

Pupil Premium Strategy Report: Technical Appendix



North East Combined Authority Pupil Premium Strategies
Primary Schools
2024–2025

Dr Wayne Harrison, Rahil Khowaja, Dr Emma Dobson, Prof Steve Higgins

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Pupil Premium Strategy Report: Technical Appendix

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Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of how primary schools across the North East of England Combined Authority use their Pupil Premium funding, based on 552 complete and published strategy statements for the 2024 to 25 academic year. The study examines how schools identify challenges, report the use of evidence-informed approaches and align their spending with the Education Endowment Foundation's tiered model and the Department for Education's statutory guidance.

The analysis shows areas of strong practice across the region. Of the 552 Pupil Premium strategy statements included in the analysis, 94 per cent explicitly referenced evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), demonstrating widespread engagement with the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit. While a further group of schools could not be included because their statements were missing or out of date at the time of review, the available evidence shows that schools commonly selected strategies that aligned closely with the challenges they identified, particularly in literacy, attendance and social, emotional and mental health. The gap maps also showed very limited use of low-impact approaches. Taken together, these findings indicate that the majority of schools are engaging seriously with the evidence base and are generally avoiding strategies known to have limited benefit for disadvantaged pupils.

Across the region, schools reported using an average of two of the five high impact Education Endowment Foundation strategies. The most commonly used high impact approaches were oral language interventions, reading comprehension strategies and structured feedback. However, the overall adoption of some of the highest value strategies was limited. Peer tutoring was used by only 2.4 per cent of schools across the North East Combined Authority area, and metacognition and self regulation by only 26.4 per cent. Feedback, although used more widely, appeared in only 43.7 per cent of statements. These findings suggest that schools are engaging with evidence but are not yet fully drawing on the highest impact approaches available to them.

The study also identified areas where further improvement would strengthen Pupil Premium practice. More than one hundred schools were excluded from the sample because their Pupil Premium statements were missing or out of date, which highlights the need for clearer support around the statutory requirement to publish an updated statement each year. Among the statements that were available, many reproduced generic Education Endowment Foundation text without explaining how selected strategies would be implemented in their specific school context, which reduced the clarity and evaluative value of the statements.

Schools across the region consistently reported literacy, attendance and social, emotional and mental health as major challenges. These patterns closely mirror national findings from the Education Endowment Foundation’s Pupil Premium research (EEF, 2025) and were particularly pronounced in the most deprived communities. Mathematics was also reported as a challenge by a notable number of schools. This may suggest that some pupils achieve the expected standard at Key Stage 2 without secure foundational understanding, which may help explain the region’s weaker outcomes in mathematics at Key Stage 4.

The report concludes that while primary schools across the North East show strong engagement with evidence informed practice, there is considerable potential to strengthen the specificity, quality and impact of Pupil Premium strategies. Key recommendations include supporting schools to meet statutory publication requirements, improving the contextual use of Education Endowment Foundation evidence and encouraging wider adoption of high impact strategies informed by robust diagnostic assessment. Strengthening these areas will help ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used effectively and that schools across the region can continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.



Introduction

Educational inequality continues to present a significant challenge in the North East of England, where socioeconomic disadvantage remains consistently higher than national averages and where disadvantaged pupils experience persistent gaps in attainment, attendance and wellbeing (North East Combined Authority 2025a). The Pupil Premium remains one of the most substantial policy mechanisms available to schools for addressing these inequalities by funding targeted, evidence-informed activity. The updated Department for Education guidance *Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders* (Department for Education 2025) and the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) 2025 updates to their *Guide to the Pupil Premium* emphasise not only the importance of high-quality teaching and diagnostic assessment, but also the need for schools to articulate clear, coherent, and evaluable strategies that align with the latest research evidence.

This emphasis aligns closely with the revised Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) for use from November 2025, which places considerably stronger focus on inclusion, equity and the extent to which schools ensure that disadvantaged pupils *belong, achieve and thrive* (Ofsted 2025a). Under the EIF 2025, inspectors draw directly on a school's published Pupil Premium strategy during pre-inspection preparation, using it to understand need identification, the rationale for chosen interventions and the coherence of strategic intent (Ofsted 2025b). The Pupil Premium statement therefore functions not only as an accountability document, but as a central evidential source demonstrating how schools diagnose barriers, align provision with pupil need, and evaluate the impact of funded activity.

Despite the strategic significance of the Pupil Premium within both national accountability frameworks and regional priorities, there has been no comprehensive analysis of how primary schools across the North East Combined Authority region diagnose need, select evidence-informed approaches or align their strategies with the EEF tiered model and the statutory DfE menu of approaches. This evidence gap limits the ability of local authorities, multi-academy trusts and North East Combined Authority partners to coordinate support, identify strengths and inconsistencies, and build a more regionally coherent approach to tackling educational disadvantage.



This study addresses that gap. It aligns with North East Combined Authority Excellence in Education Programme, which underscores the importance of high-quality teaching, early literacy, enrichment access and targeted academic support (North East Combined Authority 2025b), as well as with the North East Child Poverty Action Plan, which seeks to remove structural barriers to opportunity (North East Combined Authority 2025a). Through systematic analysis of Pupil Premium strategy statements across deprivation bands, this research provides the first region-wide insight into how schools conceptualise disadvantage, prioritise evidence-informed interventions and respond to local patterns of need. The findings aim to strengthen regional practice, support school improvement partners and enhance alignment with the expectations of the latest national guidance and inspection frameworks.

Background

The Pupil Premium provides additional funding to state-funded schools in England with the aim of improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils aged five to sixteen. Its purpose reflects longstanding evidence that socioeconomic disadvantage is one of the strongest predictors of educational attainment and that schools require targeted, well-designed and well-implemented provision to mitigate these barriers (Department for Education 2025; Education Endowment Foundation 2025). The 2025 DfE guidance formalises this by requiring all Pupil Premium activity to align with a prescribed menu of approaches structured around the EEF's tiered model of (1) high-quality teaching, (2) targeted academic support and (3) wider strategies (Department for Education 2025).

National data show that although the disadvantage gap narrowed between 2011 and 2018, the pandemic reversed much of this progress, and outcomes remain similar to those recorded a decade earlier (Department for Education 2025). Early language, communication and literacy are critical drivers of this gap, with approximately 40 per cent of disadvantage-related disparities evident by the time pupils enter primary school (Education Endowment Foundation 2024).

Consequently, the EEF's 2025 Pupil Premium guidance underscores the need for structured early reading provision, validated phonics programmes, and high-quality diagnostic assessment to ensure precise identification of learning gaps. A 2025 national analysis of a representative sample of Pupil Premium statements undertaken by the EEF identified literacy, attendance, and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs as the challenges most frequently cited by primary schools. The report also found that primary schools typically prioritise approaches such as phonics, small-group tuition, targeted academic support, and structured early-language interventions. This is promising as these are approaches with moderate to strong evidence of impact when well implemented.

These challenges are particularly acute in the North East, where socioeconomic disadvantage, limited access to enrichment and rising family hardship contribute to entrenched inequalities (North East Combined Authority, 2025a). Recent Indices of Deprivation data reinforce this picture. The 2025 release shows that the North East has the highest proportion of deprived communities in England, with 21.5% of neighbourhoods classified as deprived. This is more than five times the rate in the South East. 32.1% of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the North East fall within the most deprived decile nationally (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025). Within the North East Combined Authority, County Durham is in the third most deprived decile, with 1% of its LSOAs in the top 1% most deprived and 17% in the top 10% (Durham Insight, 2025). Earlier national analysis by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) and the Local Trust also highlights that the North East contains a significant share of England's most deprived neighbourhoods, with 42 of the 225 most deprived areas located in the region; including 16 in County Durham, followed by areas in Sunderland and Northumberland (OCSI & Local Trust, 2024). This reflects a longstanding concentration of deprivation in parts of the region, where disadvantage is both widespread and spatially concentrated rather than confined to isolated pockets (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025).

Regional policy priorities reflect this context. The North East Combined Authority's *Excellence in Education Programme* focuses on enhancing teaching quality, strengthening early literacy, improving attendance and extending access to cultural and enrichment opportunities (North East Combined Authority, 2025b). Similarly, the *North East Child Poverty Action Plan* emphasises high-quality early intervention, coordinated support for vulnerable families and the importance of equitable access to opportunity.

The revised Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EFI) intensifies the national accountability focus on the needs of disadvantaged pupils (Ofsted, 2025a). The EIF's domain-based evaluation model spans: Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, Personal Development and Wellbeing, and Leadership and Governance, and requires schools to demonstrate how they diagnose barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, how effectively they implement evidence-informed strategies, and how they evaluate impact (Ofsted 2025a). The accompanying School Inspection Toolkit instructs inspectors to review Pupil Premium strategy statements before inspection, using them to understand the coherence and rationale of a school's approach to equity and disadvantage (Ofsted 2025b).



Despite these requirements, no in-depth region-wide analysis has previously examined how North East primary schools identify disadvantage-related needs, align their strategies with the EEF's updated evidence base, or demonstrate compliance with DfE and Ofsted expectations. Recent national-level work, most notably the EEF's analysis of Pupil Premium Statements (Bowen et al., 2025), represents an important advance in understanding schools' reported practices at scale. That study employs an AI-assisted text extraction and coding approach to analyse a large corpus of statements (n = 1,395), enabling substantial gains in coverage and efficiency and offering a valuable descriptive overview of national patterns.

However, the design of the EEF analysis necessarily prioritises breadth over depth and introduces methodological constraints that shape how its findings should be interpreted. A large language model (GPT-4o via Microsoft Azure) is used to populate a structured coding framework, with validation undertaken through human-AI agreement checks on a small calibration sample (n = 20). While this provides an initial indication of coding alignment, the limited size of the validation sample constrains the precision with which coding consistency can be established across a heterogeneous national dataset. Reliability estimates are therefore best understood as indicative rather than definitive. In addition, the iterative refinement of AI prompts following agreement checks, while pragmatic, may tailor model performance to a narrow subset of statements, improving apparent alignment within the calibration sample without guaranteeing equivalent performance across the full corpus. The exclusion of variables that did not meet the predefined agreement threshold further narrows the analytic scope and may systematically under-represent certain categories, as acknowledged in the report itself.

