can to keep positive strategies going and to tweak, refine, or ditch those that aren’t working.

‘Of course, what works for one family may be entirely different to another and so it really has to be a team effort with monitoring to ensure that it is sustainable.’



Toni Hayzen

Headteacher, Pembroke Park Primary School,
Wiltshire

How can school governors help?

School governors and trustees play a crucial role in improving attainment for disadvantaged pupils by providing support and challenge to school leaders. All governors should be aware of their school's Pupil Premium strategy, ask questions, and promote a whole-school approach. We recommend all schools appoint a Pupil Premium link governor.



Use our tool for governors to support your school's Pupil Premium strategy.

How can school governors help?

'The governance of Pupil Premium, alongside that of disadvantaged students, is of paramount importance for any school. Strategic conversations that are permitted to unpick the operational elements are essential for the governing body to understand fully the application of funds and to be able to measure the impact and outcomes.'

'In our approach to Pupil Premium governance, we ensure that the broadest picture is available to us. This includes conversations with safeguarding and welfare leads and monitoring of the PP strategy through link governors with the ability to evaluate and comment on implementation and outcomes.'

'For me, all governors should have an awareness of how their school is improving outcomes for their disadvantaged students—with a specific link governor for the role. This person must be professionally curious and keen to understand how their role can better strategically guide the good work of the school for the betterment of all.'

Chris Passey FCCT

Chair of Governors, Waseley Hills High School and Vice Chair at Sutton Park Primary School, Worcestershire

'Governance has a pivotal role in ensuring Pupil Premium funding has its intended impact. As a starting point, governors' strategic oversight and responsibility for setting culture should be a driving force behind the school or Trust's Pupil Premium strategy.'

'Governors and trustees will rightly review internal data—an important aspect of identifying the specific needs of pupils and applying context to spending decisions—as well as enabling them to monitor the impact of any approaches being employed. However, it is crucial that school and Trust leaders are able to point the governing board to how external research and evidence has supported their decisions on Pupil Premium approaches.'

Emma Balchin

Chief Executive, National Governance Association



For further support and resources
search “EEF Pupil Premium”



Education
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Foundation

Education Endowment Foundation
5th Floor, Millbank Tower
21–24 Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk



@EducEndowFoundn