



Maximising the impact of the Pupil Premium

A guide for East Sussex Primary Schools

Marc Rowland
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Foreword

The recently published 2019 – 2021 strategy for school improvement in East Sussex, *Excellence for All*, identifies that “The most important priority now for schools and their wider partnerships is to sharpen our focus on the most disadvantaged groups of learners in our schools and communities.”

Successive governments have made the underperformance of disadvantaged children in the UK a priority and have supported this priority through both funding and policy. In East Sussex, as well as being less likely to achieve age related expectations at the end of KS2, our disadvantaged children are three times as likely to be absent and nearly six times as likely to be excluded from our primary schools as their more advantaged peers.

However, this is not the case everywhere we look. In East Sussex there are schools where disadvantaged children achieve consistently good outcomes which compare favourably with more advantaged children across the country – we need to learn from these schools.

In *Excellence for All*, we made a number of important commitments for disadvantaged children: -

- We will hold high aspirations for these learners and work together across all schools and across the system to improve their life chances.
- We will collectively act as champions for vulnerable learners by using achievement, attendance and exclusion data, safeguarding intelligence and learner and parent/carer voice data to support and challenge each other when we recognise that these learners are not being well served.
- We will target our resources to improve outcomes and opportunities for these learners, using evidence-based approaches to secure improvements.
- We will learn from each other and share what is working well to secure outcomes for all learners regardless of their educational or physical needs, their family background, the school they attend or the neighbourhood where they live.

This report which explores good practice in East Sussex primary schools, is an example of those commitments and the case studies demonstrate what can be done by **our** schools. In order to learn from each other we need to identify and codify what works here, in our schools, in East Sussex - so that we can target resources effectively and challenge each other to do better.

Addendum: April 2020

Covid-19 has placed significant pressures on schools and families and school closures impact disproportionately on the most disadvantaged. These issues are in *addition* to challenges we are already working to overcome with the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. It is more important than ever that we get it right together.

Elizabeth Funge

Head of Education Improvement, East Sussex County Council

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to support East Sussex Primary Schools to adopt the principles that underpin a successful strategy for tackling educational disadvantage. It aims to do this based on local context, and a context that East Sussex Schools will recognise. Guidance based on schools that face different challenges can be unhelpful.

The report aims to offer some guidance about the effective processes that need to be in place for better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Whilst illustrations of good practice can be helpful, many school leaders have suggested that understanding *how* a strategy has been planned, implemented and evaluated is more useful. Good practice case studies are the equivalent of a still from a reel of film. To be helpful to schools, the process needs illustrating. To that end, the case studies aim to show schools from different contexts, at different points in the school improvement process. Appropriate approaches are likely to change over time.

The guide aims to build on previously published guidance and research. It also aims to highlight some of the pitfalls that have sometimes negated the impact of the Pupil Premium in schools. The dos and don'ts section is included as a checklist to support this.

Educational disadvantage *can* be tackled in our schools and classrooms. This report hopes to help every school in East Sussex (and beyond) to maximise the impact of the Pupil Premium for better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.

