



Aylsham High School

Pupil premium

What is pupil premium funding?

Studies have shown that the attainment gap between children eligible for pupil premium funding and non-pupil premium students is much larger in England than in nearly all other countries - and it becomes wider as they get older. The government has made available pupil premium funding to schools to try to diminish these differences. The funding is allocated to schools based on the number of students who are recorded as:

- eligible for free school meals in the last six years or
- looked after continuously for one day or more or
- have left care through adoption or another formal route

Pupil premium funding at Aylsham High School

At Aylsham High School it is really important that we use the pupil premium funding that we receive to diminish the difference. We aim to raise the attainment and progress of pupil premium students so that their performance compares favourably with other students nationally and we will endeavour to address inequalities in education of students from low-income families with the aim of raising the attainment of these students.

We have been researching how other schools have used their funding and how they have achieved the greatest impact.

Having given a great deal of consideration to how best to use this funding, it is really important that all of our staff have a greater understanding of the different reasons why the students in this category may not currently achieve as highly as other students. Following the review of student outcomes at Aylsham High School the following areas were identified as barriers to learning:

- joining Aylsham High School at a point later than year 7
- low attendance
- limited parental support
- low level of attainment on entry
- length of time in receipt of pupil premium

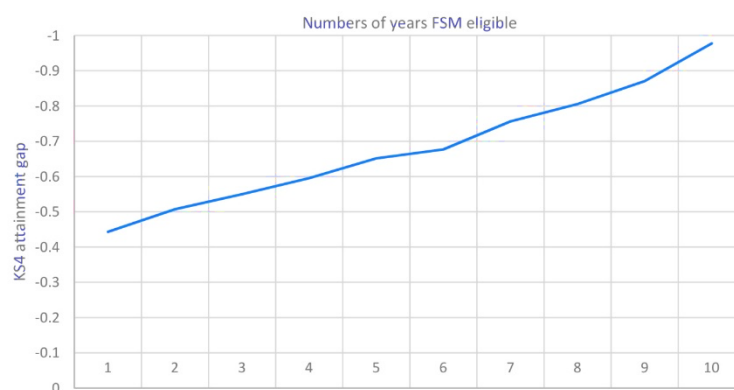
The impact of Covid has also highlighted additional barriers faced by disadvantaged or vulnerable learners. These include:

- access to resources and hardware to support learning at home
- impact on schooling caused by social emotional and mental health issues.

Our intervention strategy for ‘diminishing the difference’ includes a number of strategies and we will review the impact of these at key points during the year.

Pupil premium challenges and points to consider

- Students within the pupil premium group do not all have the same needs and therefore targeting this group with set approaches or interventions would be inappropriate. A one size fits all approach is ineffective.
- At the time that the pupil premium was introduced, research by Hobbs and Vignoles showed that a large proportion of free school meal eligible children (between 50% and 75%) were not in the lowest income households. One reason for this is that the very act of receiving the means-tested benefits and tax credits that in turn entitle the child to free school meals raises their household income above the ‘working poor’. This means that interventions targeted solely at pupil premium students would exclude other vulnerable learners from this support.
- Changes in economic circumstances mean that the pupil premium cohort can vary year on year. Again if pupil premium targeted interventions were used students would move in and out of the groups accessing this support which would reduce the impact of the intervention. However the student’s level of need will continue.
- Stephen Gorard’s research, the difficulties of judging what difference the pupil premium has made to school intakes and outcomes in England, has shown that the impact of FSM on a child’s attainment and progress increases based on the number of years a child has been in receipt of FSM. All groups of students ever eligible for FSM for any amount of time have negative progress scores, and these are substantially lower for every year that a student is known to be eligible’. The majority of students within the AHS pupil premium cohort are students that have been eligible for pupil premium for greater than two years.



Comparison of attainment gap by years of FSM, England, KS4 capped points 2015.

- Gorard's paper also suggests that the DfE advice to schools, in that they should compare their disadvantaged students' performance against the national average for non-disadvantaged students, would lead to misrepresentations.
- Dr Becky Allen has suggested that research does not provide a strong link between money spent and increased attainment. A possible reason for this is that targeting generic interventions at groups that contains groups with widely varying needs.
- Prioritising teacher development with the aim of improving teaching and learning within the classroom has been to have the greatest impact on the attainment of students.
- The EFF attainment gap report 2017 identifies what happens in the classroom as making the biggest difference to student learning especially for pupil premium students. High quality teaching has a positive impact on all students but especially disadvantaged students (*Rivkin et al, teachers, schools and academic achievement, 2005*). Implementing effective whole school strategies that developing the quality of teaching is therefore an important aspect.
- Graham Hobbs found that only 7% of social class differences in educational achievement can be accounted for by differences in the effectiveness of schools attended. A child's home life heavily influences attainment.
- Kris Boulton suggests that a child's ability should be viewed as something that determines their sensitivity to methods of instruction. Therefore, to be effective, teachers need to engage students through the appropriate use of instructional method.