Finally, the EEF analysis treats AI-generated codes as fixed inputs in subsequent statistical summaries, meaning that any residual classification uncertainty is not reflected in reported estimates. As a result, the findings are most appropriately interpreted as descriptive patterns rather than precise estimates of prevalence or comparative effectiveness. Taken together, these design features mean that the EEF study provides a valuable large-scale, exploratory account of Pupil Premium reporting practices, but offers limited insight into how strategies are constructed, adapted, and justified within specific regional and socio-economic contexts.

This study addresses that gap by providing a structured analysis of Pupil Premium strategy statements from North East primary schools, examined across deprivation bands and local authority contexts. By focusing on a region with persistently high levels of disadvantage, the review enables a more granular exploration of how schools conceptualise need, select interventions, and align their strategies with the EEF evidence base in practice. In doing so, it complements existing national analyses while generating regionally grounded insights that inform local policy, support school improvement planning, and shape future evidence-building efforts.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study builds on WhatWorked Education’s proposal to develop a regional evidence base for effective educational practice across the North East Combined Authority area (WhatWorked Education 2025). The purpose of the research is to provide a detailed analysis of how primary schools across the North East use their Pupil Premium funding and how this varies with deprivation.

The study is guided by four research questions.

1. What challenges do North East primary schools identify for pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and how do these challenges vary by levels of deprivation?
2. How does school spending align with the Education Endowment Foundation’s tiered approach of high quality teaching targeted academic support and wider strategies and how does this vary by levels of deprivation?
3. Which approaches from the Education Endowment Foundation’s Teaching and Learning Toolkit are schools funding using the Pupil Premium and how does this vary across deprivation levels?
4. Are high impact evidence informed interventions underused within specific deprivation contexts or in particular localities?

By answering these questions the study provides actionable insights that can support leadership teams, local authorities, multi-academy trusts and North East Combined Authority partners in refining resource allocation, strengthening professional development and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.



Regional Significance

This research has particular value for the region because it aligns directly with the North East Combined Authority's strategic mission to reduce inequalities, improve educational outcomes and ensure that all children benefit from evidence-informed provision. The Excellence in Education Programme emphasises professional development, nurture provision, early literacy, enrichment and targeted support; priorities that closely reflect the types of interventions Pupil Premium funding is intended to support (North East Combined Authority, 2025b). The Child Poverty Action Plan similarly stresses the need for coordinated action across education, health, local government and community organisations to ensure that all children have equitable opportunities to succeed (North East Combined Authority, 2025a).

This study advances that mission by providing the first systematic, region-wide analysis of Pupil Premium use across primary schools, enabling stakeholders to understand patterns of need across deprivation levels, identify strengths and inconsistencies in current strategy implementation and pinpoint opportunities for further training, support or targeted intervention. It offers the most detailed examination to date of how primary schools across the North East allocate and justify their Pupil Premium funding, providing granular insight into the approaches they prioritise, the rationales behind these choices and the extent to which they align with the wider evidence base.

By linking these patterns explicitly to deprivation bands, the study introduces a level of comparative analysis not previously available. This allows policymakers and school leaders to see not only which strategies are used most frequently, but how usage varies between more and less disadvantaged contexts, and whether regional inequalities are reflected in strategic decision-making.

The analysis also strengthens existing landscape work by systematically coding the content of PP statements, enabling consistent comparison across hundreds of schools and generating a dataset that can support longitudinal monitoring. Furthermore, the study contributes to the development of a coherent regional evidence ecosystem by establishing a replicable methodology that can inform future cycles of regional analysis, underpin targeted CPD, and support the design of micro-trials and other school-level evaluation activity.

Together, these contributions move the region from a broad understanding of need toward a precise, evidence-informed picture of practice, enabling more strategic deployment of resources and clearer identification of where additional support or innovation is most required. In doing so, the study directly supports NECA's ambition to ensure that the Pupil Premium is used in ways that maximise its potential to address entrenched inequalities and improve life chances for disadvantaged pupils.



Methods

Study Design

This study is a Secondary Data Analysis of publicly available documents, specifically the Pupil Premium Strategy Statements published by primary schools across the North-East Combined Authority. The design involved systematically collecting, coding and analysing existing secondary data to examine how schools articulate their use of Pupil Premium funding for the 2024-25 academic year. The analysis was comparative in nature, with schools stratified by both local authority and deprivation status. This enabled examination of how school context shapes strategic decision-making in the use of Pupil Premium funding.

Sample and Data Sources

The study included all state-funded primary schools located within the North East Combined Authority region, covering the local authority areas of Sunderland, Newcastle, South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead whose Pupil Premium reports of year 2024/2025 were available on their websites. The aim was to capture a comprehensive regional dataset representing the full range of deprivation contexts across the North East.

School data were downloaded from the Department for Education's Get Information About Schools database, which provided key administrative details including school name, phase, local authority and unique reference number (URN). Using these identifiers, the research team located and downloaded each school's published Pupil Premium Strategy Statement directly from school websites. To analyse variation by deprivation level, socioeconomic data were obtained from the UK Government's Office for National Statistics (ONS) Mapping Income Deprivation at a Local Authority Level dataset (ONS, 2024).

To ensure consistency and comparability, the following inclusion criteria were applied:

1. The school had to be a primary school located within one of the North East Combined Authority local authority areas.
2. A Pupil Premium Strategy Statement for the 2024-25 academic year had to be publicly available on the school website.
3. The published statement had to broadly align with the Department for Education's 2024-25 template, including key sections such as "Challenges", "Intended Outcomes" and "Activity in This Academic Year."

Schools meeting these inclusion and classification criteria were retained in the final dataset. This ensured that the sample represented the full spectrum of deprivation across the North-east and enabled comparison of Pupil Premium strategies between schools serving more and less deprived communities.

All data for this study were collected manually to ensure accuracy and consistency across the sample. A research assistant visited the website of every primary school within the North East Combined Authority region and reviewed each school's *Pupil Premium Strategy Statement*. Where a valid report for the 2024-25 academic year was available, it was downloaded and stored for analysis.

Each school website was checked individually to confirm that the document aligned with the Department for Education's (DfE) 2024-25 template (Appendix A) and included the required sections such as "Challenges," "Intended Outcomes," and "Activity in This Academic Year." If a report was not available or was incomplete, this was recorded in the dataset for transparency.

Through this process, *Pupil Premium Strategy Statements* were successfully collected for 552 primary schools across the seven North East Combined Authority local authority areas: Sunderland, Newcastle, South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead. The data collection was completed between 1st October 2025 and 14th October 2025. All reports were downloaded in PDF or Microsoft Word format and stored in a secure project database for subsequent coding and analysis.

Content Analysis Procedure

Data from individual school reports were entered into EPPI (University College London, EPPI-Centre). Coding and data management were undertaken using EPPI-Reviewer 4, a systematic review software that supports the organisation, coding and synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data. To address the research questions, a structured coding framework was developed to organise and interpret the information extracted from the Pupil Premium Strategy Statements. The framework enabled systematic analysis of key variables relevant to the study. These included local education authority area, level of deprivation, and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* strands, which were categorised by impact rating (high, moderate, low, null, negative, or unclear). Additional variables captured each school's Pupil Premium budget and expenditure, as well as the specific challenges identified for disadvantaged pupils

Deprivation status, challenges, financial information and region information were coded and entered by two researchers, with the dataset divided equally between them.

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Strategy coding and data entry were conducted in three phases. In the first phase, 30 reports were randomly selected and independently coded by two researchers to evaluate initial inter-rater agreement. Each researcher extracted and entered the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) strategies reported by schools. Following completion, coding outputs were compared, and discrepancies were discussed and resolved collaboratively. Any issues that could not be resolved were reviewed in consultation with a third researcher (SH). During this phase, overall agreement between the two researchers was 84%. The lowest levels of agreement were observed for two strategy categories: feedback (46%) and outdoor adventure learning (57%).

In the second phase, an additional 280 reports were reviewed and coded, with each researcher coding 140 reports independently. In the third phase, 42 reports were again coded independently to reassess and confirm inter-rater reliability. Agreement improved to 95%, with the previously low-agreement strategy categories showing substantial improvement, increasing to 92% for feedback and 85% for outdoor adventure learning. Notably, no strategy category demonstrated agreement below 80% in this phase, indicating high reliability between reviewers. In the final phase, the remaining 200 reports were reviewed and coded, with each researcher responsible for 100 reports.



Exploration of AI-Assisted Coding

In the early stages of the project, the researchers explored the potential of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the coding of *Pupil Premium Strategy Statements*, following a similar approach to that used in the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) *Pupil Premium Statement Research (2024/25)*. We tested two large language models, ChatGPT version 4.0 and Claude, to assess their ability to identify and classify content according to the EEF *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* strands and their associated inclusion and exclusion criteria.

However, during pilot testing we found that the AI models were not sufficiently sensitive to contextual information within the school statements. The models frequently misinterpreted narrative descriptions of interventions, often assigning incorrect strand classifications or overlooking key elements where schools used implicit or locally specific language. As a result, the automated coding lacked the precision required to apply the EEF's detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria consistently across strands.

Given these limitations, we concluded that manual coding was necessary to ensure accuracy and reliability. Each Pupil Premium Strategy Statement was therefore reviewed and coded manually by a researcher using the refined EEF framework. This ensured that strand presence, contextual relevance and alignment with evidence-informed practice were captured consistently across the dataset.

Comparative Analytical Methods

To assess whether the use of evidence-informed strategies and their impact ratings varied by region and deprivation status, comparative analysis was conducted. Cross-tabulations were generated to examine the distribution of high-impact and moderate-impact strategies across different regions and the three deprivation categories (Most Deprived, Middle, and Least Deprived), with results reported as frequencies and percentages.

To determine whether differences in strategy use were statistically significant, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess whether the number of high-impact and moderate-impact strategies varied by region and deprivation status. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Challenges reported by schools regarding Pupil Premium implementation were compared across deprivation categories. Five challenges reported by all three deprivation groups were selected for comparative analysis and visualised using a bar graph to examine variation in reported challenges by deprivation status.