Key principles

1. Schools are best placed to define disadvantage in their own communities. Strategies to tackle educational disadvantage focus on the needs of pupils, not labels. There is no such thing as a 'Pupil Premium child'. The proportion of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium is not always an accurate representation of disadvantage within a community. Conversely, immediate perceptions of the local community may not be representative of the levels of disadvantage at the school.
2. Values, professional judgement, research evidence, the needs of pupils and accountability to pupils and families should drive behaviours. These should be prioritised over external accountability.
3. Educational disadvantage cannot be tackled in isolation. The Pupil Premium strategy should align with the wider school development plan wherever possible. Additional funding helps, but everything that happens within a school context should work towards better outcomes for pupils from the least fortunate backgrounds.
4. Research evidence should be used to challenge assumptions and beliefs, not simply to justify decisions already taken. Research evidence without the right school culture, professional judgement and teacher agency is unlikely to be helpful.
5. Consistency, structure and order are critical to success for disadvantaged pupils, but this needs to be balanced with teacher autonomy and subject specific pedagogy. The consistency should be about positive relationships, a shared understanding of high expectations and ensuring all pupils have the support to achieve those high expectations. Consistency is about principles, not everyone doing the same.
6. No programmes will be successful without positive relationships.
7. The most effective schools create the capacity and provide the expertise and support for teachers **and** other staff to better meet the needs of their vulnerable learners.
8. Labels can create unconscious bias and set limitations on what pupils can achieve.
9. Strong pastoral care is the foundation stone of a successful strategy. It should be seen as the bedrock of any efforts to tackle educational disadvantage. Evidence should be valued in pastoral approaches as much as in academic approaches.
10. Schools should take responsibility for tackling educational disadvantage and not blame external factors for the performance of their most vulnerable pupils.
11. The quality of implementation is as important as the activities and approaches chosen. Poor implementation is likely to lead to weaker outcomes. Prioritising, and doing a small number of things well, leads to shared ownership and understanding, gives time for approaches to be embedded and avoids initiative fatigue.
12. Schools should focus on what's in their gift, and not try to solve all of society's challenges.
13. The implementation of a school's Pupil Premium strategy should be treated as a process, not an event.
14. Activity is not impact. The most effective strategies look to improve learners over time, rather than success defined through 'doing things'. Adopting a three-year plan with a progression model supports this: *'What would we like the oral language of our disadvantaged pupils to be like by the end of Year 6?'*
15. Be wary of putting too much weight on the outcomes of a single cohort, particularly where the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is relatively low.

Further reflections

Schools' role in tackling the underachievement of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups should focus primarily on what happens within our classrooms and wider school life.

In order to maximise the impact of the Pupil Premium, to achieve better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, schools, families, system leaders and accountability measures work in partnership.

Strategy

Educational disadvantage cannot be tackled in isolation. Strategies to tackle disadvantage should align with the wider school development plan wherever possible. School development priorities should be considered through the lens of their most disadvantaged pupils.

There is good evidence that short term, interventionist approaches do not have a long term impact. It is critical that anyone involved in holding schools to account does not promote short termism.

Schools should be encouraged to have the self-confidence to follow strategies that address the causes of the attainment gap. These include limited vocabulary, underdeveloped oral language, self-regulation, lack of access to high quality early years provision, poor self-perception or lack of access to enrichment activities.

Needs, not labels

Schools must identify pupil need and base their strategies around this. It is critical strategies focus on pupil need and not on the label. Leaders are best placed to determine who is vulnerable and needs additional support. This is where a 'whole school' approach is effective. Schools need to create their own definitions of disadvantage.

The negative labelling of pupils who are low prior attainers as 'low ability' can set limits on what pupils can achieve through low expectations. Prior attainment should never be a diving bell on future attainment. Differentiation should be about 'scaffolding up', not setting limitations on what pupils can achieve.

Avoid oversimplifications, generalisations and assumptions

Any strategy that is not rooted in a deep understanding of the needs of pupils as individuals risks a 'Supermarket Sweep' approach to Pupil Premium. Evidence of need should be based on diagnostic assessment (pastoral and academic), teacher voice, pupil voice, discussions with families and an understanding of the community and the challenges they face.

It should also be rooted in a robust evaluation of the quality of classroom experiences for our disadvantaged pupils. This is especially important for low prior attainers.

Research Evidence

The use of research evidence to inform activity is not universally strong. In a number of cases it appears that research may be being used to justify decisions already made. Some schools rely too much on the meta-analysis of research, rather than a deeper engagement with the evidence.

Research evidence should be used to challenge assumptions and beliefs. Research evidence without the right school culture, values, professional judgement, consideration of the needs of pupils and families and teacher agency is unlikely to be helpful.

Feedback

Feedback is a critical element of improvement for our most vulnerable learners.

Feedback is a highly relational transaction. Some of the most disadvantaged pupils are often least well placed to take on board feedback because of a lack of self-confidence, perceptions of themselves as learners and inconsistent relationships. Taking on board feedback with things we struggle with is difficult and feedback needs to be seen through the lens of the least successful learners. Successful learners want more feedback. Feedback can be a gap widener without care.

Focus on what's in schools' gift

Schools have far greater control over the quality of reading instruction in our classrooms than they have over the amount that pupils read at home. If pupils are taught to read effectively, they are more likely to read at home. This in turn can help close the vocabulary gap.

