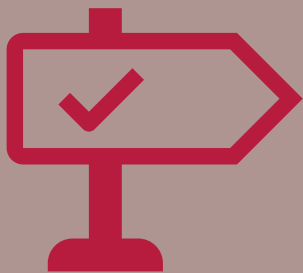


Funding for disadvantaged pupils

Survey evidence from pupils, parents and school leaders

 Interactive





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Introduction

Funding for disadvantaged pupils

In June 2015, we published a value-for-money report about the Department for Education's (the Department's) implementation of the Pupil Premium policy since 2011. The report can be accessed in full through the National Audit Office's website, at the following address:

www.nao.org.uk/report/funding-for-disadvantaged-pupils/



Our principal conclusion about value for money was as follows:

It will take time for the full impact of the Pupil Premium to be known. While the attainment gap has narrowed since 2011, it remains wide and, at this stage, the significance of the improvements is unclear. More time and further evaluation will be needed to establish whether the Department has achieved its goals. However, the early signs are that many schools, supported by the Department's investment in the EEF (the Education Endowment Foundation), are using the Pupil Premium to help disadvantaged pupils in useful ways. If these schools' early performance can be sustained and built upon, the Pupil Premium has the potential to bring about a significant improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the value for money of school spending.

The Department has already created a strong drive to improve support for disadvantaged pupils by targeting the Pupil Premium at schools on a rational basis; clearly communicating the funding's objective; investing in research and sharing best practice; and empowering teachers to try new things. However, the Department, working with others, has more to do to optimise value for money. Not all disadvantaged pupils currently attract funding. Some schools do not focus funding on disadvantaged pupils appropriately or use the most cost-effective interventions, and, in any event, the evidence base is still underdeveloped. Furthermore, the core school funding that the Pupil Premium supplements is not distributed on the basis of need. Most importantly, there is a risk that accountability and intervention mechanisms allow schools to waste money on ineffective activities for many years without effective challenge. As the impact of the Pupil Premium becomes clearer, the Department will need to review if it is investing the right amount in it, including whether spending more in this way could allow it to close the gap more quickly, generating wider savings for the taxpayer.



In our report we made a number of recommendations:

a The Department should develop its understanding of how schools are using the Pupil Premium and take further steps to reduce schools' use of ineffective, costly activities to support disadvantaged pupils, including by:

- improving the dissemination and usage of best practice;
- ensuring that all Pupil Premium reviews are conducted by approved reviewers and considering whether to make reviews mandatory; and
- examining, with the EEF, whether and how to expand the evidence base more quickly.

b As it sets core funding for schools in future, the Department should use a fairer formula so that pupils across England receive similar funding, related more closely to their needs and less affected by where they live.

It should work with local authorities to understand the impact of core funding allocated to schools on the basis of disadvantage and consider how schools could be held accountable for its use. It should also clarify instructions to schools about the total value of funding that ought to be available to disadvantaged pupils with special educational needs, and explore how it can identify disadvantaged pupils more effectively.

c The Department should be more specific about how it will measure the Pupil Premium's impact, including by:

- setting out as soon as possible the attainment metrics it will use and ensuring these continue to be measured in a comparable way until at least 2023; and
- researching how other potential Pupil Premium impacts, such as the destinations of disadvantaged pupils and savings in terms of other public services, can be measured.

This briefing

In the course of our fieldwork, we gathered evidence from many sources, including surveys of pupils, parents and school leaders. Some of this evidence is presented in our original report but there was insufficient room to accommodate other interesting material. This briefing puts that material into the public domain but does not alter our original findings and conclusion. We hope that other researchers and practitioners working on this important issue will find the material useful.



1 Pupils' views

We commissioned YouGov to survey a sample of children aged 8 to 15 in Great Britain (including Scotland and Wales) between 20 March and 25 March 2015. YouGov received responses from 1,338 children and weighted these to make them representative of all children in the age group. This means that 49% of respondents were aged 8 to 11 (in broad terms, primary-school age) and 51% were aged 12 to 15 (in broad terms, secondary-school age).¹ Of the respondents, 1,316 were attending school and therefore answered our substantive questions; the others reported that they were being home-schooled.²

The Pupil Premium is typically spent on techniques and activities intended to transform disadvantaged pupils' ability to learn and do well in examinations. To understand more about children's learning preferences and styles, we asked about:

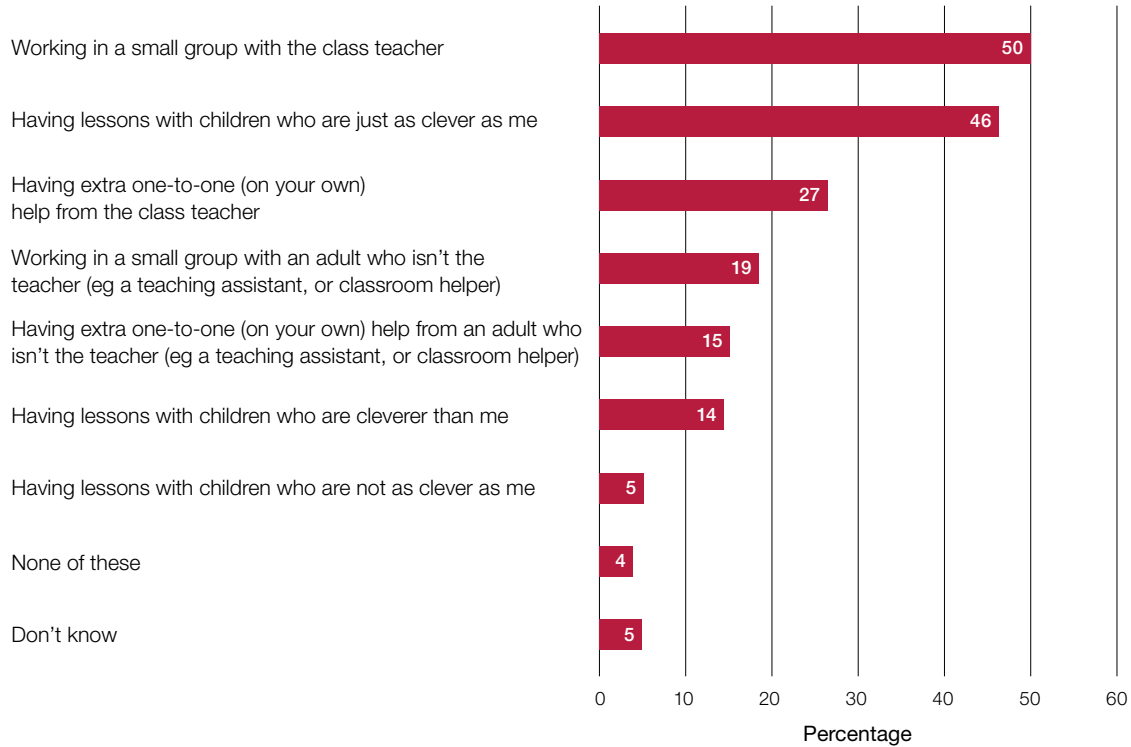
- the types of activities that they felt most helped them to learn during lessons (**Figure 1** on page 7);
- the types of activities that they felt most helped them to learn outside lessons (**Figure 2** on page 8); and
- how good or bad particular types of lessons and activities made them feel (**Figure 3** on page 9).