Financial analysis compared average budget spending on three categories of strategies (teaching, targeted, and wider strategies) across the three deprivation categories using descriptive statistics and bar graphs. All comparative analyses were conducted using R Studio.

Ethics and Data Management

The research involved secondary analysis of publicly available Pupil Premium statements published on school websites. No participants were directly involved and no personal or sensitive data were collected. Consequently, ethical approval was not required.

As the study relied exclusively on publicly accessible information, formal data protection approval was not required. All activities adhered to the Data Protection Act 2018 and followed Data Protection by Design principles to ensure secure and responsible data handling.

Results

At the time of data collection, a total of 660 primary schools were identified in the North East of England. Of these, 552 schools (83.6 per cent) had a Pupil Premium statement for the 2024 to 25 academic year available on their school website and were included in the analysis. In 12.4 per cent of schools (n = 81), no current statement was available and the documents found related to previous academic years, so these schools were excluded. A further 27 schools were excluded because statements could not be accessed due to broken web links, incorrect policy documents or the inability to locate a Pupil Premium statement on the school website. As a result, the final analytical sample comprised 552 primary schools (Figure 1).

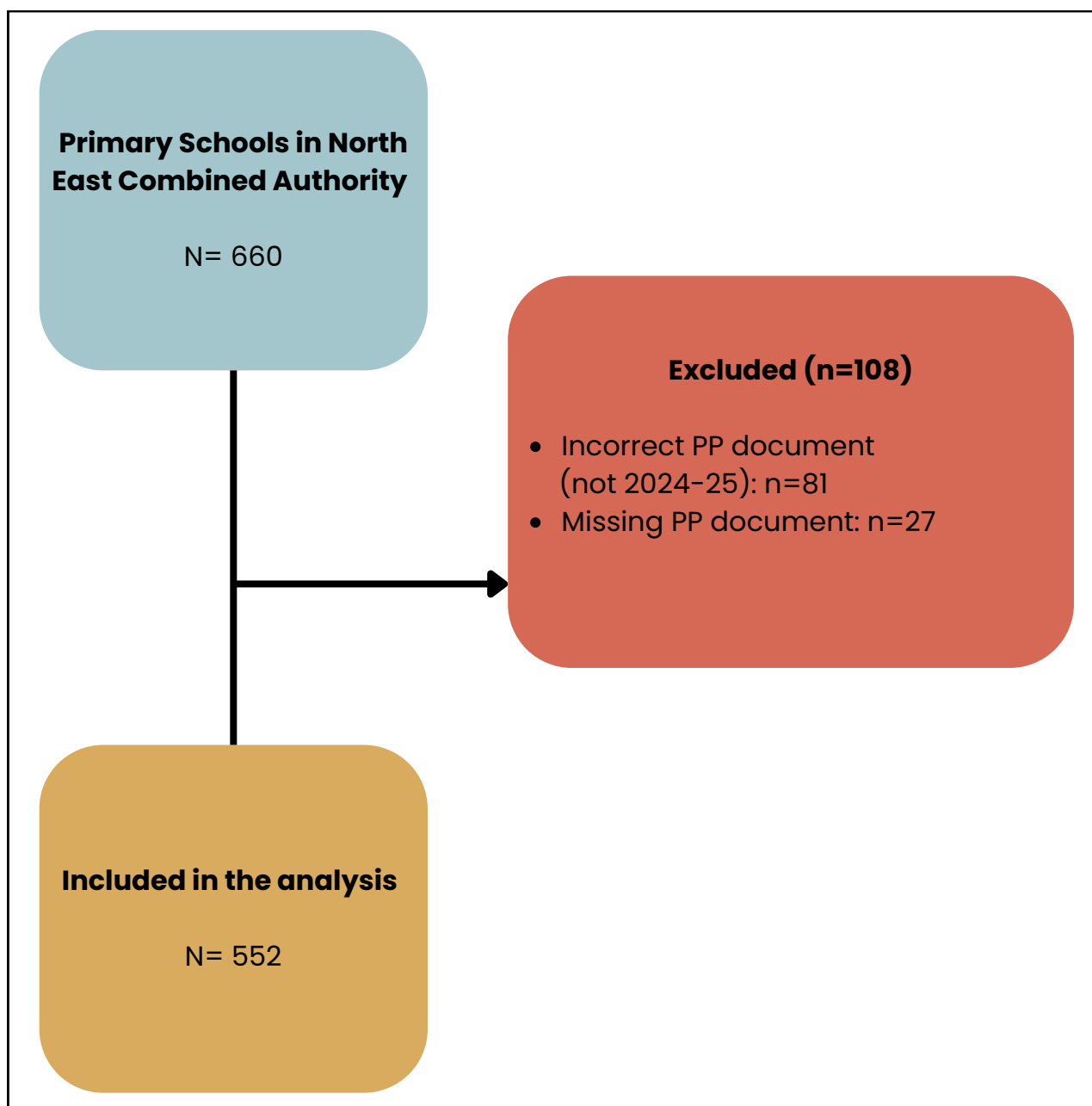


Figure 1 . PRISMA diagram

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the schools included in the analysis. Of these, 31.2% were located in Durham, 17.4% in Northumberland, and 12.1% in Newcastle upon Tyne. In terms of deprivation, 328 schools (59.4%) were located in the most deprived areas, while 24.6% were situated in the least deprived areas.

Characteristic		Number of Schools (%)
Region	Durham	172 (31.2%)
	Gateshead	59 (10.7%)
	Newcastle upon Tyne	67 (12.1%)
	North Tyneside	47 (8.5%)
	Northumberland	96 (17.4%)
	South Tyneside	37 (6.7%)
	Sunderland	74 (13.4%)
Deprivation	Least Deprived	136 (24.6%)
	Middle	88 (15.9%)
	Most Deprived	328 (59.4%)

Table 1: Characteristics of schools



Regional Pupil Premium Strategies

In the pupil premium statement, schools were asked to outline the strategies they employ to support their disadvantaged pupils. Figure 2 (Gap Map) presents an overview of these strategies, categorised into high impact, moderate impact, low impact, and unclear impact. Although the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) identifies additional strand categories, these are not displayed in the Gap Map as no participating schools reported using them.

To view the interactive gap map please visit this [link](#).



Figure 2. Visual presentation of the interactive gap map

Table 2 shows the proportion of schools adopting high-impact strategies for their Pupil Premium pupils. The most frequently used approaches include oral language intervention (60.5%), followed by reading comprehension (51.4%) and feedback (46.6%), while peer tutoring is used by only 2.4% of schools. Across regions, notable variation exists: only 24.3% of schools in South Tyneside report using feedback, the lowest across the region, while reading comprehension is used by 34% of schools in North Tyneside and 36.5% in Northumberland, the lowest adoption rates in the Northeast.

Overall, the number of high-impact strategies used is relatively consistent across the region. Although five high-impact strategies are available within the EEF framework, schools report using an average of approximately two (Table 3). Similarly, there are 14 moderate-impact strategies, yet schools typically adopt around seven (Table 4). The exception is Northumberland, where schools report using an average of six moderate-impact strategies, indicating a lower uptake compared to other areas.

Region	Feedback	Meta-cognition and Self-regulation	Reading Comprehension	Peer Tutoring	Oral Language Intervention
Total	257 (46.6%)	141 (25.54%)	284 (51.5%)	13 (2.4%)	334 (60.5%)
Durham	82 (47.7%)	43 (25%)	105 (61%)	5 (2.9%)	100 (58.1%)
Gateshead	25 (42.4%)	12 (20.3%)	31 (52.5%)	1 (1.7%)	34 (57.6%)
Newcastle upon Tyne	32 (47.8%)	21 (31.3%)	35 (52.2%)	0 (0%)	50 (74.6%)
North Tyneside	28 (59.6%)	13 (27.7%)	16 (34%)	2 (4.3%)	23 (48.9%)
Northumberland	43 (44.8%)	24 (25%)	35 (36.5%)	4 (4.2%)	57 (59.4%)
South Tyneside	9 (24.3%)	10 (27%)	24 (64.9%)	1 (2.7%)	23 (62.2%)
Sunderland	38 (51.4%)	18 (24.3%)	38 (51.4%)	0 (0%)	47 (63.5%)

Table 2: High impact strategies by region

Region	Mean Number of High Impact Strategies (SD)	P-value
Durham	1.95 ± 1.15	0.329
Gateshead	1.75 ± 0.82	
Newcastle upon Tyne	2.06 ± 1.18	
North Tyneside	1.74 ± 1.15	
Northumberland	1.70 ± 1.13	
South Tyneside	1.81 ± 0.97	
Sunderland	1.91 ± 0.95	

Table 3: Number of High impact strategies used by region



Region	Mean Number of Moderate Impact Strategies (SD)	P-value
Durham	6.64 ± 1.81	0.002
Gateshead	6.73 ± 1.80	
Newcastle upon Tyne	6.85 ± 2.18	
North Tyneside	6.68 ± 2.16	
Northumberland	5.71 ± 2.18	
South Tyneside	6.59 ± 1.80	
Sunderland	6.54 ± 1.61	

Table 4: Number of Moderate impact strategies used by region



Pupil Premium Strategies Used by the Deprivation Status

Table 5 presents the proportion of high-impact strategies adopted by schools according to levels of deprivation. Across all high-impact strategies, the most commonly used strategy among schools serving disadvantaged pupils is oral language intervention, ranging from 55.9% among least deprived, 61.4% in middle-deprivation schools, and increasing to 62.2% among the most deprived schools. Reading comprehension shows a similar pattern, used by 50.7% of least deprived schools, 40.9% of middle, and 54.6% of the most deprived schools.

High Impact Strategies	Deprivation		
	Least Deprived	Middle	Most Deprived
Feedback	53 (39.0%)	43 (48.9%)	161 (49.1%)
Meta-cognition and self-regulation	40 (29.4%)	13 (14.8%)	88 (26.8%)
Reading Comprehension	69 (50.7%)	36 (40.9%)	179 (54.6%)
Peer Tutoring	6 (4.4%)	2 (2.3%)	5 (1.5%)
Oral Language Intervention	76 (55.9%)	54 (61.4%)	204 (62.2%)

Table 5: High impact strategies by deprivation



The mean number of high-impact strategies used is similar across the three deprivation groups (Table 6). While five high-impact strategies exist in total, schools are using on average around two strategies irrespective of deprivation, with the difference not reaching statistical significance (Least deprived: 1.79; Middle: 1.68; Most deprived: 1.94, $p = 0.093$).