Intervention

Additional intervention, where appropriate, should be supplementary to high quality teaching. It should be structured, evidence informed and time limited, with clear success criteria that are sustained back in the classroom. Teachers should be involved in the commissioning of the intervention, and retain responsibility for pupil learning, even when a pupil is involved in additional structured intervention.

When planning any interventions, it is important that the most vulnerable learners retain access to the most effective teaching. Effective intervention should be informed by diagnostic assessment to identify gaps in learning, and the expertise, including AfL, as to how to address these issues.

Pre and follow-up teaching interventions have been seen to be effective in East Sussex and further afield, as part of a 'keep up, not catch up' agenda, but the unintended consequences of isolating pupils from the informal school curriculum should also be considered in advance of any interventions, and continually monitored for any negative impact.

It is important for schools to be 'joined up' about pastoral and academic interventions, recognising that the best way to raise self-esteem is success in the classroom. This needs to come before wider 'aspirations' activities.

Talk

Consideration should be given to who is getting to talk and develop their oral language in classrooms? Is it the pupils with well-developed oral language? Do pupils with strong oral language gravitate towards each other? Do these pupils dominate and take over in talk partner work? Are some pupils left out? Is classroom talk structured to develop language through peer questioning and the assignment of roles?

Also valuable are role models, rich language in the classroom (including rich texts), scaffolding, valuing and modelling responses. It is important to expose children to, and systematically build, strong subject specific vocabulary to convey concepts. It is important to increase background knowledge, whatever pupils' attainment profiles.

The language gap, combined with a social interaction gap, may be a key driver for educational underperformance from EYFS to KS2.

Implementation and Evaluation

Impact evaluation is not trying to prove something has worked, it's about finding out whether it has, and in what circumstances. Better evaluation would lead to better, more efficient use and impact of Pupil Premium funding. Remember that poorly designed evaluations are more likely to present a façade of good impact. It is important to de-couple impact evaluation from accountability.

Those involved in the implementation of any strategies are often poor judges of whether a strategy has been successful. Involve governors in the development of an evaluation framework at the start of any programme.

Good process

Stage 1 The foundations that need to be in place to secure good outcomes for disadvantaged pupils			
Belief that disadvantaged pupils can attain well and be successful in all aspects of school life.	A focus on curriculum equity and inclusive pedagogy.	High expectations of academic attainment.	Pastoral provision that matches need, focussing on maximising access to learning.
Pupil need clearly identified from a range of data, including robust academic and diagnostic assessment, pupil voice, teacher voice and classroom observations.	The use of research evidence, professional judgement and values to inform decision making. Early intervention prioritised.	A well-designed process and impact evaluation framework. A clear theory of change.	A whole school approach: everyone understanding the Pupil Premium strategy and their role within it.

Stage 2 Identification and prioritising areas for development		
Possible areas for development: Pupils and Families (not exhaustive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy - word recognition and language comprehension Self-regulated learning Motivation Relationships Vocabulary Social isolation Oracy Self esteem Belonging Multiple vulnerabilities Social isolation Motivation and aspiration Parental involvement Social, financial and cultural capital Learning resilience and self-efficacy 	Possible areas for development: In school (not exhaustive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well qualified, well trained, well mentored / experienced teachers working with disadvantaged and vulnerable learners Staff wellbeing reducing absence and use of supply The primacy of teaching for raising attainment of disadvantaged pupils Expectations and belief Communication and record keeping Keeping progress under review Using assessment to inform responsive teaching or intervention Using data to deploy staff to need Senior leadership involvement in monitoring pupil progress Management of transition points Prioritisation and implementation Accountability 	Possible areas for development: Community (not exhaustive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to cultural enrichment Opportunities for positive childhood experiences out of school Transport Difficulties with home learning e.g. overcrowding Cost of living Access to high quality early years provision Social isolation Inequality Health and wellbeing Exposure to a variety of careers, meeting inspiring, relevant people Challenging stereotypes

Stage 3 Identification of programme(s) and approaches, well planned implementation and evaluation			
Use of research evidence	Prioritisation	Using evidence on effective implementation	Ongoing professional development on key theme
Shared ownership and leadership stability / capacity and commitment	Rigorous evaluation framework	Fit and feasibility	Anticipating what may go wrong / adaption

Better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils

Key questions to consider

1. *What are the key issues to address to raise the attainment of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils at your school?*

What are the barriers to learning? Be specific. Focus on the causes, not the symptoms. Avoid generalisations such as 'poor literacy'. Lower rates of progress are not barriers, but outcomes. Issues can be academic, pastoral or both.