¹ The unweighted number of responses was also 1,338, of which 47% came from children aged 8 to 11 and 53% from children aged 12 to 15.

² We excluded home-schooled children from the rest of the survey because of the different experiences they have, the very small number of respondents, and the fact that, in England, they are ineligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Figure 1
Activities and techniques that children said helped them learn during lessons

Half of children reported that working in a small group with the class teacher was helpful.



50%

of children reported that working in a small group with the class teacher was helpful

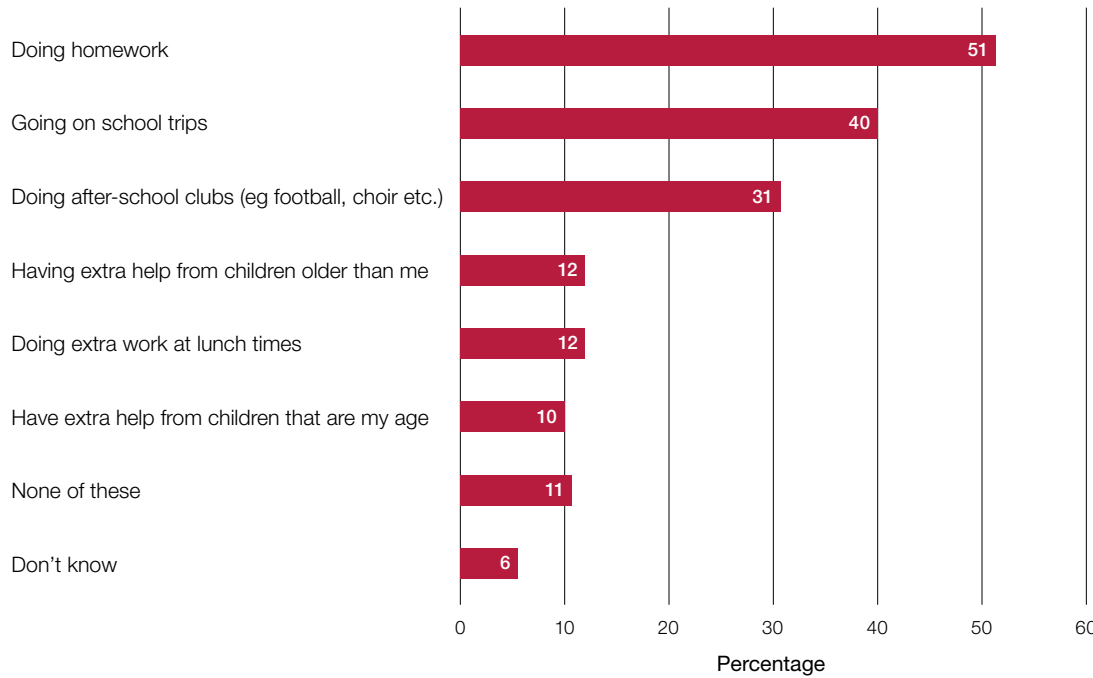
Note

1 Based on responses from 1,316 children in Great Britain between 20 March and 25 March 2015.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office

Figure 2
Activities and techniques that children said helped them learn outside lessons

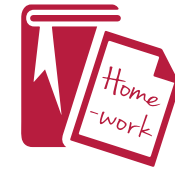
Half of children reported that doing homework was helpful, and 40% said the same about school trips.



Note

1 Based on responses from 1,316 children in Great Britain between 20 March and 25 March 2015.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office