Pupil premium strategies at Aylsham High School

In order to achieve our aims of improving outcomes for pupil premium students, we will continue to strive to ensure that outstanding teaching and learning is a consistent and relentless focus. This is paramount to the progress of all of our students and through this, we will be well placed to further improve outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Rather than simply use the pupil premium label to target pupil premium students with generic interventions, we will endeavour to identify students by their educational need. This is a more effective way to approach the work of improving student outcomes. This will allow teachers to look beyond the pupil premium label so that they can address a student's barriers to learning and cognitive learning needs. Research in to the neuroscience of socio-economic status is a new but rapidly growing field. Differences, based on a student's socio-economic status, have been consistently observed for working memory, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility and attention (*Daniel Hackman et al, socioeconomic status and executive function*). Teachers will focus on effective classroom practice to address these areas and will need to use instructional methods that give students the best possible chances of success given these variations in cognitive function.

Classroom teachers focus on:

- supporting students to develop a strong recall of a subject's core knowledge
- regular deliberate practice of the application of core knowledge by the setting of high quality homework
- reviewing subject curriculum so that they are challenging and focus on developing the appropriate key knowledge
- the assessment and feedback of key pieces of work completed by students

- the quality of teacher explanations, lesson activities and resources
- communicating concerns around student progress to families as early as possible to allow for a prompt response

Form tutors are central to this work and focus on:

- creating weekly opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and achievements by completing the weekly sections of their journal
- use of learning conversations to discuss progress with students
- mentor students and implement intervention strategies to remove barriers to learning.
- communicate concerns around student progress to families as early as possible to allow for a prompt response

Conclusion

The pupil premium cohort contains a number of students that face barriers to their learning in terms of their attendance, lower starting points, joining AHS at a point after year 7 and limited parental involvement. Not all students within this group face the same challenges, the group contains students that are as different from each other as they are from non-pupil premium students. This means that a one size fits all approach would be an ineffective way to provide support. There are also other vulnerable learners within the non-pupil premium cohort that would benefit from support that aims to bring equity to education. These vulnerable non-pupil premium students will be included within the strategies implemented and they will be part of the disadvantaged cohort.

Our main focus is to develop the quality of teaching as this has been shown to have the greatest impact on student attainment. This is especially true for disadvantaged students. The attainment figures in the table below show that disadvantaged students at AHS have performed well when compared to all students nationally. Therefore we will continue to make the development of teaching our main priority.

The average attendance figures for pupil premium students during the last academic year was 89.2% compared to 92% for non-disadvantaged. We will continue to work with students and their families to support improvements in this area. It is crucially important that students are in school to work with their teachers.

We will continue our endeavours to increase parental/carer engagement. To maximise the chances of success students need to attend school on a regular basis, complete set homework and learn their core knowledge. Parents and carers play a vital role in these areas. An additional aspect that we will explore to support our engagement with families will be the use of YouTube. We will continue to develop YouTube resources that share materials that can be used by students to support the completion of their homework. These resources can also be used by parents/carers so that they can see how we teach certain topics. This will mean that they can support their child with the completion of homework. We have received positive feedback so far on the videos that have been produced from parents/carers. To provide additional support we will also explore the production of videos for parents/carers who may want to develop their own confidence in certain areas.

Professor Becky Allen concludes that closing the attainment is a difficult challenge and maybe one that schools on their own will not be able to do. We recognise these challenges and appreciate that closing the attainment gaps is a long term process rather than a quick fix. We will continue to endeavour to provide support to our most disadvantaged students and their families with the aim of maintaining educational equity.

Reference material

Education policy. Evidence of equity and effectiveness. Stephen Gorard.

Mapping the trajectory of socioeconomic disparity in working memory: Parental and neighbourhood factors. Hackman et al. 2014

Executive function as a mediator between SES and academic achievement throughout childhood. Lawson and Farah. 2016

What is executive function? 3 key executive skills explained. The understood team. 2018

The difficulties of judging what difference the pupil premium has made to school intakes and outcomes in England. Stephen Gorard et al, 2019.

The following blogs have been produced by Professor Rebecca Allen and they discuss further the challenges that schools face in addressing attainment gaps.

The pupil premium is not working (part I): Do not measure attainment gaps.
<https://rebeccaallen.co.uk/2018/09/10/the-pupil-premium-is-not-working/>

The pupil premium is not working (part II): Reporting requirements drive short-term, interventionist behaviour
<https://rebeccaallen.co.uk/2018/09/11/the-pupil-premium-is-not-working-part-ii/>

The pupil premium is not working (part III): Can within-classroom inequalities ever be closed?
<https://rebeccaallen.co.uk/2018/09/13/the-pupil-premium-is-not-working-part-iii/>