2. *What is the evidence you have used to identify those issues?*

This is critical. One of the reasons Pupil Premium has not had the impact it might have is that barriers are sometimes assumptions. A strategy that is not informed by a robust analysis of need is like trying to bake a cake without a recipe.

3. *What outcomes are you looking to achieve, and how will you know you have achieved them?*

It is really important to be specific here. Remember that those involved in the implementation of a strategy are unlikely to be able to evaluate robustly and objectively. The weaker the evidence, the more important a robust evaluation framework is. Outcomes should be set out over short, medium and longer periods. Some strategies may take longer to embed and have a sustained impact. Remember that evaluation is about assessing whether something has worked, not trying to prove it has done. Multiple sources of evidence should be used as part of effective evaluation and workload should be considered as part of feasibility.

4. *What programmes, actions or approaches will you adopt to overcome those issues?*

It is important to remember to focus on learning, and to focus on what's in the school's gift. Schools can't solve all of society's problems. Make sure that the activities tackle the identified need.

Being clear about the actual approach, e.g. improving classroom talk or embedding metacognition into teaching and learning enables you to avoid generalisations like 'Quality First Teaching'. Be clear about feasibility.

5. *What is the Theory of Change?*

Approach (e.g. additional adults to Early Years) leads to [describe activity] leads to Improved Attainment.

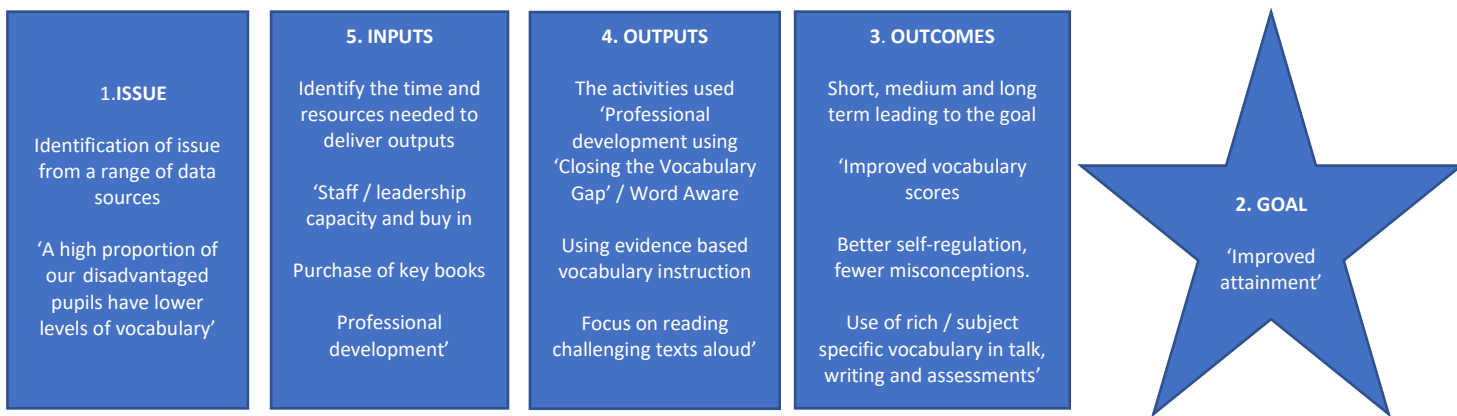
6. *What research evidence exists to support your chosen approach?*

It is important to use evidence to inform decision making, not just to look for evidence to justify decisions already taken. How does the evidence align with professional judgement and values? Does it fit with school context?

7. *What might not work as well as you'd like it to?*

Carry out a 'pre-mortem' about what might go wrong, to anticipate challenges. The EEF's implementation guidance supports this approach.

Logic model approach example



Case studies

East Sussex teachers and leaders are showing that educational disadvantage *can* be tackled by adopting the key principles seen throughout these thoughtful case studies.

Sandown Primary School, Hastings

538 pupils on roll. 43.5% of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium. 3% speak English as an additional language.