51%

of children reported that doing homework was helpful

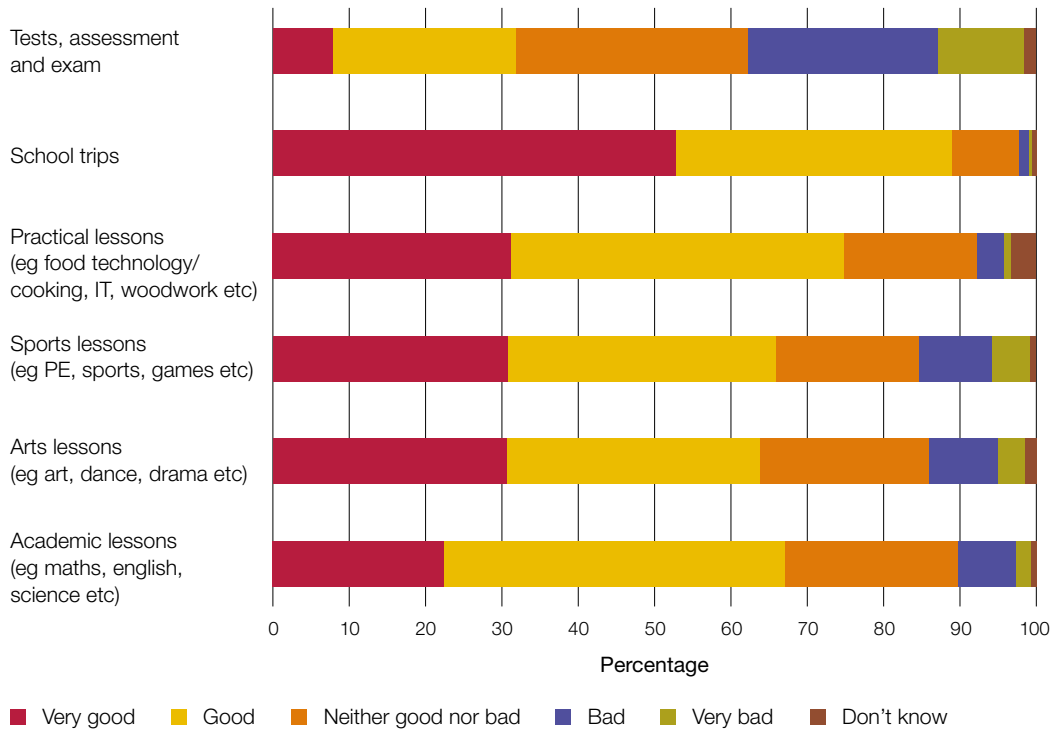


40%

said the same about school trips

Figure 3
Children's feelings about particular school lessons and activities

The largest proportion of children (89%) felt positive about school trips, but 67% also felt positive about academic lessons. More than one third of children (37%) reported that tests, assessments and exams made them feel bad.



Note
1 Based on responses from 1,316 children in Great Britain between 20 March and 25 March 2015.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office



89%

felt positive about school trips



67%

also felt positive about academic lessons



37%

reported that tests, assessments and exams made them feel bad



2 Parents' views

We commissioned YouGov to survey a sample of parents between 25 February and 3 March 2015. YouGov provided responses from a weighted base of 1,456 parents in England who had state-educated children aged between 4 and 16.

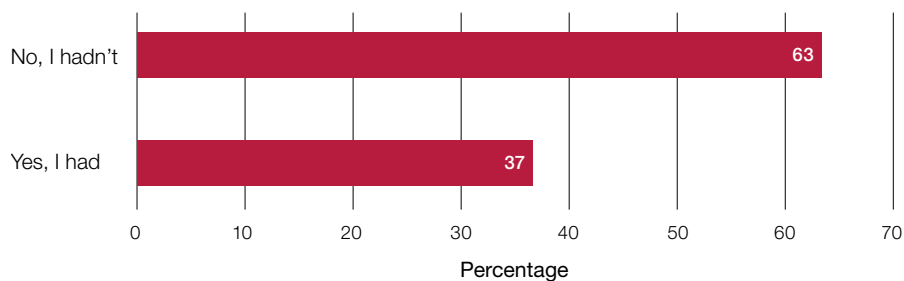
A key intention of the Department's Pupil Premium policy has been that its implementation should be transparent to parents and, in particular, that parents should be able to hold schools to account through statutory documents – Pupil Premium statements – that schools are meant to publish annually. To understand more about parents' familiarity with the Pupil Premium we asked parents:

- whether they had heard of the policy before taking the survey (**Figure 4** on page 11);
- whether they knew if their child was eligible for the Pupil Premium (**Figure 5** on page 11);
- if their child was known to be eligible, whether they knew how the school had used the funding (**Figure 6** on page 12); and
- whether they had read the school's Pupil Premium statement (**Figure 7** on page 12).

Overall, we found low levels of familiarity among parents. Whereas around 29% of children across England were eligible for the Pupil Premium in 2014-15, only 8% of the parents in our survey (113 out of 1,456) were able to confirm that their child had the funding. More detailed findings are contained in Figures 4–7.

Figure 4
Parents' knowledge of the Pupil Premium

Before taking our survey, fewer than half of the respondents had heard of the Pupil Premium.



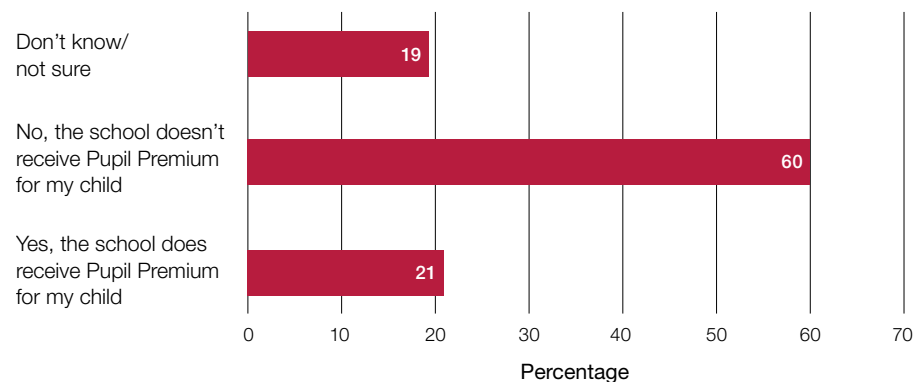
Note

1 Based on responses from 1,456 parents.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office

Figure 5
Parents' knowledge of their child's Pupil Premium status

One in five parents who had heard of the Pupil Premium did not know if their school was receiving Pupil Premium for their child.



