

Appendix 6 Sutton Trust Recommendations for use of Pupil Premium 2015

□ Continued support for the pupil premium, to improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils.

The pupil premium should remain as a key lever to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Its success will depend on the degree to which it is spent effectively. This means schools working together more to maximise impact and build capacity, and a sustained effort by the Department for Education, Ofsted and others to make a genuine improvement in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, with appropriate accountability.

□ Continue paying the pupil premium on the basis of disadvantage, not prior attainment.

It is important that the premium is paid for all disadvantaged pupils, without discrimination between low and high attainers. Doing otherwise - as some have suggested - would be bad for social mobility. It would also send perverse signals to successful schools. Recent Sutton Trust research has shown that disadvantaged but bright pupils fall behind at school, and it is important that schools use their premium funding where appropriate to provide stretching lessons for able disadvantaged pupils as well as helping low attainers to make good progress. This is also particularly important in improving later access to higher education.

□ A strong commitment to the promotion of rigorous evidence, particularly where it has been tested in randomised control trials.

Evidence is a crucial tool which schools should use to inform their decision making and ensure that they identify the “best bets” for spending, but it must be acted upon. The EEF’s own qualitative research is consistent with this view. Even where money is spent on strategies which research shows have not always been effective, evidence can help schools identify steps which make success more likely. A good example is the way in which the EEF has evolved its evidence on the use of teaching assistants to show how they can make a difference with the right structures.¹ Ofsted should consider a schools’ use of evidence in their inspections and schools should be supported to evaluate approaches themselves. As we move towards a more school-led system, opportunities to build capacity on the effective use of evidence between schools and across trusts should be encouraged and recognised.

□ Improved teacher training and professional development so that all school leaders and classroom teachers understand how to use data and research effectively.

Questions in the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Teacher Omnibus Survey for the Sutton Trust showed that only 4 per cent of teachers would spend the money first on improving feedback between teachers and pupils, a relatively inexpensive measure that could add eight months to pupils’ learning. Research shows that improving feedback can be a highly effective way to improve teacher development. And only 1 per cent would use peer-to-peer tutoring schemes, where older pupils typically help younger pupils to learn, an equally cost-effective measure to deliver substantial learning gains. Of course, any such

measure requires effective implementation, but it is important that schools consider cost effectiveness where it can enable their premium funding to go further. Resources such as the Teaching and Learning Toolkit provide a good entry point to research, but more could be done through initial teacher training and professional development to equip teachers with the skills needed to engage with education research and to foster an understanding of the ways in which research can be used.

□ **More effective systems to allow schools to identify pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.**

Schools are currently reliant on individual parents to apply for free school meals for their child, which means that schools only receive pupil premium funding for those pupils if their parents have been pro-active. The Government should consider introducing a data sharing system so that schools are automatically informed when pupils are entitled to free school meals and, therefore, pupil premium funding.

□ **Extension of pupil premium awards so that schools that successfully and consistently improve results for all while narrowing the attainment gap are properly rewarded.**

Government should also consider linking some of the pupil premium systematically to school rewards, so that schools that successfully and consistently improve results for all while narrowing the attainment gap are properly recognised. The Pupil Premium Awards scheme is a welcome initiative, and it has rewarded over 600 schools this year, but consideration should be given to making this more systematic in future so successful schools are automatically rewarded. The opportunities to innovate that exist in a system with increasing autonomy increase the importance of doing this. In particular, schools should be rewarded for evaluating innovation robustly. In addition, where new school networks and structures exist these should be designed in such a way that increases the spread of knowledge to other schools, so that greater autonomy does not lead to increased isolation, and the pupil premium could help facilitate shared innovations that improve standards for disadvantaged pupils.