Sandown Primary School achieves consistently strong outcomes for pupils, some of whom face exceptionally challenging circumstances. This is achieved through the recruitment, retention and development of expert staff in all roles, not just those in the classroom. This is underpinned by a set of values shared by all: 'do what is right, not what is easy'. This is a thread that runs through the schools' Pupil Premium strategy.

Strategies include:

- Zero use of supply – with quality and inconsistency of relationships potentially damaging for the most vulnerable. This is done through an expert HLTAs team who are supported and monitored
- 'Growing our own' teachers at the school, with HLTAs being a pathway to teaching
- A focus on wellbeing for pupils and staff: everyone 'finding their place'
- Constant reflection and quality assurance
- Pupils taking responsibility
- Relationships with families
- High expectations

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is reducing slightly over time. There are a number of factors at play. The school is increasingly popular with all families for its excellent outcomes but wider social policies such as Universal Credit have impacted, as have Universal Free School Meals. School leaders also acknowledge that some of the most vulnerable families are those on low incomes who are time poor but not eligible for Pupil Premium: 'time stress is an issue'. Free School Meals eligibility over time, and involvement with social care, also create challenges for pupils.

The school's Pupil Premium strategy is underpinned by a highly skilled, highly experienced and impressive family support / attendance officer. This role combines a forensic approach to data, resilience in the role, a consistency of approach, high expectations, good relationships and close relationships with teachers. The ambition for supporting families is high – providing support and challenge for them to make their lives better, so that the work of the school is on more solid foundations at home. This is supported by a leadership team that prizes and involves themselves in the success of the role. The outcomes are impressive. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been at 97% since 2018. This facilitates better teaching for all. This is achieved through:

- An expert, well trained member of staff
- A commitment to inclusion for all
- Having both difficult and positive conversations when appropriate, using judgement
- Knowing pupils and families as individuals
- Visibility
- Teamwork

Staff work together as part of a collective effort to tackle disadvantage: 'Everyone needs a champion. It can't just be an afterthought. This is not just a job. You have to believe in social change. We value each other. We challenge each other. We do what's right.'

One of the major challenges that pupils face is their perception that 'success doesn't belong to them'. Teachers challenge the idea that achievement does not happen by chance, but through hard work. Teachers use metacognitive language in the classroom to tackle this issue: 'We know how to do this because... we learnt these strategies...'. There is a relentless focus on creating successful learners who can overcome difficult problems and tasks. They are encouraged to own their learning and regulate their emotions.

Whilst relationships underpin everything, structure and quality assurance are critical too: 'We care about all pupils, not just those in Year 6.' The school's Pupil Premium strategy focusses on excellence for all.

School leaders are transparent and relentless in their quest for excellence for all but recognise that 'nurturing everyone' is fundamental too. A culture of constant improvement is underpinned by the no supply policy and ongoing quality assurance of teaching across all subjects and phases. This is given the highest priority. The vulnerability in the community means that teachers and teaching assistants need to be expert practitioners. The Pupil Premium strategy and the school improvement strategy are intertwined.

Netherfield Church of England Primary School, Battle

137 pupils on roll. 13% of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium. 1% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Whilst the local community served by the school is relatively affluent, a proportion of families are vulnerable and facing some challenging circumstances. Mobility, social isolation, in-school admissions, social and emotional vulnerabilities and insecure relationships impact on pupils in the classroom.

The focus on excellent teaching and learning is relentless for school leaders. Skilled staff are a priority. Challenges pupils face are tackled primarily in the classroom, with very few formal interventions taking place: 'Too often, interventions are looking for pupils, rather than strategies that are personal to individual need... there is often an opportunity cost which is ignored when pupils are in interventions. They miss out on language opportunities. We want to avoid doing things that are easy to evidence that don't make a difference'.

The school also takes a view that high expectations should be for all and all teachers and support staff are expected to have that mindset: 'Our focus is on any pupil at risk of underachievement, whatever their attainment. It's not about who is pupil premium. All deserve better. We can always do better. Children who are working towards the higher standard also have gaps. If we have any other mindset, we can set limits on what pupils can achieve.'