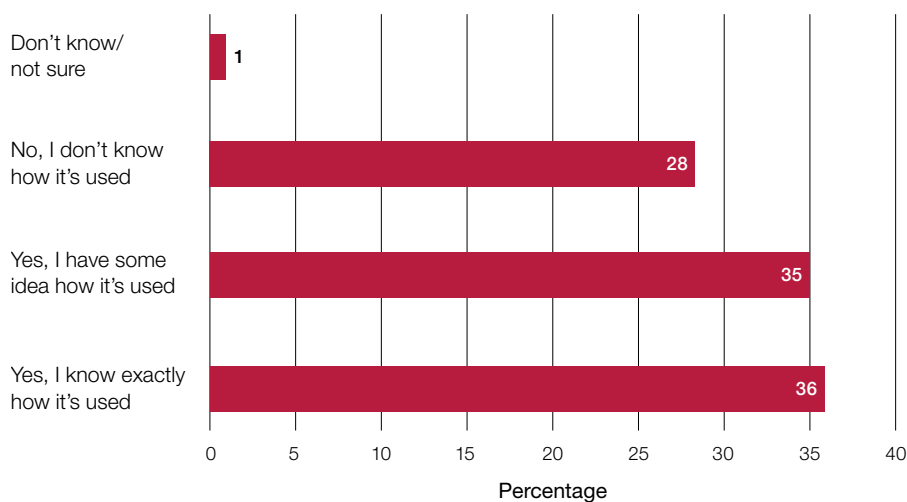
Notes

- 1 Based on responses from 534 parents who said they had heard of the Pupil Premium.
- 2 When a parent had more than one child, they were asked to answer about the child whose birthday came soonest after the date of the survey.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office

Figure 6
Parents' knowledge of how the Pupil Premium is spent

More than two thirds of parents who knew their child's Pupil Premium status also had some idea about how the school was using the funding.

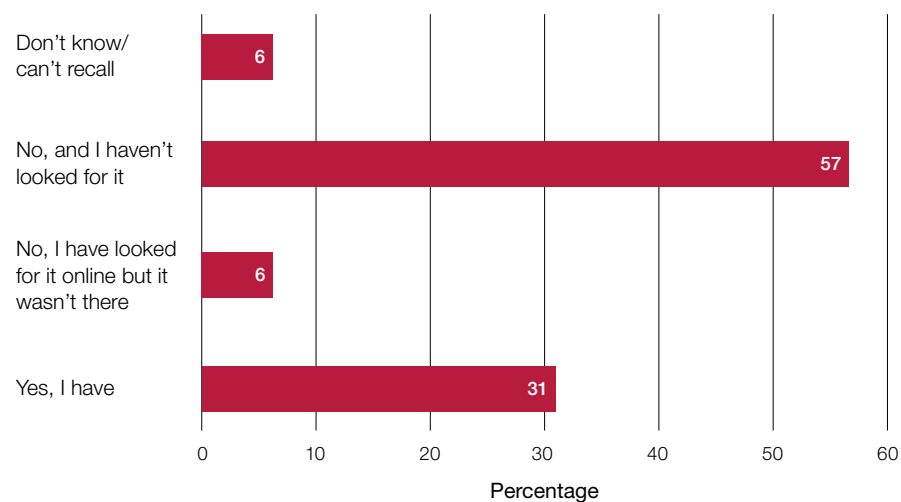


- Notes**
- 1 Based on responses from 113 parents who knew that their school was receiving Pupil Premium for their child.
 - 2 When a parent had more than one child, they were asked to answer about the child whose birthday came soonest after the date of the survey.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office

Figure 7
Parents' engagement with Pupil Premium statements

Only 30% of parents who knew their child's Pupil Premium status had also read the school's Pupil Premium evaluation.



- Notes**
- 1 Based on responses from 113 parents who knew that their school was receiving Pupil Premium for their child.
 - 2 When a parent had more than one child, they were asked to answer about the child whose birthday came soonest after the date of the survey.

Source: YouGov survey for the National Audit Office



3 School leaders' views

We commissioned VoicED to survey a representative sample of school leaders across England, in both primary and secondary schools, between 16 February and 13 March 2015. We received responses from 543 school leaders, of whom 402 were in the primary sector and 141 were in the secondary sector. We weighted the responses to reflect the breakdown of phase and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in the population. Results are reported by weighted responses (450 primary and 93 secondary). Of the respondents, 31% (168) were in schools with more than 1 in 5 pupils eligible for free school meals.³

Many of the results of this survey were published in our main report. These are reproduced here alongside other results that we are publishing for the first time. The areas covered include:

- the cost of schools' work with disadvantaged pupils (**Figure 8** on page 14);
- the targeting of Pupil Premium funds (**Figure 9** on page 14);
- the specific interventions schools choose (**Figure 10** on pages 15 and 16);
- how schools identify best practice (**Figure 11** on page 17);
- the interventions schools find most effective (**Figure 12** on page 18);
- the impacts school leaders report as a result of the Pupil Premium (**Figure 13** on pages 19 and 20);
- barriers to raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils (**Figure 14** on page 21); and
- school leaders' understanding of other funding they receive based on deprivation (**Figure 15** on page 22).

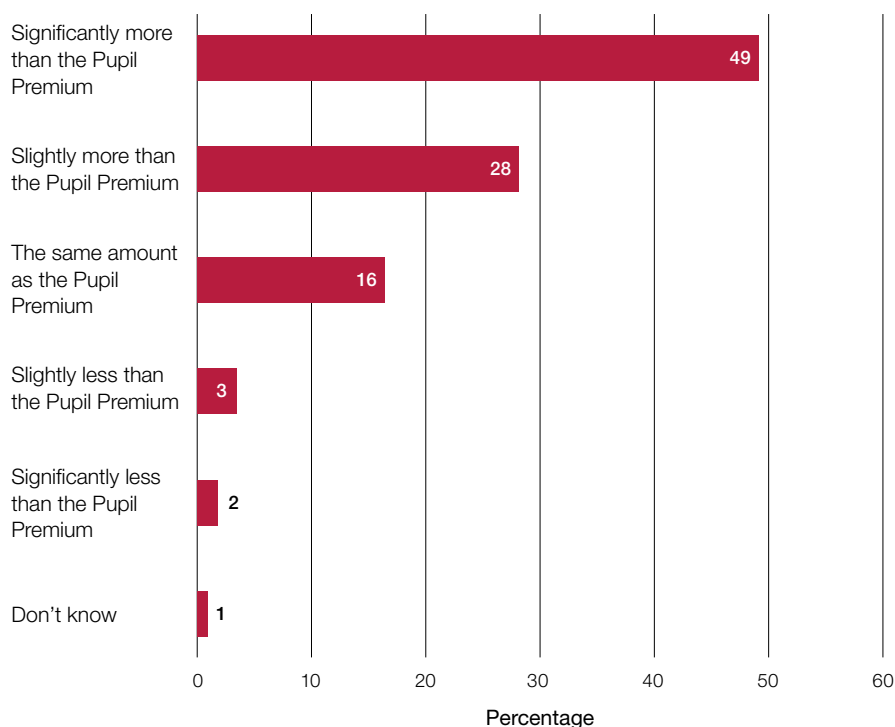
³ Nationally, some 15% of school pupils are eligible for and claiming free school meals, according to the Department for Education's Statistical First Release on *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* published in January 2015. Schools with more than 1 in 5 pupils eligible for free school meals are, therefore, dealing with a higher-than-average level of disadvantage.