Similarly, uptake of moderate-impact strategies appears consistent across deprivation levels. Although there are 14 strategies in total, schools report using between six and seven on average. The mean number of moderate-impact strategies ranges from 6.27 in middle deprivation schools to 6.59 in the most deprived, with no significant difference between groups ($p = 0.366$) as shown in table 7. This suggests that level of deprivation has minimal influence on the number of moderate-impact strategies adopted by schools.

Deprivation	Mean Number of High Impact Strategies (SD)	P-value
Least Deprived	1.79 ± 1.05	0.093
Middle	1.68 ± 1.11	
Most Deprived	1.94 ± 1.09	

Table 6: Number of High impact strategies used by deprivation

Deprivation	Mean Number of moderate Impact Strategies (SD)	P-value
Least Deprived	6.43 ± 1.83	0.366
Middle	6.27 ± 2.09	
Most Deprived	6.59 ± 1.97	

Table 7: Number of moderate impact strategies used by deprivation



What challenges do schools identify for pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium?

At the outset of a Pupil Premium statement, schools are required to identify the key barriers to achievement faced by their disadvantaged pupils. The most frequently cited challenges were English/literacy attainment, attendance, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing, limited access to enrichment and cultural opportunities and mathematics/numeracy attainment (Figure 3).

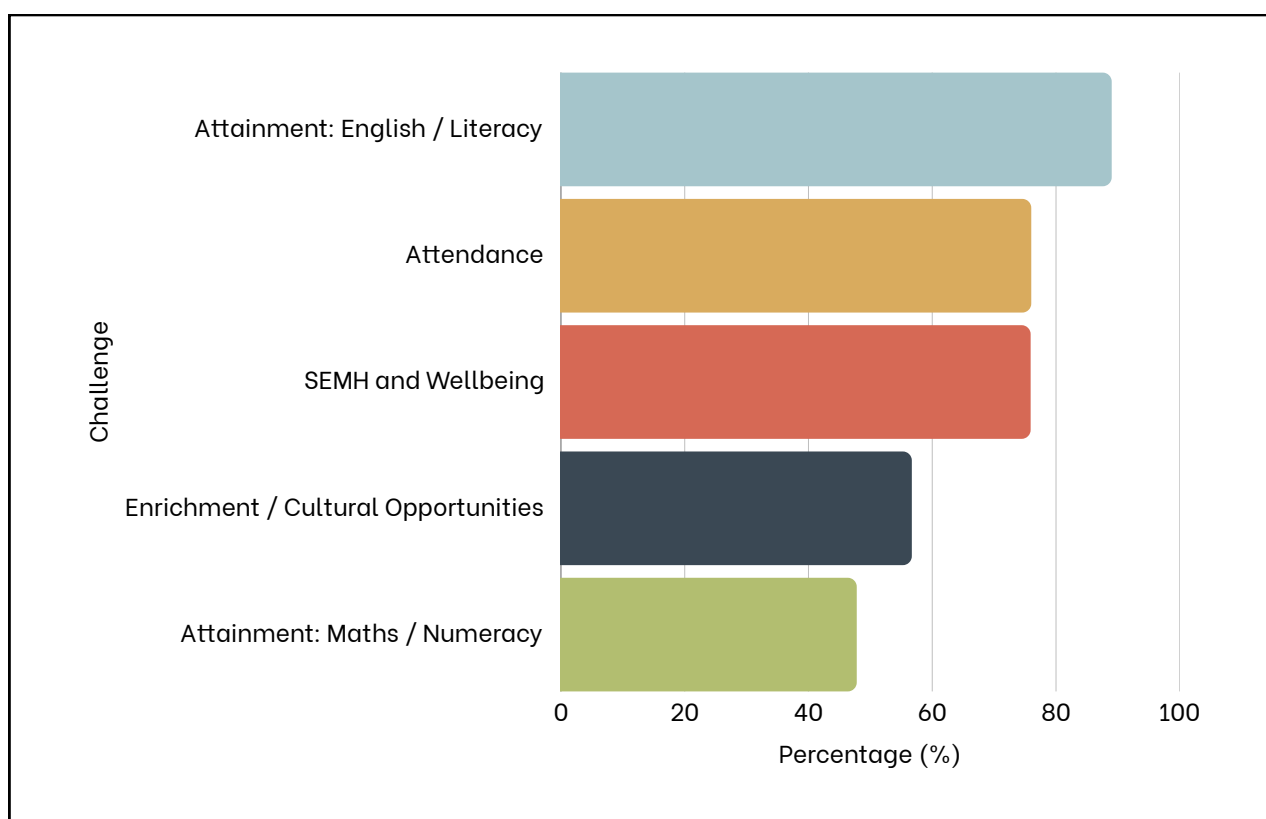


Figure 3. Most relevant challenges cited by primary schools

Across all three deprivation groups – least deprived, middle, and most deprived – the same priority challenges were identified, suggesting a shared recognition of the main issues affecting disadvantaged learners irrespective of local deprivation (Figure 4). However, the prevalence and severity varied by area. For example, attendance concerns were reported by 83.2% of schools in the most deprived areas, compared with 64% of schools in the least deprived and 68% in middle deprivation areas, indicating a stronger link between deprivation and persistent absence.

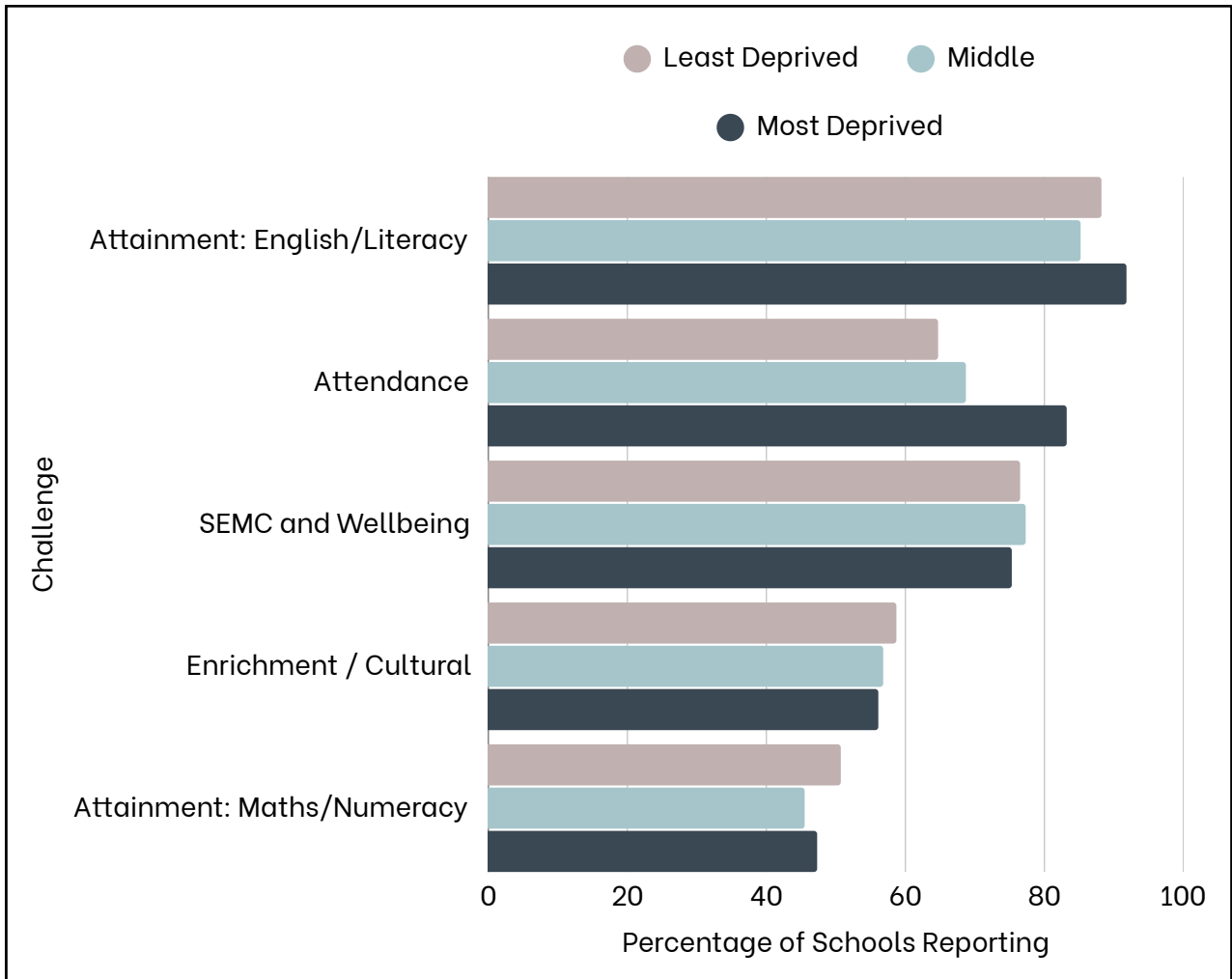


Figure 4. Comparison of Top 5 Challenges Across Deprivation Categories

How does school spending align with the EEF's tiered approach?

Schools are required to report their planned Pupil Premium expenditure in alignment with the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) tiered model, which comprises high-quality teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies. On average, schools allocated a greater proportion of funding to high-quality teaching and targeted academic support, with comparatively less directed towards wider strategies (Figure 5).