Implementation is a priority: 'Our resources go into people... There is limited turnover of staff. Professional development and investment in all teaching, learning and support staff is a strong theme. We want adults to have good relationships with pupils, but also with other adults. We want to create a culture where we all take responsibility, where everyone buys in'. Part of the process of achieving this has been to raise the confidence of support staff. This has been done through formal professional development, informal discussions and supporting staff to get involved and try things out.

A positive school culture has been key to this: 'We don't expect adults to get it right all the time... but we don't avoid any difficult conversations. This builds confidence in a collective effort to get better'. A similar approach is taken with teachers: 'We get better at teaching through high expectations. We are hands on. We acknowledge that people may feel vulnerable. Asking for or receiving help is not seen as a weakness. It's part of a restlessness to do better for all, irrespective of background or prior experiences. We strive to get it right; for staff, for pupils.'

One of the challenges faced by the school is the lack of trust from families during in-year admissions, based on prior experiences and isolation in the community. This is tackled through relationships: 'We work to bring parents and families on board. Not through any particular programme, but through listening. This doesn't mean we don't have difficult conversations. We just use our resources to get to know them... to get to know the child. There is no judgement. We'll sort it.'

School leaders believe that quick fixes have hampered the impact of the Pupil Premium across the system: 'Everyone needs to understand that these things take time. We need a common understanding about this, and to stop giving inconsistent messages, particularly when schools are finding things difficult.'

St Pancras Catholic Primary School, Lewes

137 pupils on roll. 22% of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium. 13% speak English as an additional language.

Whilst the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is just below the national average, there are significant variations in the level of disadvantage in different year groups. This means that the school must take a long-term approach and respond to need, not just repeat the strategy year on year. Recent years have seen a cultural shift at the school. There are raised expectations of academic attainment and teachers recognising that life chances and life choices come from achieving academically. Everyone is expected to be on board. All staff are keen to emphasise that this shift takes time. Cultural change is embedded over time, not just through one event, and sometimes that change is uncomfortable.

This is coupled with an ongoing commitment to pupils' pastoral needs: 'If they are hungry, we'll feed them. We need to have them in class, learning.'

Pupil Premium is used to support pupils in the classroom and in academic and pastoral interventions:

- Family liaison officer
- Evidence based interventions such as '1st Class @ number'
- Smaller group sessions for target subjects

Staff work imaginatively to build relationships with pupils as a foundation for learning: 'It's all about finding a spark... finding out about pupils' interests. Not because they should be limited to those interests, but so they know you care. It's about building relationships.' In the longer term, teachers and leaders are clear that the focus needs to be about creating more effective learners – self regulated learning is a key theme: 'Pupils need to feel like success in learning is in their grasp... Pupils need to better understand that success is not defined by extrinsic rewards, but through hard work. They shouldn't be reliant on the affirmation of others'. This is having an impact. The language for learning is strong: 'If you are struggling... you have to use some extra brain cells. You need time to think. You have to keep trying and ask questions if you don't understand. Our teachers give us strategies, not answers, when we find things hard'.

The school works to ensure pupils feel a sense of belonging and responsibility for their local community, with a series of outward facing initiatives such as a project on climate change. Disadvantaged pupils are at the forefront of these efforts. School leaders and teachers expressed the importance of disadvantaged pupils 'feeling like they have a voice... some influence over what is happening in the world around them'.

The wellbeing of staff is also a key strand of the school's strategy. Implementation of efforts to tackle disadvantage are based on a collective responsibility, with everyone playing their roles.

Manor Primary School, Uckfield

411 pupils on roll. 13.6% of pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium. 5.6% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school takes a holistic approach to tackling disadvantage:

- Pastoral support
- Positive relationships
- Focus on reading
- Inclusive teaching
- Wider curriculum
- Raising aspirations

Disadvantaged pupils at the school attain well. Every disadvantaged and vulnerable pupil at the school has a champion. Every member of staff is a champion for those pupils.

Pupil Premium champions focus on the following:

- Engagement
- Nurture
- Academic intervention
- Pastoral intervention

This support is offered to all disadvantaged pupils, irrespective of prior attainment, but it is not exclusive to those who are 'Pupil Premium'. Other vulnerable pupils are included too. Labels are not the driver.