Figure 8

School leaders' view of the amount they spend on work with disadvantaged pupils

Over three quarters of schools assess that they spend more than the value of the Pupil Premium on activities targeted at disadvantaged pupils.



Note

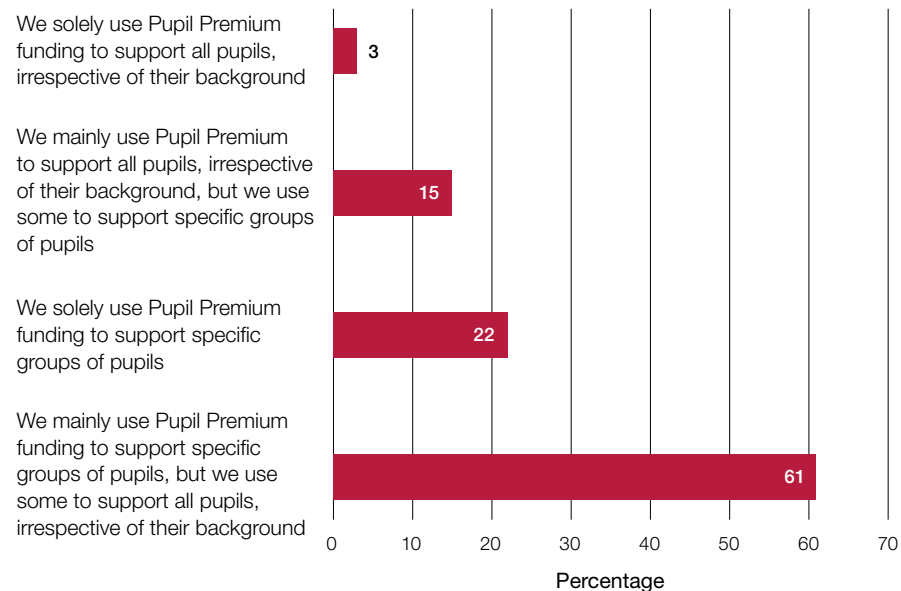
1 Where school leaders report spending more than the Pupil Premium, they will be using core school funding, some of which is also distributed on the basis of deprivation.

Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

Figure 9

Targeting Pupil Premium funds

Schools typically use the Pupil Premium to support specific groups of pupils with particular needs but they spend some of the money on activities aimed at all pupils.



Note

1 Our main report on *Funding for disadvantaged pupils* found that funding school- or class-wide interventions could be an effective and efficient means of supporting disadvantaged pupils (for instance, actions to improve general behaviour) but also identified a risk that, in certain circumstances, such general interventions could dilute the impact of funding on disadvantaged pupils, particularly when they are present in small numbers in a school.

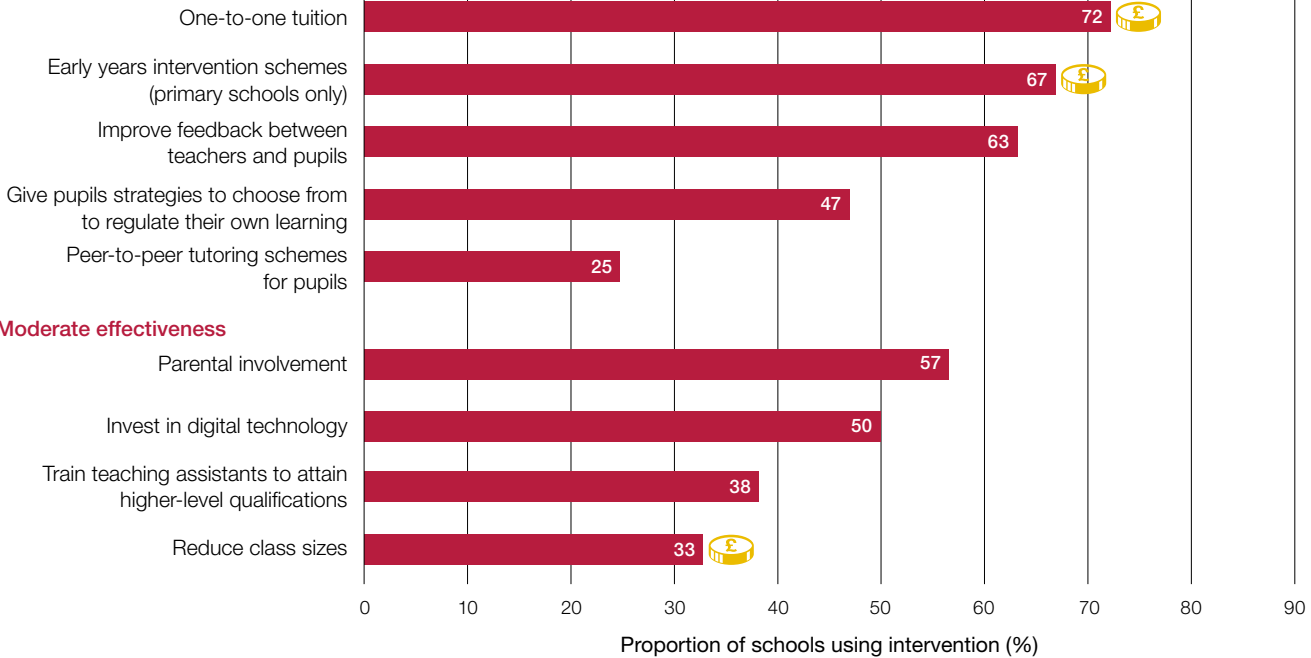
Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

Figure 10
Interventions chosen by schools

This graph shows the cost-effectiveness of interventions schools use to support disadvantaged pupils and the proportion of schools that use them.

