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**Disadvantaged and Pupil Premium Students**

This note focuses on Pupil premium students, but the general approach also applies to working with any disadvantaged student grouping, e.g, underachieving white British students. Ultimately, student poverty is now such a big and growing issue that every school should also have a policy and action plan for addressing this in all its aspects, and provision for disadvantaged students should be incorporated within it.

**Introduction**

The government needed a definition of who are such students in terms of their schools receiving Pupil Premium funding, and decided on:

* Students eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years
* Students identified as having left local-authority care because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order
* Students whose parents are in the services

There has thus been a significant funding available to boost the educational provision for these students since 2011, but national data shows that it has had little effect on the disadvantage gap

Ofsted has found that some schools have not been focusing the spending of the Pupil Premium on disadvantaged students, and in some cases have just been using it to subsidise the overall school budget; **this is clearly totally unacceptable**.

**The wider problem is that too many schools have not been allocating the money in ways that will have maximum impact, and usually because money is spent without recognising that the Pupil premium cohort comprises a wide range of students with different educational needs, i.e, the measures put in place and the associated resourcing need to be personalised**. **Many Pupil Premium students are performing very well**, **while the reasons why other PP students may be underachieving vary greatly, making “one size fit all” solutions totally inappropriate**. Schools which set out to know their students as individuals, and provide sensitive assistance and support, are the ones that are likely to be most successful in enhancing the attainment of disadvantaged students. It is unnecessary, patronising, wasteful, ineffective and insulting for schools to be failing to treat PP students not as individuals, but as some stereotyped, branded grouping

Another problem arises with the DfE definition of who is a disadvantaged student, given that 60% of British people in poverty live in a household where someone is in work, and thus in some cases will not be entitled to the benefits that give them free meals and therefore their children, who could in many ways be described as disadvantaged, are not entitled to have access to the extra Pupil Premium funding. In terms of fairness and equity, schools should identify as far as they can who these students are, and provide the same sort of support as outlined above. I would argue that it is quite ethical to spend some of the Pupil premium money on these students as long as the school is up front about this and explains its rationale

In broad terms, the progress/needs of a PP students can be assessed in two ways:

* To what extent is the student underachieving
* To what extent does the student have “pastoral”, family or personal development problems, this being defined very broadly

Some PP students may face both of these, some only one and some neither

**Where the PP student is underachieving,** (and not all will be)

Schools should easily be able to use their data tracking systems to identify which Pupil Premium students are underachieving and in what subjects. It is then a case of diagnosing the reasons for the underachievement, **with these varying greatly between different students,** and they could be any of the following barriers to learning:

• Attendance

• Behaviour

• Skills as a learner, including behaviour for learning

• Level of literacy

• Quality of teaching being received in key subjects

• Personal, team and leadership skills and qualities

• Happiness in the context of personal problems

• Self-confidence and self-belief

• Mental health issues

• Family and community support and aspirations

• Labelling of students

• Relationship with a teacher

In this overall context, there is then a case for looking also at the student in relation to all or some of the following:

• Concentration

• Organisational Skills

• Emotional Intelligence

• Interactions with Peers

• Interactions with Adults

Schools need to have staff trained both in this type of diagnosis and then also able to produce personalised action plans for those PP students who are under acieving, based on challenging but realistic targets, to address the identified issues, Students can then be given a trained, high quality mentor, who will oversee the implementation of this plan and monitor its impact and, where appropriate, liaise with the parents/carers. All teachers and departments should be made fully aware through CPD of the personalised provision being put in place for these students, and the role they have to play, especially in the class room, to make it a success Part of the Pupil premium budget will then be used to finance these individualised plans. For example, if some PP money is used to hire a literacy mentor, then the use of this person will be focused only on the cases where literacy has been identified as a prime cause of underachievement, etc. Pupil Premium students who are performing well and are on target will probably need none of this type of support

Taking this a step further, outstanding schools will be identifying and addressing the needs of all underachieving students, with personalised diagnosis, action planning and mentoring. In this context the work being done with disadvantaged students is actually no different except that there is the extra funding to support it. This is why some of these say they do not have a specific PP policy, because they are working with all identified underachieving students

**Where the PP student has “pastoral or personal development problems**

This will not be the case with all PP students, but where this is identified then support will be available. Once again, outstanding schools will say they are giving support to all students who are facing theses type of problems The support has to be personalised. For example, whereas it is often the case that a school finances a residential weekend for all PP students, it should instead be targeted on students who it has been identified will gain most from it, and this may well include some non PP students.