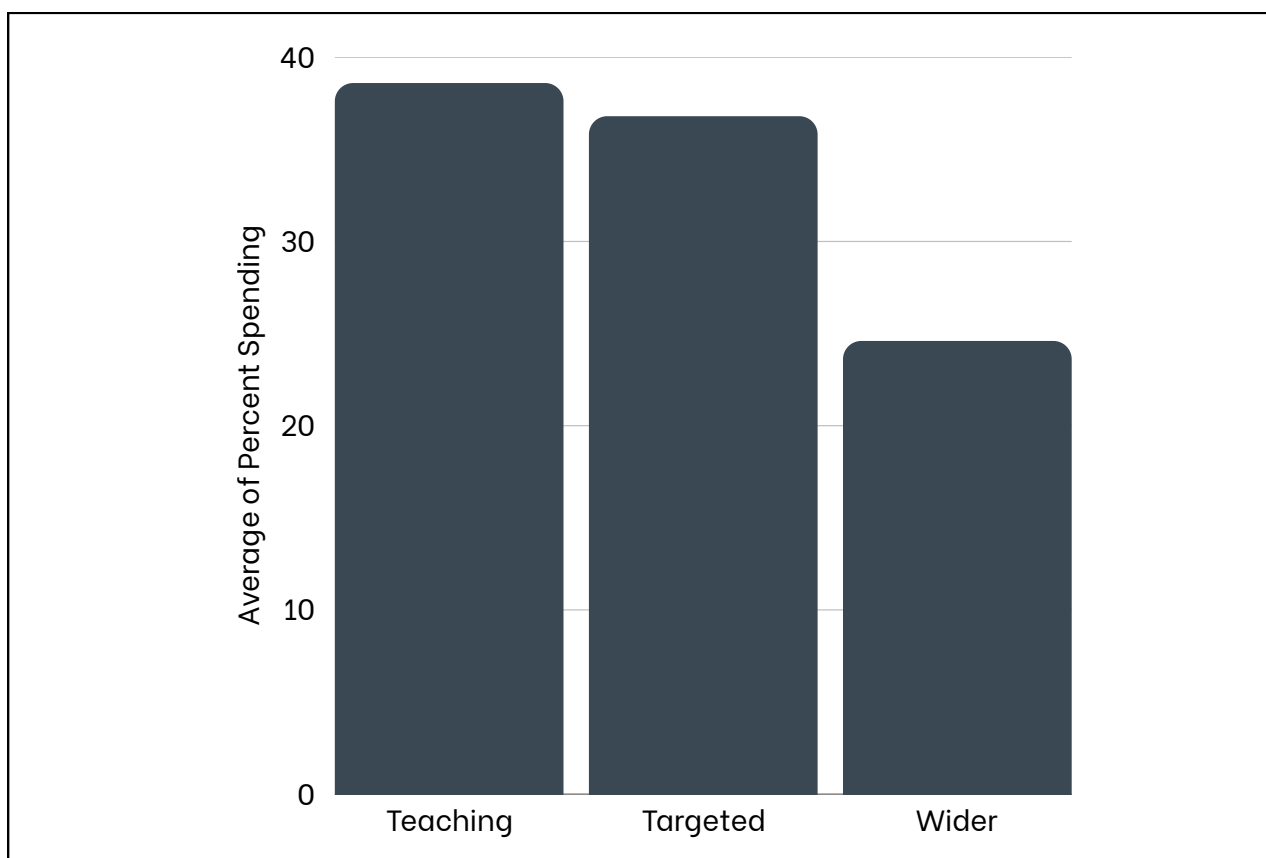


Figure 5. Average percent spending by category

While the overall pattern of spending is broadly consistent across deprivation groups, some differences emerge (Figure 6). In middle deprivation areas, the highest proportion of funding was allocated to targeted interventions (42.4%), whereas in both the least deprived (37.9%) and most deprived (39.8%) regions, the largest share was directed towards high-quality teaching strategies. Nonetheless, these differences were relatively modest, indicating that schools across all levels of deprivation generally follow similar funding priorities.



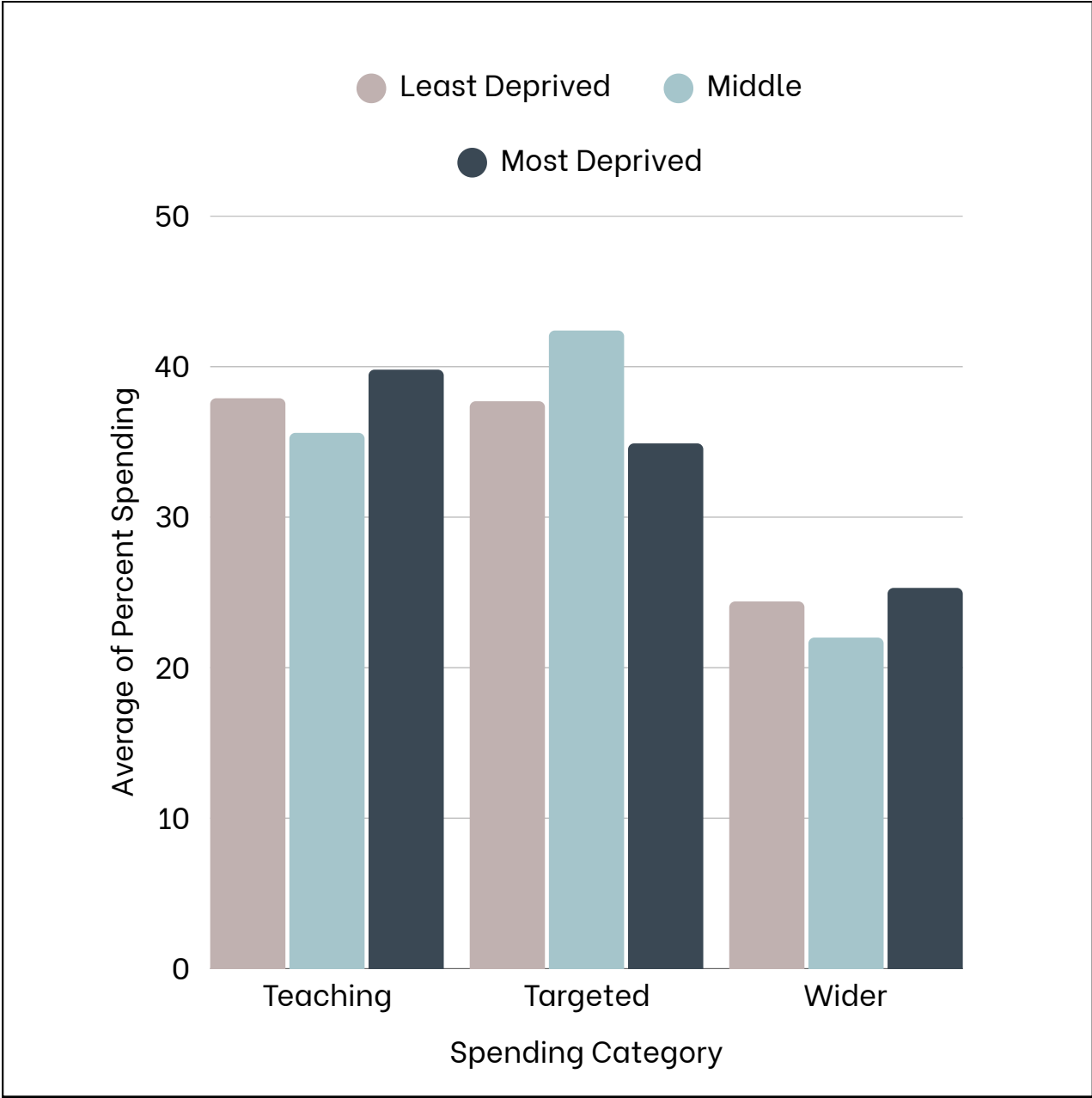


Figure 6. Average percent spending by category and deprivation

Discussion

Strengths in Schools' Engagement with Evidence-Informed Practice

The analysis shows areas of strong practice across the region. Of the 552 Pupil Premium strategy statements included in the analysis, 94 per cent explicitly referenced evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), demonstrating widespread engagement with the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit and guidance reports. This indicates that schools are aware of the importance of grounding decisions in research and are making efforts to align their strategies with approaches known to have a strong impact on pupil outcomes.

We also found that many schools selected interventions that were clearly linked to the challenges they identified, particularly in literacy, attendance and social, emotional and mental health. This alignment suggests that leaders are using the Pupil Premium as intended, targeting funding to address diagnosed barriers rather than adopting generic or untargeted provision.

Furthermore, the gap maps demonstrated very limited use of low-impact strategies across the region. Instead, schools tended to prioritise approaches with stronger evidence of effectiveness, including oral language interventions, reading comprehension strategies and structured feedback. The low prevalence of strategies with limited or no evidence of impact suggests that most schools are making thoughtful and informed choices about how the funding is deployed. These findings provide a reassuring picture of schools' commitment to evidence-informed practice. They show that while there are areas where support and refinement could strengthen Pupil Premium strategies further, many schools across the North East are already building on a strong foundation of research engagement and targeted decision making.

Compliance and Variability in the Publication of Pupil Premium Statements

During the data collection process more than one hundred schools in the North East Combined Authority region were excluded from the analysis because their Pupil Premium statements were either missing or significantly out of date. In eleven cases the most recent statement had been published in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. The majority of excluded reports were published for the academic year 2023-24.

However, some schools had uploaded documents describing a three year plan published in 2022 with a stated review date of 2025. This indicates that some schools have interpreted the introduction of three year Pupil Premium planning as meaning that a single document can remain on the website for the entire duration of the plan.

This interpretation does not match statutory expectations. The conditions of grant for the Pupil Premium require schools to publish an updated Pupil Premium strategy statement every year by 31 December. The intention behind the three year approach is that schools can design longer term strategies. However, the requirement to publish an annual update remains in place to ensure that stakeholders have access to current information about funding allocations, identified needs and the impact of previous spending. The Department for Education's guidance makes clear that a new or updated statement must be available each year.

The consequences of non compliance extend beyond administrative accuracy. Under the revised Ofsted Education Inspection Framework for use from November 2025 and the accompanying School Inspection Toolkit, inspectors are required to consider publicly available documents when preparing for inspection. The Pupil Premium strategy statement is one of the key documents used to understand the school's context, priorities and approach to addressing educational disadvantage. When a school's statement is out of date inspectors are limited in their ability to understand how the school supports disadvantaged pupils and how effectively it uses public funds. This has implications for evaluation across several areas of the framework including Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, and Leadership and Governance.