Intervention by effectiveness

High effectiveness



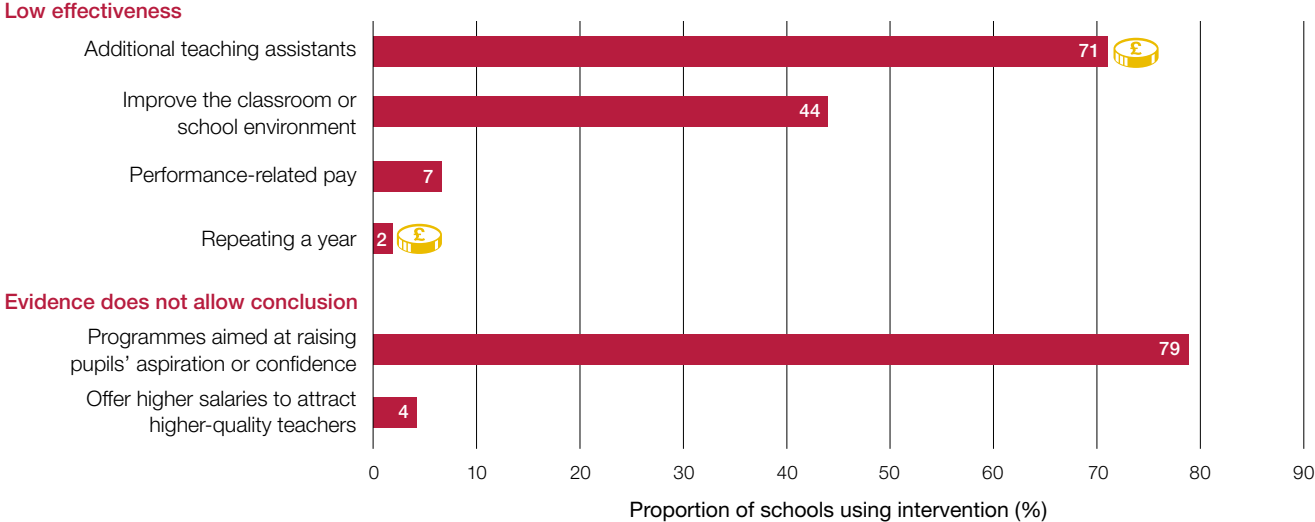
High cost

Figure continued on next page →

72%
of schools used one-to-one tuition as an intervention

57%
of schools used parental involvement as an intervention

Figure 10 continued
Interventions chosen by schools



High cost

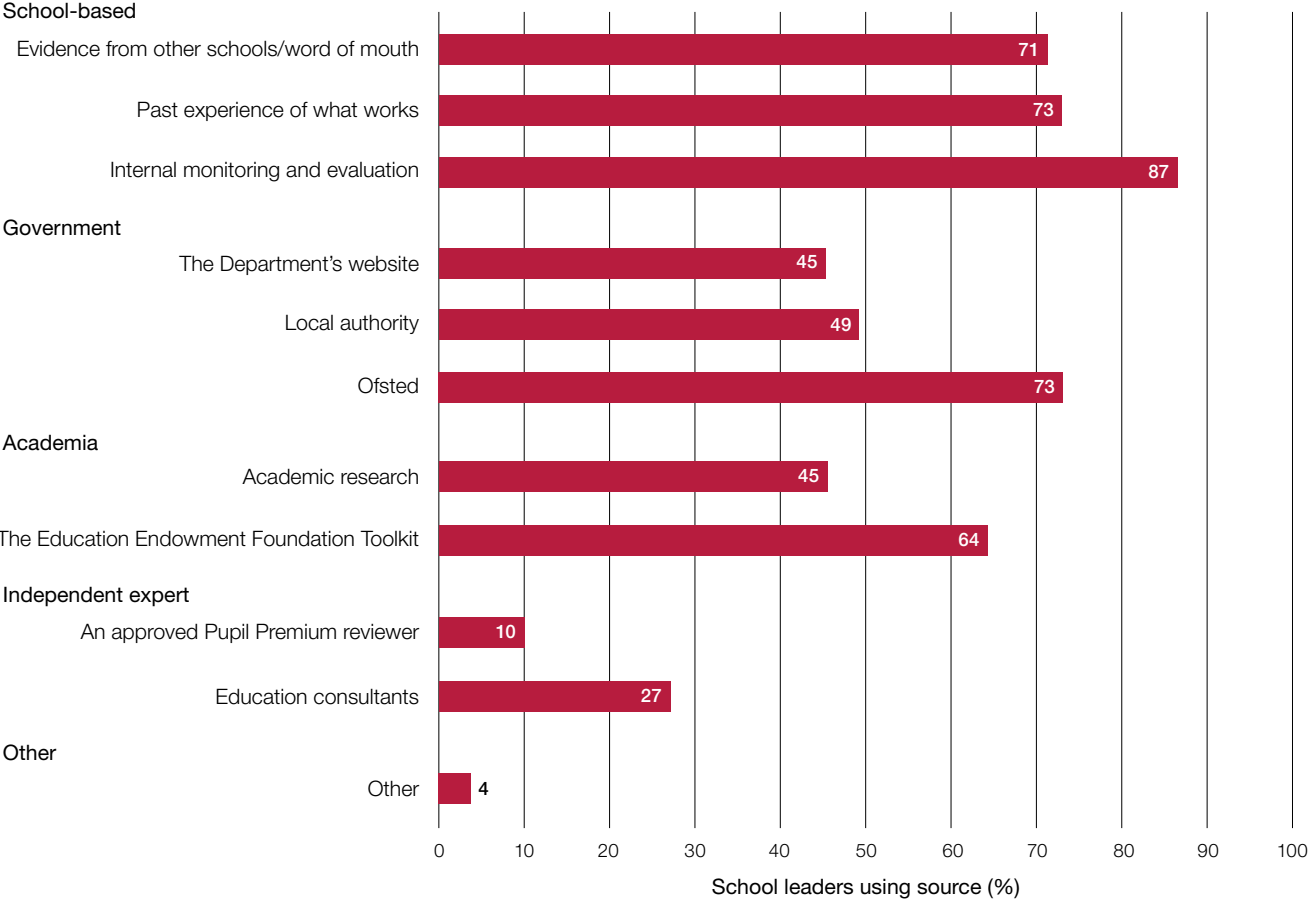
Note

- 1 The level of effectiveness is as determined by the Education Endowment Foundation in its Teaching and Learning Toolkit and was correct at June 2015.
- 2 Research indicates that the effectiveness of teaching assistants varies greatly depending on how they are used. Our main report on *Funding for disadvantaged pupils* cited research from the Education Endowment Foundation that "the typical deployment and use of teaching assistants, under everyday conditions, is not leading to improvements in academic outcomes".

Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

Figure 11
How schools identify best practice

Schools use a wide range of sources but not all use those that are externally produced



Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

**Figure 12**

Interventions school leaders think most effective

Type of intervention**Percentage of respondents assessing the intervention as one of the "most effective" (%)**

Use more one-to-one tuition	44
Improve feedback between teachers and pupils	43
Programmes aimed at raising pupils' aspirations or confidence	42
Early years intervention schemes (infant and primary schools)	31
Employ additional teaching assistants	23
Parental involvement	22
Give pupils strategies to choose from to regulate their own learning	18
Reduce class sizes	18
Train teaching assistants to attain higher qualifications	8
Something else	7
Invest in digital technology	6
Have more peer-to-peer tutoring schemes for pupils	5
Improve the classroom or school environment	4
Offer higher salaries to attract higher-quality teachers	2
Don't know	1
Performance-related pay	0

Note

- 1 Survey respondents were asked to list up to 3 interventions that they considered to be the most effective at improving the performance of disadvantaged pupils at their school.

Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

**44%**

of respondents said one-to-one tuition was one of the "most effective" interventions

**43%**

of respondents said improved feedback between teachers and pupils was one of the "most effective" interventions

