

Pupil Premium

Most, if not all, governors will already be well aware of the pupil premium but they may not as yet fully appreciate how important a topic this is at the time of a visit from Ofsted. For this reason it might be worth reviewing the situation, albeit briefly.

The premium was first introduced in April 2011, two years ago. It provides (in the 2013-2014 educational year) some £900 to a school in respect of each 'disadvantaged' child. Those children eligible are those who either (a) were registered for Free School Meals (FSM) at any time during the past six years, (b) have been in public care continuously for six months or more or (c) the children of service personnel (in which case it is £300).

The school must use that money specifically to provide additional support for those children and the school is required to make available detailed information as to the way in which this money has been used. Governors will be quizzed on this and must be able to justify the relevant expenditure. In the process they should be able to say why they opted for the approach they used rather than for any other. They must then be able to define the actual impact of that expenditure, what difference it has made for those children.

Governors may find it helpful to examine a publication from the Oxford University Press, and free to download at <http://www.oup.com/oxed/primary/pupil-premium/?gclid=CMmljtSkhLYCFczHtAodwR4AJQ> which provides a good deal of additional information. It is described as "... a practical guide to help school leadership teams and governors in identifying and deploying the Pupil Premium funding to raise achievement and narrow the gap between children from low income and other disadvantaged families and their peers".

During the Autumn of 2012, Ofsted visited 68 primary and secondary schools specifically to ask them about the use of the pupil premium. Although no Dudley school was included, some from our neighbours in Birmingham, Sandwell, Walsall and Worcestershire were involved and governors did have to explain their school's use of the money. The report of these visits is publically available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/pupil-premium-how-schools-are-spending-funding-successfully-maximise-achievement> and this too is worth reading as it includes an examination of some of the strategies used by those schools. The report says "..... that schools that manage the cash well are likely to have ring-fenced it, will aim to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest levels and understand that all teaching must meet the needs of each pupil.

They should also analyse the effectiveness of each technique and intervention and adjust the way they spend the money accordingly.

According to the report schools which did less well often showed "a lack of clarity about the intended impact of the spending", did not monitor the effect properly and often spent the cash "indiscriminately on teaching assistants".

Whilst the report does not prescribe the specific way(s) that schools should utilize the money, a report by the Sutton Trust (and the Education Endowment Foundation) has produced an analysis of many different approaches that might be used, together with a quantification of their likely costs and a measure of their effectiveness in making a difference. That report is freely available on the Internet at [http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Teaching and Learning Toolkit \(July 12\).pdf](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Teaching_and_Learning_Toolkit_(July_12).pdf) Totally counter-intuitively, the Report indicates that the use of teaching assistants is both one of the most expensive mechanisms and at the same time one of the least effective in helping to “narrow the gap”. On the other hand, both in primary and secondary schools, it identifies the use of homework as a relatively inexpensive but quite valuable tool. Governors would do well to familiarize themselves with the whole of this report.

For those who believe that their school has used a particularly imaginative and effective way of employing this additional financial resource, there is an award of up to £10,000 available “up for grabs”. This was announced by Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister and the Pupil Premium Awards are made available by the Times Educational Supplement (TES) in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE).

Praefectus vulgaris