The absence of a current Pupil Premium statement also reduces transparency for parents, governors, local authorities and regional partners. In a region such as the North East, where tackling educational inequality is a significant priority, the lack of up to date documentation makes it more difficult to understand how schools are responding to persistent challenges such as language development, attendance and wellbeing.

The scale of non compliance identified in this study therefore represents both a methodological limitation and a broader policy concern. It suggests that many schools may not be fully aware of the statutory requirement to publish annual updates or may be facing capacity pressures that affect compliance. Strengthening understanding of the publication requirements and supporting schools to integrate the Pupil Premium statement into their annual planning, evaluation and inspection readiness processes may be necessary to improve consistency across the region.

Use of Generic EEF Evidence Without School-Specific Application

A further issue identified during the analysis of Pupil Premium statements relates to how schools draw upon the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit within their published strategies. Many statements referenced EEF evidence, but often in a generic manner that did not explain how the cited approach would be implemented within the school's specific context. This pattern was observed particularly in sections describing planned activities or interventions. For example, a strategy might state that the school is using small group tuition or one to one support, followed by a standard sentence taken from the Toolkit such as "Small group tuition typically leads to an additional four months of progress." The accompanying evidence link was frequently copied directly from the EEF website, including links to related strands. However, the statements did not explain how these approaches would be operationalised, monitored or adapted for the needs of their pupils.

The updated EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium (EEF, 2025) emphasises that the Toolkit is designed to support diagnosis, decision making and implementation. It is not intended to be used as a simple list of high impact approaches. The guidance highlights that the success of any approach depends on the careful alignment between the school's identified needs, the rationale for selecting a particular strategy and the quality of implementation over time. When schools include generalised EEF impact statements without linking them to their own assessments, staffing structures or curriculum design, the citation does not represent evidence informed practice. Instead, it reduces the value of the evidence by disconnecting it from the specific context in which it is intended to be applied.

This creates two challenges for meaningful accountability and for the use of evidence in school improvement. First, the EEF guidance stresses that impact is dependent on high quality and sustained implementation, which includes training, monitoring, and adaptation when needed. Generic statements that do not reference diagnostic assessment or intended mechanisms of change make it difficult to determine how the proposed activity will address the particular challenges facing disadvantaged pupils in that school. The evidence is therefore presented without the contextual understanding required for effective decision making.

Second, from the perspective of the revised Ofsted Education Inspection Framework for use from November 2025 and the School Inspection Toolkit, the lack of school specific explanation limits the extent to which inspectors can evaluate the rationale behind the school's use of Pupil Premium funding. Inspectors are

required to consider how well leaders understand the needs of disadvantaged learners and how consistently they select, implement and evaluate approaches to meet those needs. A Pupil Premium statement that simply repeats EEF impact figures provides little insight into the school's theory of change, its implementation plans or the way progress will be monitored. This weakens the evidence base available to inspectors, particularly in the evaluation areas of Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement and Leadership and Governance. The common use of generic EEF text may also reflect capacity pressures within some schools, where leaders rely on templated wording rather than more detailed analysis. Although understandable, this limits the value of the strategy statement as a tool for reflection and improvement. The intention of the updated EEF guidance and the requirement to publish a revised Pupil Premium strategy each year is to encourage schools to review the effectiveness of existing provision, justify future spending choices and explain how approaches will be delivered in practice. When strategy statements do not include clear implementation plans, success criteria or links to identified challenges, their usefulness for school improvement is reduced.

Supporting schools to move beyond generic citations of EEF evidence may therefore require renewed regional guidance and professional development. Schools may benefit from clearer expectations about how to show why an approach has been chosen, how it will be delivered, who will deliver it, what changes are expected for pupils and how impact will be monitored over time. Encouraging schools to engage with the principles of diagnosis, selection, implementation and evaluation outlined in the EEF guidance will strengthen the quality of Pupil Premium planning and improve the strength of publicly available evidence during inspection preparation.

Gaps in the Use of High-Impact Strategies Across the Region

The analysis revealed variation across the region in the adoption of high-impact strategies identified within the Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit. Although schools on average reported using approximately two of the five high-impact approaches, their uptake differed considerably by local authority. For example, the use of feedback ranged from 24.3 per cent of schools in South Tyneside to 59.6 per cent in North Tyneside. Oral language interventions were more consistently adopted but still showed a notable spread across the region, ranging from 48.9 per cent to 74.6 per cent of schools. Peer tutoring, a strategy with strong evidence of impact when implemented well, was used by only 2.4 per cent of all schools in the sample.



These gaps are important because the updated EEF guidance emphasises that high quality teaching and targeted academic support should form the core of an effective Pupil Premium strategy. High impact approaches, when implemented carefully, have the potential to accelerate progress and strengthen core learning skills that support long term attainment. Strategies such as structured feedback, metacognition and oral language have clear and well established evidence bases that are applicable across subjects and phases. Therefore, the uneven uptake of these approaches signals missed opportunities to maximise the potential impact of Pupil Premium funding.

The relatively low use of peer tutoring is also notable given its strong evidence base. Although it can be more complex to implement effectively, the EEF highlights that peer tutoring can produce substantial gains when delivered through well structured routines. Its limited adoption across all deprivation levels suggests that schools may require additional support, training or resources to integrate this approach into their provision.

These gaps in the adoption of high-impact strategies highlight the need for targeted regional support, including professional development and the creation of networks that enable schools to learn from peers who have successfully implemented these approaches. Aligning local practice more closely with the evidence base also supports regional priorities under the Excellence in Education Programme, which emphasises high quality teaching, literacy improvement and targeted academic support. Strengthening the consistency and depth with which high-impact strategies are used across the region represents a significant opportunity to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Challenges Identified Across the Region Compared with National Trends

A central purpose of the Pupil Premium strategy statement is to identify the key challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils so that funding decisions can be targeted appropriately. The regional analysis showed that North East primary schools most frequently cited challenges relating to English and literacy attainment, attendance, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), limited access to enrichment opportunities, mathematics attainment, and parental engagement. These findings closely align with the national patterns reported in the Education Endowment Foundation's Pupil Premium Statement Research for 2024/25 (Verian, 2025). The national study, which analysed 1,255 statements from schools across England, identified English and literacy attainment, attendance, and SEMH and wellbeing as the three most common challenges facing disadvantaged pupils (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025).

The strong similarity between regional and national trends suggests that schools in the North East face challenges that are broadly consistent with those encountered by schools across England. However, the prevalence of particular challenges in the North East shows a more acute picture in some areas. For example, attendance concerns were reported by 83.2 per cent of schools in the most deprived areas of the region, compared with 64 per cent of schools in the least deprived areas. This gradient mirrors the national finding that attendance challenges are more commonly reported in schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils, but the regional figures indicate that persistent absence may be a more significant barrier in the North East than nationally. The same pattern is visible for SEMH and wellbeing, which were also highlighted as a major challenge in the EEF's national study, but appear particularly widespread in high-deprivation communities across the region.

Another important comparison concerns early literacy and language. The national EEF report found that English and literacy attainment was the single most frequently cited challenge across all school phases (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025), a finding echoed strongly in the North East sample. The prominence of early reading, vocabulary and communication challenges across all deprivation levels in the region reinforces local and national evidence about the importance of early language development, especially given that a substantial proportion of the attainment gap emerges before the end of the primary phase.

While the overarching patterns align closely with national findings, the North East shows relatively higher levels of reported need in a few key areas, particularly attendance, SEMH and access to enrichment. These findings align with wider socioeconomic indicators for the region, including higher rates of child poverty and limited access to cultural or extracurricular opportunities, as described in the Child Poverty Action Plan (North East Combined Authority, 2025a). The comparison with the EEF's national data therefore reinforces that schools in the North East are not only grappling with the same core barriers as schools elsewhere in England but may be doing so under more challenging contextual conditions.

Overall, the regional analysis demonstrates both consistency with national trends and heightened levels of need in specific domains. This suggests that while national guidance from the EEF is broadly relevant to North East schools, there may be a need for enhanced regional support around attendance, SEMH provision and early literacy. The comparison with national data also highlights the importance of ensuring that interventions selected by schools are adequately matched to the scale of need and to the specific challenges faced within individual communities.



Mathematics as a Challenge: Linking Primary and Secondary Attainment

In our regional analysis, a notable number of North East primary schools identified mathematics attainment as a challenge in their Pupil Premium statements, even though maths did not appear as frequently as literacy, attendance or SEMH. This pattern is important because, while the region performs comparatively well on the combined Key Stage 2 measure of reading, writing and mathematics, it also records some of the lowest outcomes nationally at Key Stage 4, particularly in GCSE mathematics. The concern raised by primary schools may therefore signal early foundations that are not secure enough to support later progression.

This interpretation suggests that pupils can meet the expected standard in KS2 mathematics through procedural competence without fully developed number fluency, reasoning or conceptual understanding. These foundational gaps may not be visible in primary assessments but become more apparent as mathematical demands increase in secondary school. The EEF's national study likewise found that mathematics was cited as a challenge in a proportion of primary school statements, although less frequently than literacy or attendance (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025).

Together, these findings indicate that while headline KS2 attainment in mathematics appears strong, underlying gaps in mathematical understanding may persist for disadvantaged pupils. This underscores the importance of schools prioritising early diagnostic assessment and selecting evidence-informed approaches that strengthen fluency, reasoning and problem solving in the primary phase, aligning with the EEF's guidance on matching interventions to identified need.

Alignment of Spending with the EEF Tiered Approach

Our analysis found that primary schools across the North East Combined Authority broadly aligned their Pupil Premium spending with the Education Endowment Foundation's three-tiered model of high-quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies. In particular, schools allocated the largest proportions of funding to high-quality teaching and to targeted academic support, with comparatively less directed towards wider strategies. This pattern was consistent across deprivation groups and reflects a shared understanding of the importance of classroom teaching and structured academic intervention in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.



These findings are broadly in line with the national picture reported in the EEF's Pupil Premium Statement Research for 2024/25, which found that schools across England also tended to prioritise spending on targeted academic support and high-quality teaching over wider strategies (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025).