Figure 13
Impacts of the Pupil Premium reported by school leaders

Figure continued on next page →

Schools attribute attainment and other impacts to the Pupil Premium

Reported impacts

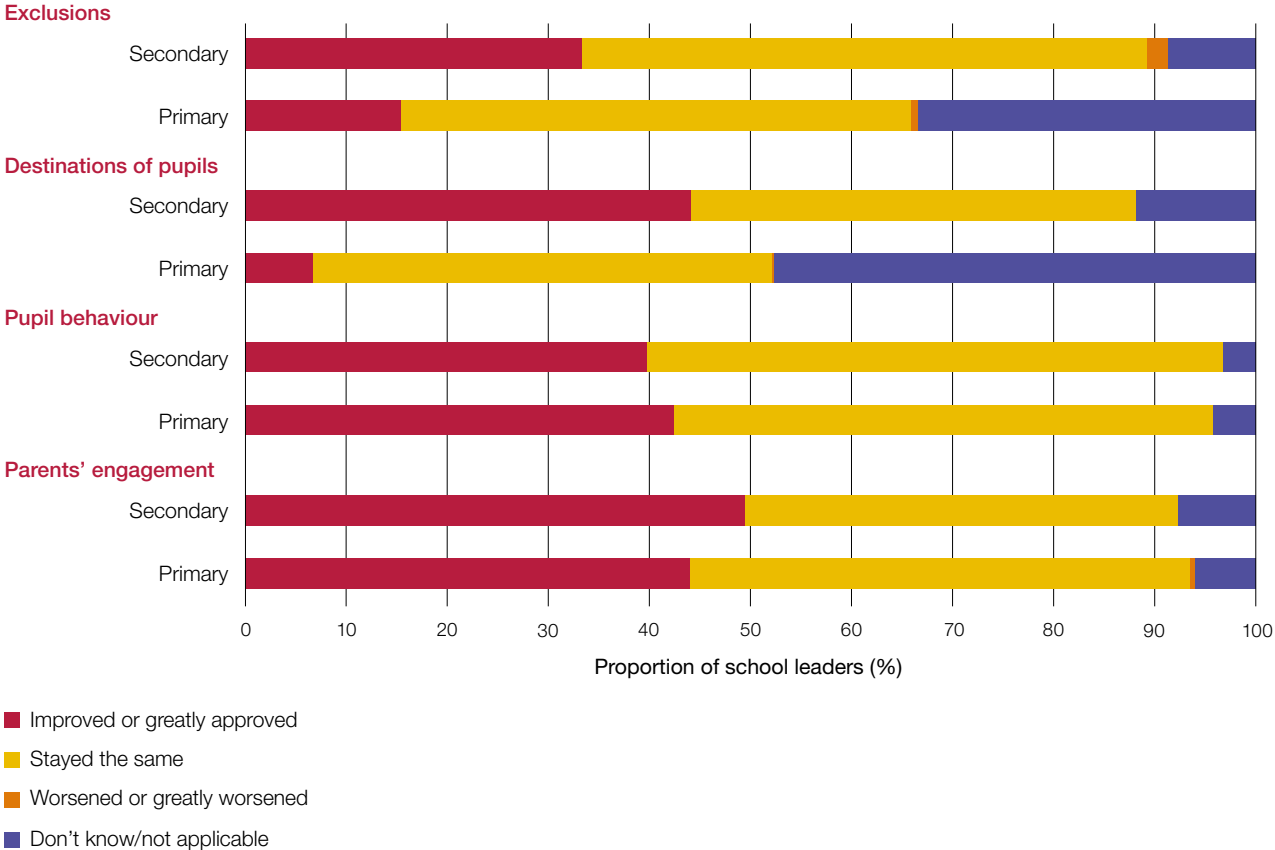


Figure 13 continued

Impacts of the Pupil Premium reported by school leaders

Reported impacts

Pupil attendance



Pupil confidence



Pupil attainment



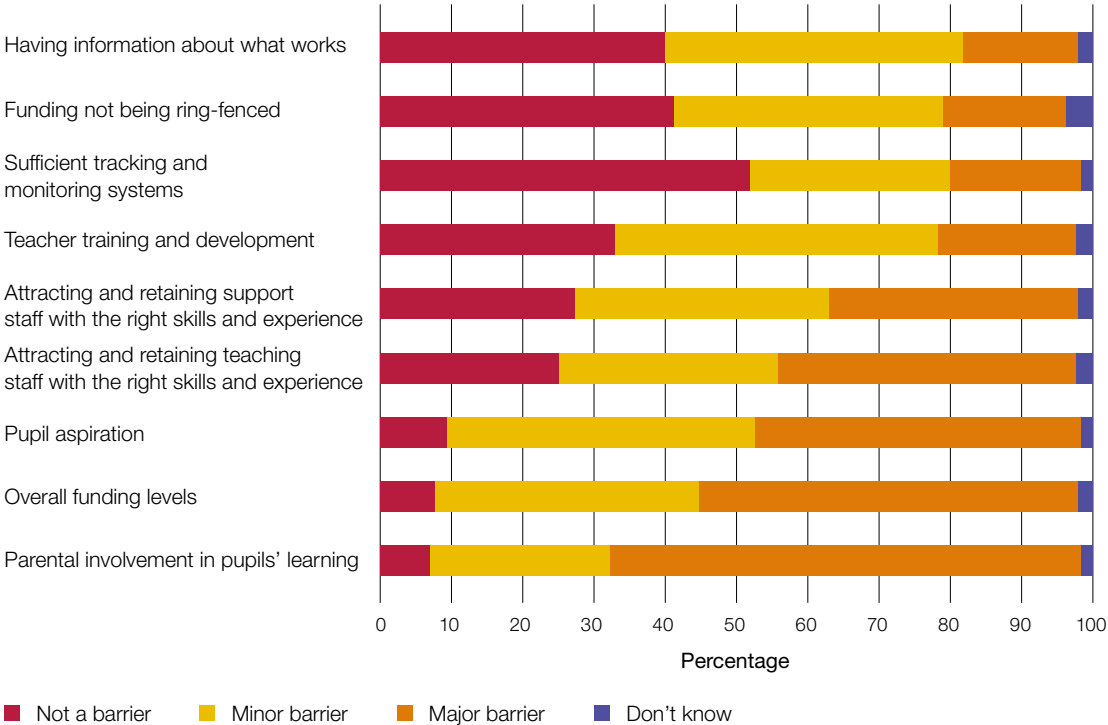
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Proportion of school leaders (%)

- Improved or greatly improved
- Stayed the same
- Worsened or greatly worsened
- Don't know/not applicable

Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

Figure 14
Barriers schools encounter in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils

Two thirds of school leaders see lack of parental involvement as a major barrier to raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

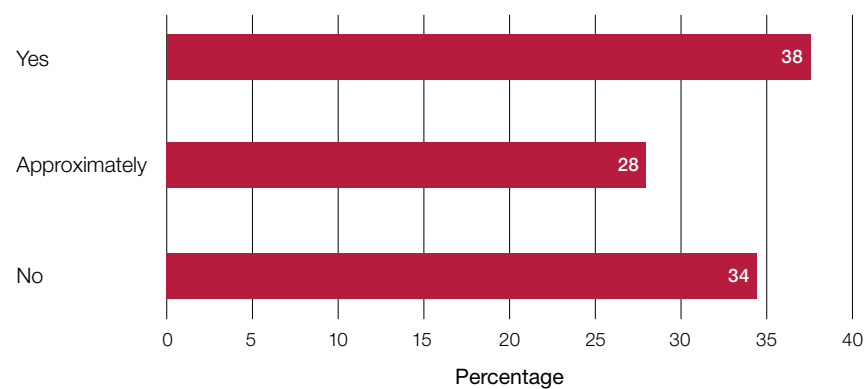


Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders

**Figure 15**

School leaders' awareness of other school funding based on deprivation

More than one third of school leaders did not know, in addition to the Pupil Premium, how much core school funding they received on the basis of deprivation.

**Notes**

- 1 Local authorities are responsible for choosing how to distribute core school funding (the Dedicated Schools Grant) to both maintained schools and academies. They use deprivation as one of the factors to determine how much each school receives, with different local authorities distributing different amounts based on this factor. We asked school leaders if they knew how much core funding their school received on the basis of deprivation.

Source: National Audit Office survey of 543 school leaders



Appendix One

Further reading

There are many sources of information about how to spend the Pupil Premium effectively and who to target it at. The following list is by no means exhaustive and focuses on recently-published material.

Department for Education, *Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils: articulating success and good practice*, November 2015.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-the-attainment-of-disadvantaged-pupils

Department for Education, *Factors associated with achievement*, November 2015.

Key Stage 2 – www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473674/RR486_-_Factors_associated_with_achievement_-_key_stage_2.pdf

Key Stage 4 – www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473673/RR407_-_Factors_associated_with_achievement_-_key_stage_4.pdf

Education Endowment Foundation, *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*, regularly updated.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/>

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