Every child is met weekly. They are given 20 minutes of personal time for conversation, for discussion. The thinking behind the approach is that every pupil, and particularly the most vulnerable, needs someone who understands how they think. Every pupil has an advocate for them, beyond their teacher. Every Pupil Premium champion has been trained in precision teaching. The team is ably and passionately led by the Deputy Headteacher, who organises additional training and development where necessary.

Some pupils are also given additional reading time with staff. Sometimes this will involve the pupil reading aloud. Sometimes the adult will read to the pupil. All staff are expected to participate in this approach: Senior leaders, administrative staff, caretaker, teachers and the Chair of Governors. There is a whole school approach where everyone takes responsibility. Reading support, Pupil Premium Champions and teachers work closely together.

Teachers focus on inclusion in the classroom, through tackling the language gap experienced by some disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, with a clear progression model for language development from Reception to Year 6. Teachers are also building on their understanding of neuroplasticity, and not rushing through content, giving pupils opportunities to embed their learning. Teacher – pupil relationships are prioritised. No external supply is used.

There is also a focus on ensuring pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at the school. Pupils are encouraged to participate in after school or lunchtime clubs. Pupil Premium champions look to find an interest the pupils have and encourage them to pursue those interests (e.g. singing lessons). Other opportunities in the informal curriculum, such as careers opportunities, use role models that all pupils can relate to. Critically, relationships and achievement in learning come before efforts to raise future aspirations.

Staff are encouraged to facilitate better social interaction for disadvantaged pupils. They look to build confidence and independence. They look to 'improve the learner' as part of the Pupil Premium strategy.

Every member of staff is expected to be a Pupil Premium champion. From nurture provision to relationships to teaching and learning to careers opportunities, the school looks to create choice and opportunity for all.

Stone Cross Primary School, Pevensey

424 Pupils on roll. 15% of pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium. 1% speak English as an additional language.

The appointment of a relatively new senior leadership team has coincided with an increase in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils, and the complexities of the challenges pupils face. Needs analysis has identified increasing levels of social and emotional needs, disproportionately impacting on disadvantaged pupils.

School leaders have prioritised:

- Nurture provision to support the most vulnerable, so they are in a position to access whole class teaching.
- Work on school culture, ensuring that all staff were 'up for the challenge'.
- Invest in the wellbeing of staff (whilst not shying away from the fact that 'we are here to do a job').
- Frequent, regular staff training, focussed on the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.
- Working in a collaborative partnership with other schools to adopt the principles of the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants approach. In particular, ensuring that all pupils are independent in their learning.

Staff have also been encouraged to work to their strengths. The school has invested in their strengths. A member of support staff who has been committed and passionate about better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has worked with the whole support staff team, including midday supervisors. This is to help them better understand pupil need, to support them with pupils' emotional vulnerability, so they are 'always ready' to be in class. The LA lead on nurture provision is also working with the school to ensure the offer is of the highest quality. The focus is always on ensuring pupils can access learning.

There is a strong focus on teacher development, using the Lesson Study model, focussing on Assessment for Learning and disadvantaged pupils' gaps in learning. They are also being supported to work with an external consultant to develop their teaching of rich texts.

An additional teacher is employed to work alongside class teachers to intervene in gaps in learning, or to release the class teacher to work with pupils who need additional support.

The strategy is founded on:

- Quality of pastoral care and the foundations for learning being in place
- Everyone taking responsibility
- Commitment to pupils
- Secure relationships with families
- Ongoing high quality professional development, investing in people, focussed on pupils
- Giving pupils opportunities: 'opening their eyes to possibility'

Dos and Don'ts of Pupil Premium

Do

- See Pupil Premium as an opportunity for pupils, rather than an accountability burden to be shouldered
- Ensure that all staff have a clear understanding and ownership of the school's Pupil Premium strategy
- Ensure that teachers feel empowered by the strategy
- Be driven by pupil need, identified through multiple sources, not labels
- Consider how to negate the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on learning, rather than overly focusing on external factors
- Focus on achievement in the classroom
- Focus on improving inclusive teaching practices
- Use the EEF's 'Family of Schools' database to benchmark against contextually similar schools
- Evaluate whether strategies are successful, not try to prove they are. Adapt and change over time
- Involve governors in the development of an evaluation framework at the start of any programme.