However, the national study included secondary and special schools, whereas the present research focuses solely on primary settings. This phase difference likely accounts for some variation. Secondary schools, for example, reported higher use of tuition and subject-specific interventions, while primary schools nationally tended to emphasise phonics, early language and small-group support. Despite these differences in phase, the broad alignment with the tiered model across both studies suggests that the EEF framework continues to provide a clear structure that schools find meaningful when planning and justifying their Pupil Premium spending.

Overall, the consistency between regional and national patterns indicates that North East primary schools are broadly aligning their spending priorities with evidence-informed expectations. The challenge, therefore, is not in adherence to the tiered approach, but in ensuring that spending within each tier is clearly linked to identified barriers, matched to local context and supported by strong implementation planning.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Compliance with the Statutory Requirements for Publishing Pupil Premium Statements

A significant number of schools in the region had missing or out-of-date Pupil Premium statements, despite the requirement to publish an updated strategy annually by 31 December (Department for Education, 2025). To address this, school leaders and Pupil Premium leads should ensure that the publication of a compliant statement becomes a routine part of their annual planning cycle. Carrying out a simple check each autumn term that the statement is current, follows the DfE template and includes all required elements will help schools meet the legal conditions of grant and ensure transparency for parents, governors and Ofsted. Embedding this process within existing leadership and governance structures will also strengthen inspection readiness and support clearer communication about how the school is using its Pupil Premium funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the Use of EEF Guidance and Avoid Generic Evidence Statements

Schools should make fuller use of the updated Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Pupil Premium guidance to ensure that evidence is applied meaningfully rather than cited generically. Many statements in the regional sample reproduced Toolkit descriptions or impact figures without explaining how these approaches would be delivered in their specific context. To improve the quality of strategy planning, schools should link EEF evidence to their own diagnostic assessments, outline why particular approaches have been selected and describe how they will be implemented, monitored and evaluated. Using the EEF guidance in this way will strengthen the coherence of Pupil Premium strategies, improve accountability, and provide clearer insight for governors and Ofsted into how the school's chosen approaches will address the needs of disadvantaged pupils.



Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Use of High-Impact EEF Strategies and Improve Targeting Through Diagnostic Assessment

The analysis showed that the reported use of the Education Endowment Foundation's highest-impact strategies were used infrequently across the region. Peer tutoring, one of the five high-impact approaches in the EEF Toolkit, was used by only 2.4 per cent of schools. Metacognition and self-regulation appeared in 26.4 per cent of statements, and feedback in 43.7 per cent, indicating that these proven strategies are not yet embedded widely across primary schools. Increasing the uptake of these approaches, where appropriate to pupil need and school context, represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the impact of Pupil Premium funding.

The study also observed strong examples of practice where schools used standardised assessments in English and mathematics to diagnose precise learning gaps before selecting interventions. Wider adoption of robust diagnostic assessment would help schools match pupils more effectively to high-impact strategies.

Aligning intervention choices more closely with the EEF's evidence base, supported by high-quality assessment and careful implementation planning, would help ensure that Pupil Premium funding is directed towards approaches most likely to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.



Limitations

There are some important limitations to using Pupil Premium statements as a source of information about how schools actually spent their funding. Previous research found that many schools use several different funding streams to support disadvantaged pupils, with around seven in ten schools drawing on multiple sources of finance to fund the same activities (Verian, 2025). As a result, some statements may describe a school's wider offer for disadvantaged pupils rather than activities funded specifically through the Pupil Premium. In addition, some programmes mentioned in statements can be funded through other mechanisms, such as English Hub support for validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics programmes. In these cases, it is not always possible to identify which elements were funded by the Pupil Premium and which were not.

It is also important to note that Pupil Premium statements set out a plan for spending at the start of the year, and actual spending may change as pupil needs develop. Finally, the statements are self-reported and publicly accessible, which may influence how schools choose to describe their provision. Taken together, these factors mean that Pupil Premium statements do not always provide a complete or fully accurate picture of how the funding was used in practice.

A further limitation of this study is the large number of schools that could not be included in the analysis because their Pupil Premium statements were missing, out of date or incomplete. More than one hundred schools in the region were excluded for these reasons. This reduced the overall sample size and may mean that the findings do not fully represent all primary schools across the North East. It is possible that the schools without compliant statements differ systematically from those included in the analysis. As a result, the patterns reported in this study should be interpreted as reflecting only the schools that had published complete and current Pupil Premium statements, rather than the entire regional population.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how primary schools across the North East Combined Authority use the Pupil Premium and how their approaches vary across different levels of deprivation. By examining 552 complete strategy statements, the research offers a detailed picture of how schools diagnose need, select evidence-informed approaches and align their spending with national expectations set out by the Department for Education and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The findings highlight both the strengths of current practice and areas where further support and alignment could enhance outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The analysis showed that schools in the region identified a consistent set of challenges, particularly around literacy attainment, attendance and social, emotional and mental health needs. These challenges closely mirror national findings from the EEF's Pupil Premium Statement Research, although attendance and wellbeing concerns appear more acute in the North East. Mathematics was also identified as a challenge by a notable number of schools, suggesting that gaps in conceptual understanding may become more visible later in pupils' educational journeys, despite relatively strong regional performance on some KS2 measures.

Schools demonstrated broad alignment with the EEF's tiered model, directing the greatest proportion of funding towards high-quality teaching and targeted academic support. However, the analysis also revealed limited use of several of the highest-impact approaches in the EEF Toolkit, including peer tutoring, structured feedback and metacognition. These findings suggest that while schools are broadly embracing the structure of the tiered approach, there is further potential to strengthen the depth and specificity of the strategies adopted. The study also surfaced important areas for improvement. Many schools used generic EEF statements without contextualising how approaches would be implemented in their setting, reducing the clarity and evaluative value of their published strategies. In addition, gaps in publication and updating of strategy documents indicate that some schools may require further support to meet statutory requirements and to integrate the Pupil Premium more effectively into annual planning and school improvement processes. Stronger examples of practice were found in schools that used standardised assessments to guide decision making and that articulated clear rationales and implementation plans for their chosen interventions.



It is important to acknowledge that the findings in this report are based exclusively on information contained within school-published Pupil Premium statements. As noted in the limitations section, these documents do not always provide a complete or fully accurate account of how funding is used in practice. Schools may draw on multiple funding streams to support disadvantaged pupils, planned activities may change during the year and the publicly accessible nature of the statements may influence what is included. The analysis therefore reflects how schools *report* their strategies rather than a full audit of actual expenditure or implementation.

Taken together, the findings underline the importance of high-quality, up-to-date and evidence-informed Pupil Premium strategies. They also highlight the opportunity for North East Combined Authority, local authorities and multi-academy trusts to strengthen regional support through professional development, model statements and compliance monitoring. Ensuring that schools make full and effective use of the EEF guidance and the DfE's menu of approaches will support more consistent and impactful provision across the region.

The Pupil Premium remains a vital mechanism for reducing educational disadvantage. By deepening the alignment between diagnosed need, evidence-informed practice and implementation quality, schools across the North East can further improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and help ensure that all children are able to belong, achieve and thrive.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the North East Combined Authority as part of its commitment to strengthening evidence-informed practice and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the region.

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Appendix A: Pupil Premium statement template for Academic Year 2024/25

Before completing this template, read the Education Endowment Foundation’s guide to the pupil premium and DfE’s pupil premium guidance for school leaders, which includes the ‘menu of approaches’. It is for school leaders to decide what activity to spend their pupil premium on, within the framework set out by the menu.

All schools that receive pupil premium are required to use this template to complete and publish a pupil premium statement on their school website by 31 December every academic year.

If you are starting a new pupil premium strategy plan, use this blank template. If you are continuing a strategy plan from last academic year, you may prefer to edit your existing statement, if that version was published using the template.

Before publishing your completed statement, delete the instructions (text in italics) in this template, and this text box.

Pupil premium strategy statement – [insert school name]

This statement details our school’s use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended – you must still publish an updated statement each academic year)	
Date this statement was published	
Date on which it will be reviewed	
Statement authorised by	
Pupil premium lead	
Governor / Trustee lead	

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (<i>enter £0 if not applicable</i>)	£
Total budget for this academic year <i>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year</i>	£

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

You may want to include information on:

- What are your ultimate objectives for your disadvantaged pupils?
- How does your current pupil premium strategy plan work towards achieving those objectives?
- What are the key principles of your strategy plan?

Challenges

This details the key challenges to achievement that we have identified among our disadvantaged pupils.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<i>Add or delete rows as needed</i>
2	
3	
4	
5	

Intended outcomes

This explains the outcomes we are aiming for **by the end of our current strategy plan**, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
<i>Add or delete rows as needed</i>	

Activity in this academic year

This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium funding **this academic year** to address the challenges listed above.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £ *[insert amount]*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
----------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------

Add or delete rows as needed.		

Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support, structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £ [insert amount]

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Add or delete rows as needed.		

Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £ [insert amount]

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Add or delete rows as needed.		

Total budgeted cost: £ [insert sum of 3 amounts stated above]

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Outline the performance of your disadvantaged pupils in the previous academic year and explain how it has been assessed. You should draw on:

- Data from the previous academic year's national assessments and qualifications, once published.
- Comparison to local and national averages and outcomes achieved by your school's non-disadvantaged pupils (a note of caution can be added to signal that pupils included in the performance data will have experienced some disruption due to Covid-19 earlier in their schooling, which will have affected individual pupils and schools differently).
- Information from summative and formative assessments the school has undertaken.
- School data and observations used to assess wider issues impacting disadvantaged pupils' performance, including attendance, behaviour and wellbeing.

You should state whether you are on target to achieve the outcomes of your strategy (as outlined in the Intended Outcomes section above) and outline your analysis of what aspects of your strategy are/are not working well.

If last year marked the end of a previous pupil premium strategy plan, you should set out your assessment of how successfully the intended outcomes of that plan were met.