It is noticeable from the data that Pupil Premium students tend to do less well in schools where there are relatively few of them. That they tend to do better in schools serving socially and economically deprived areas, suggest that the students will do better in those schools, and indeed all the schools, who prioritise enhancing the life chances of all their students as a key aspect of their vision and culture

**Possible actions to be taken over the year –a checklist**

* After deciding on what actions are to be put in place, these are costed against the allocated PP money in the PP financial statement that has to be on the school website. It is best not to allocate all the money in one go, but leave a reserve to cover the cost of actions that prove necessary later in the year
* The money should be rigorously focused and spent on PP and other students who have been identified as disadvantaged, and not be used to benefit the whole student body
* Where PP students are also members or other underperforming student groupings, e.g, boys, white British working class, actions can be coordinated with the work being done by the staff responsible for these groups
* Given the importance of PP for Ofsted, it may be worth listing actions in a plan format, with, e.g, these headings:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pupil Premium used for: | Amount allocated to the intervention / action(£) | Is this a new or continued activity | Brief summary of the intervention or action, including details of year groups and pupils involved, and the timescale | Specific intended outcomes: how will this intervention or action improve achievement for pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium? What will it achieve if successful? | How will this activity be monitored, when and by whom? How will success be evidenced? | Actual impact: What did the action or activity actually achieve? Be specific: ‘As a result of this action…’ If you plan to repeat this activity, what would you change to improve it it next time? |

* The School strategy plan for providing for PP students also has to be on the school website

As outlined above, all these possible actions need to be personalised to the students **where they are relevant** to addressing their identified barriers to learning or their personal or family issues and personal development

**All the actions below are likely to be effective with all disadvantaged and/or underachieving students, as long as there is an individualised approach.** The actions below could as easily be applied to any “underachieving and/or disadvantaged” students and not just “PP” students

* The early identification of PP students prior to transfer, gaining all possible information about the students from primary schools
* The implementation of highly personalised educational, social and personal provision for each PP student based on a full understanding of their individual circumstances
* A special emphasis on the development of the literacy and numeracy skills where this is an issue for a student, and monitoring of library use.
* The setting of personalised and challenging targets for PP students related to individual learning plans
* Following data tracking, a discrete data base of PP students produced, so that their progress overall along with all individual student underachievement is clearly identified
* All staff informed who the PP students are and have this recorded in their assessment records, and there is CPD for staff on how best to meet these students’ individual needs
* Where individual student underachievement intervention is being used for PP students, then the very best mentors are used, with departments also paying special attention to them as they seek to improve performance via individualised, monitored intervention strategies
* The attendance of specific PP students is boosted via personalised planning, but only as found necessary
* Similarly the behaviour of PP students is carefully monitored, with individual behaviour plans put in place as necessary
* PP students have priority access to counselling and external agencies as needed, as well as an “open door” into the school’s pastoral system whenever it is needed with access to mentors and role models
* How much personalised praise and recognition PP students receive is regularly checked and boosted as necessary
* PP students are fully involved in the school’s Student Voice, Involvement and leadership provision
* Special attention is given to higher ability and gifted and talented PP students
* PP students are given high quality, personalised advice and support at times of transition, e.g, options choice or transfer to secondary school, with a personalised curriculum and, where necessary, the opportunity for an alternative curriculum
* PP students receive inspiring and supportive careers advice and destination planning from an early age, thus enhancing motivation, with personalised guidance on their best post 11 and 16 routes and individually planned work experience
* Checks are made to see whether some PP students are having logistical problems in terms of being able to produce homework, with personalised school support and study facilities made available
* There is liaison with the SEND department to ensure that PP students are being given all possible assistance in developing their basic skills and literacy and numeracy
* Assistance with EAL PP students
* Establishment of alternative provision where necessary
* PP students are encouraged and assisted to attend the extra revision and learning sessions that the school offers and receive intensive support in terms of preparation for public examinations
* PP students are encouraged to join in extra-curricular activities and this is monitored
* PP students given financial assistance as necessary to go on visits and trips and take part in summer schools, as well as helping with uniform costs Food tech and DT costs etc; the breakfast club specifically caters for a good proportion of the PP students
* Close liaison is established with their parents/carers, including the use of family days and activities, and home visits
* Money is found to supply PP students with ICT equipment when they do not have access to one at home
* PP money is used to employ extra staff to work with PP students, but only those who need that support;
	+ TAs
	+ Teachers
	+ Pastoral support staff
* PP money is used to provide extra learning resources and materials as needed
* PP money is used to extend the breadth of the curriculum
* One to one tuition is made available for PP students as needed and also peer to peer tuition
* Special activities and events are put on for specific PP students each term
* When considered appropriate, Some PP students get access to free music lessons
* PP students’ work is given its fair share of display
* Ensure that it is not made clear publicly which students are on free meals

**Recording impact in aggregate terms**

Through regular analysis of key indicator data

Comparison of PP and non-PP performance in terms of the performance tables indicators for all key stages:

* Achieved last year
* Targets for the year
* Situation at each data tracking point
* Achieved at end of the year

Also, termly comparison of PP and non-PP performance in terms of:

* Attendance
* Exclusions
* Praise and rewards
* Extra-curricular involvement

**Tony Stephens**