Don't

- Focus on superficial labels
- Isolate disadvantaged pupils unintentionally
- Use negative language about pupils and families in your Pupil Premium strategy
- Try to tackle self-esteem or aspirations without success in the classroom
- Rely on interventions to meet accountability targets
- Prioritise intervention over teaching
- Prioritise accountability to external bodies over accountability to pupils
- Make assumptions about disadvantaged pupils, from language comprehension skills to aspirations
- Assume that training equates to impact
- Focus on strategies that are the most easily measurable
- Focus on strategies that are easy to evidence that they have been 'done'
- Try to tackle issues that are not in the school's influence
- Use research evidence superficially, to justify decisions already taken
- Try to prove that your strategy has been successful retrospectively, or rely on a single source of data to evidence success

Marc Rowland, March 2020

Research evidence

Low income and cognitive development in the UK (Sutton Trust):

https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Sutton_Trust_Cognitive_Report-2.pdf

Using evidence to improve attendance (NFER 2019) <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/being-present-the-power-of-attendance-and-stability-for-disadvantaged-pupils/>

Teachers' belief that maths requires innate ability predicts lower intrinsic motivation among low-achieving students (ScienceDirect)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959475218307199>

The Matthew Effect: What Is It and How Can You Avoid It in Your Classroom? (informEd)

<https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/the-matthew-effect-what-is-it-and-how-can-you-avoid-it-in-your-classroom/>

EEF Implementation guidance: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/a-schools-guide-to-implementation/>

EEF: Collaborative learning <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/collaborative-learning/>

EEF: Parental Involvement guidance

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/working-with-parents-to-support-childrens-learning/>

EEF: Metacognition and self-regulated learning

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Support/Publications/Metacognition/EEF_Metacognition_and_self-regulated_learning.pdf

Robert Coe: Improving education

<http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf>

Debbie Salmon, Marc Rowland, Jonathan Bell: Improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners in opportunity areas <https://marcrowland.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/oldham-and-derby-report.pdf>

Marc Rowland and Katharine Bruce: Achievement unlocked in North Yorkshire

<https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/sites/default/files/School%20improvement/2017%2018%20Achievement%20Unlocked%20Summary%20Update%20Report%2025.6.18.pdf>

RSA: Between the cracks <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/between-the-cracks>

EEF: Guide to the Pupil Premium <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/pupil-premium-guide/>

NFER: Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/supporting-the-attainment-of-disadvantaged-pupils-articulating-success-and-good-practice/>

Where to go for help

Durrington Research School, Durrington on Sea: <https://researchschool.org.uk/durrington/>

East Sussex Local Authority Excellence for all:
<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/5654/excellence-for-all-2019-to-2021.pdf>

Methodology

A number of school leaders were invited to participate in the research based on a range of performance measures and contextual factors, including:

- Performance of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 over time
- Performance of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 over time
- The attendance of pupils at the school
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language at the school
- The location of the school
- The number of pupils on roll

These performance measures and contextual factors also informed website strategy reviews.

Activities included:

- A meeting with Primary Headteachers
- A meeting with Secondary Headteachers
- Two meetings with senior Local Authority staff
- School visits, including classroom visits and teacher, staff and pupil interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Website analysis of websites of schools with higher attainment for disadvantaged pupils
- Website analysis of websites of schools with lower attainment for disadvantaged pupils
- Data analysis
- Further consultation with senior local authority staff for input.

The review also draws on evidence from England-wide school visits and research programmes on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Limitations

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. The first is the size of the sample. The second limitation is the time and resources available for the study. The third is that schools that were visited were, once filtered, self-selecting. It is also subject to biases of opinion from the author based on prior experiences. As a result, it should be interpreted with caution and these limitations should be borne in mind.

Author

Marc Rowland is currently the adviser for improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners for the Unity Schools Partnership in Suffolk and across the national Research Schools Network. He was formerly head of the Research School at Rosendale Primary School in Lambeth.

Marc has also worked with the Department for Education, Jersey government, North Yorkshire, Essex, Sheffield, Hampshire, Suffolk, Swindon, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, Stoke on Trent and a number of other LAs, other agencies and numerous Multi Academy Trusts on long term projects to support better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

He has published two award winning books, 'An Updated Practical Guide to the Pupil Premium' in December 2015 and 'Learning without Labels' in 2017.