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you used your pupil premium to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider

Service pupil premium funding (optional)

<i>For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information: How our service pupil premium allocation was spent last academic year</i>
The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils

Further information (optional)

<i>Use this space to provide any further information about your pupil premium strategy. For example, about your strategy planning, implementation and evaluation, or other activity that you are delivering to support disadvantaged pupils that is not dependent on pupil premium funding.</i>

(DfE Template Academic Year 2024-25, EEF 2025)

Appendix B - Coding Framework

1. Contextual Variables

1.1 Local Educational Authority (categorical, single-code)

Code one of the following:

- Durham
- South Tyneside
- North Tyneside
- Sunderland
- Newcastle
- Gateshead
- Northumberland

1.2 Deprivation Level (categorical, single-code)

Based on grouped IDACI/LA deprivation deciles:

- Most Deprived
- Middle
- Least Deprived

2. EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit Coding

Each strand is coded Y/N based on whether the strategy explicitly funds or describes an intervention belonging to that strand. Inclusion/exclusion rules follow the EEF Refined Coding Framework.

Below is the complete toolkit coding structure.

2.1 High Impact Strands

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
HI1	Feedback	Code Y where strategies provide structured, actionable feedback beyond routine marking. Not general marking policy.
HI2	Metacognition and Self-Regulation	Code Y for explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies, self-regulation routines or learning-to-learn approaches.
HI3	Oral Language Interventions	Code Y for vocabulary, NELL, structured dialogic talk, S&L programmes. Not general literacy.
HI4	Peer Tutoring	Code Y when older or same-age peers tutor others using a structured instructional model. Not paired work.
HI5	Reading Comprehension Strategies	Code Y when structured comprehension strategy instruction is described.

2.2 Moderate Impact Strands

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
MI1	Arts Participation	Code Y when PP funds music, drama, art-based curriculum enrichment. Not generic trips.
MI2	Behaviour Interventions	Code Y for behaviour mentors, restorative practices, behaviour curricula. Not sanctions-only.
MI3	Collaborative Learning Approaches	Code Y for structured group learning with shared goals. Not group seating alone.
MI4	Extending School Time	Code Y for before/after-school academic provision or Saturday school. Not childcare.
MI5	Homework	Code Y for structured homework support, homework clubs.
MI6	Individualised Instruction	Code Y for personalised pathways, adaptive learning software. Not small groups unless personalised.
MI7	Mastery Learning	Code Y for mastery pedagogy, structured progression, reteaching until mastery.

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
MI8	One-to-One Tuition	Code Y for tutoring or TA-led 1:1 academic instruction. Not mentoring.
MI9	Parental Engagement	Code Y for structured programmes supporting parents to help learning at home. Not general communication.
MI10	Phonics	Code Y for validated SSP schemes (e.g., Little Wandle, RWI).
MI11	Small Group Tuition	Code Y for 2–5 pupils receiving targeted instruction.
MI12	Social and Emotional Learning	Code Y for ELSA, nurture groups, SEL curricula, emotional regulation.
MI13	Summer Schools	Code Y where PP is used to fund holiday academic programmes.
MI14	Teaching Assistant Interventions	Code Y where TAs deliver structured academic interventions. Not general classroom TA presence.

2.3 Low Impact Strands

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
LI1	Mentoring	Within-Class Attainment Grouping
LI2	Performance Pay	Pay linked explicitly to pupil performance.
LI3	Physical Activity	PP-funded sports or exercise intended to impact learning.
LI4	Reducing Class Size	PP funds reduced numbers taught by a teacher. Not extra TA.
LI5	Within-Class Attainment Grouping	Attainment-based table groups within a class.

2.4 Null Impact Strand

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
NI1	Setting and Streaming	Attainment grouping across classes.

2.5 Negative Impact Strand

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
NGE1	Repeating a Year	Only code if explicitly referenced as practice or policy.

2.6 Unclear Impact Strands

Code	Label	Coding Instructions (summary)
UI1	Aspiration Interventions	Only code if explicitly referenced as practice or policy.
UI2	Learning Styles	Code Y for VAK or teaching matched to learning styles.
UI3	Outdoor Adventure Learning	Code Y for adventure-based residential or outdoor challenge programmes. Not forest schools unless adventure-focused.
UI4	School Uniform	Only where PP funds uniform to address inclusion/attendance.

Appendix C - Coding Framework for challenges - Taken directly from recent EEF PP study

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.1	Access to enrichment / cultural opportunities	Code Y where the statement references reduced access to cultural capital, enrichment, extracurricular opportunities (arts, music, theatre, outdoor learning, science experiences, career pathways).	
3.1.1	Cultural capital	Code Y when 'cultural capital' is explicitly referenced.	Must also code 3.1 = Y
3.2	Aspiration	Code Y only if aspiration or synonymous terms about future attitudes/opportunity are explicitly stated. Do not infer.	
3.3	Attendance	Code Y if poor/low attendance or any form of absence is referenced.	
3.3.1	Persistent absence	Code Y where persistent absence is explicitly referenced.	Must also code 3.3 = Y
3.3.2	Severe absence	Code Y where severe absence is explicitly referenced.	Must also code 3.3 = Y
3.4	Attainment: English/Literacy	Code Y for reference to prior attainment or current performance in English/literacy: speech, language, vocabulary, grammar, oracy, reading, phonics, writing, spelling, composition. Do not code needs-only statements.	

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.4.1	Speech / Language	Code Y for attainment-related references to speech/language/vocabulary/grammar.	Must also code 3.4 = Y; Do not code SLCN needs.
3.4.2	Oracy	Code Y for attainment in spoken language/oracy/learning through talk.	Must also code 3.4 = Y
3.4.3	Reading	Code Y for reading attainment: reading age/level/phonics-related reading attainment.	Must also code 3.4 = Y
3.4.4	Writing	Code Y for writing attainment: handwriting, transcription, spelling, composition.	Must also code 3.4 = Y
3.4.5	Phonics	Code Y for phonics attainment challenges.	Must also code 3.4 = Y
3.5	Attainment: Maths / Numeracy	Code Y for maths attainment: number, place value, problem-solving, maths confidence, geometry, algebra, statistics.	
3.6	Attainment: Other subject	Code Y if attainment in any named subject other than English or Maths is referenced.	
3.7	Attainment: General	Code Y when attainment is mentioned but without subject specificity (e.g., all subjects, attainment gap, learning loss, behind age-related expectations).	

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.8	Behaviour	Code Y for behavioural issues (disruption, defiance, aggression, disengagement).	Code additionally to Attendance / Independent learning / PSED where appropriate.
3.9	EAL	Code Y only where challenges are specific to English as an Additional Language.	Also code attainment codes if attainment-specific.
3.10	Independent learning	Code Y for explicit references to independent learning, motivation, metacognition, readiness to learn, learning behaviours.	If challenge relates to home environment → code under 3.13 instead.
3.11	Lack of financial means (school-based resources)	Code Y where lack of financial means affects resources needed in school: uniform, equipment, technology, books.	If home-learning resources: also code under 3.13
3.11.1	Need for uniform	Code Y for uniform-related financial need.	Must code 3.11 = Y
3.11.2	Need for equipment	Code Y where financial constraints limit travel/transport for school.	Must code 3.11 = Y
3.11.3	Need for travel	Code Y where financial constraints limit travel/transport for school.	Must code 3.11 = Y
3.11.4	Need for food	Code Y for food insecurity, hunger.	Must code 3.11 = Y

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.12	SEMH / Wellbeing	Code Y for mental, social, emotional health concerns, anxiety, emotional resilience.	If absence due to mental health → also code 3.3
3.13	Parental engagement & home learning environment (HLE)	Code Y for home learning support: reading at home, homework, structured routines, quiet study space, parental engagement with learning.	Use subcodes if mentioned.
3.13.1	Lack of financial means (home resources)	Code Y for cost barriers to home-learning resources (workbooks, revision guides, travel, food).	Must code 3.13 = Y
3.13.2	Lack of suitable space	Code Y for lack of quiet/homework space	Must code 3.13 = Y
3.13.3	Lack of parental engagement with home learning	Code Y for lack of parental involvement in home learning.	Must code 3.13 = Y
3.13.4	Need for intensive family support	Code Y where families are in crisis or need intensive support.	Must code 3.13 = Y
3.14	Personal and social development	Code Y for self-esteem, confidence, social skills, emotional intelligence, communication of needs.	Do not double-code with SEMH unless both apply.
3.15	Personal circumstances	Code Y for parental wellbeing, mobility, ACEs, safeguarding, transport access. Use subcodes where appropriate.	

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.15.1	Parental engagement with school	Code Y for parental challenges engaging with school (attendance meetings, behaviour).	Must code 3.15 = Y
3.15.2	Parental health / wellbeing	Code Y for parent/carer physical or mental health issues.	Must code 3.15 = Y
3.15.3	Access to school / transport	Code Y for access barriers not due to cost (e.g., availability of transport).	Must code 3.15 = Y
3.15.4	Child protection / safeguarding	Code Y where child protection or safeguarding is mentioned.	Must code 3.15 = Y
3.15.5	Child mobility	Code Y where children move schools frequently.	Must code 3.15 = Y
3.16	Physical health	Code Y for pupil physical health issues (illness, fitness, motor development).	If absence due to illness → also code 3.3
3.17	School factors	Code Y for challenges linked to school provision (expertise, facilities, resources).	
3.17.1	Human resourcing	Code Y for staffing shortages, recruitment, CPD needs.	Must code 3.17 = Y
3.17.2	Physical resourcing	Code Y for lack of facilities, inadequate space.	Must code 3.17 = Y
3.18	SEND	Code Y for SEND as a barrier: EHCP, sensory needs, complex needs.	Code additionally to other relevant challenge codes

Code	Label	Description / Coding Instructions	Dependencies / Notes
3.19	Local factors	Code Y for environmental / neighbourhood factors (services, transport availability, catchment).	
3.20	Other	For uncategorised challenges, quote verbatim.	

Appendix D - Pupil Premium Budget Coding

Each variable should be extracted numerically as written in the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement.

Variable	Description
PP Total Budget	Total Pupil Premium funding allocated for the academic year.
PP Spend HighQualityTeaching	Budget allocated to high-quality teaching (Tier 1).
PP Spend TargetedSupport	Budget allocated to targeted academic support (Tier 2).
PP Spend WiderStrategies	Budget allocated to wider strategies (Tier 3).