

Pupil Premium Strategy Statement Review

Primary Schools

Technical Appendix



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Executive Summary

Purpose

This report is the second annual region-wide analysis of how primary schools across the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) report their use of the Pupil Premium to support disadvantaged pupils. It examines Pupil Premium strategy statements for the 2025/26 academic year, identifies patterns in the challenges schools report and the strategies they select, compares these findings with the regional 2024/25 analysis, and considers them alongside the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) national Pupil Premium research. The two-year programme provides an emerging longitudinal picture of how evidence-informed Pupil Premium planning and reporting are developing across the region.

Approach

The analysis included 519 primary schools across County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland for which a current 2025/26 Pupil Premium strategy statement was available. Statements were systematically coded for 30 EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit strategies and 20 categories of challenge. AI-assisted coding was developed and validated against independent expert coding, reaching approximately 95% agreement following refinement, with human review used during validation. Patterns were examined across local authorities and according to both area-level deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM).

As this is an analysis of publicly reported strategy statements, the findings describe what schools report planning or providing through their Pupil Premium strategies; they should not be interpreted as a direct measure of implementation quality, expenditure attributable solely to the Pupil Premium, or the impact of individual approaches on pupil outcomes.

Patterns of strategy use

Schools reported using a broad range of approaches. Phonics and social and emotional learning were the most frequently identified strategies, each appearing in 87.5% of statements, followed by small-group tuition (84.6%), teaching assistant interventions (77.3%) and feedback (70.9%). There was, however, considerable variation within high-impact EEF approaches. Feedback (70.9%) and oral language interventions (67.6%) were relatively widely reported, and reading comprehension strategies appeared in 56.1% of statements. In contrast, metacognition and self-regulation was reported by 15.8% of schools and peer tutoring by only 2.5%.

On average, schools reported using approximately two of the five high-impact strategies and seven of the fourteen moderate-impact strategies examined. These patterns were broadly similar across local authorities, area-deprivation categories and FSM bands. This suggests that the particularly low reported use of peer tutoring and metacognition is not concentrated in a small number of localities or types of school, but represents a wider regional pattern. This creates an opportunity for regional support focused on understanding barriers to adoption and strengthening schools' capacity to select and implement these approaches where they are appropriate to identified pupil need.

Challenges facing disadvantaged pupils

A highly consistent picture of need emerged across the region. English/literacy attainment was the most frequently reported challenge, identified by 92.3% of schools and ranking first or joint first in every local authority. This was followed by social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing (80.2%), attendance (79.2%) and access to enrichment (71.7%). Some differences were associated with the concentration of disadvantage within schools. English/literacy attainment was reported as a challenge by 94.7% of schools with at least 25% FSM eligibility, compared with 86.8% of schools below this threshold. Attendance showed a similar pattern (82.1% compared with 72.8%). In contrast, SEMH and wellbeing was reported at high levels across both FSM groups. This suggests that some barriers, particularly literacy and attendance, become more prominent as disadvantage becomes more concentrated, whereas others, notably SEMH and wellbeing, represent a widespread challenge across the primary sector.

Change since 2024/25

The two-year comparison identifies both continuity and meaningful change. Reported use of feedback increased substantially, from 46.6% of schools in 2024/25 to 70.9% in 2025/26. Oral language interventions increased from 60.5% to 67.6%, while reading comprehension strategies increased from 51.5% to 56.1%. Other patterns have proved more persistent. Use of peer tutoring remained almost unchanged, at 2.4% in 2024/25 and 2.5% in 2025/26. Metacognition and self-regulation declined in every local authority, despite being identified as a high-impact approach within the EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit. At the same time, the core challenges identified by schools remained strikingly stable, with literacy, attendance and SEMH/wellbeing continuing to dominate the regional picture. The findings therefore suggest that schools' reported use of some evidence-informed approaches is changing, while both the underlying profile of need and several gaps in strategy adoption remain persistent.

Comparison with national patterns

The North East findings are closely aligned with the EEF's national primary-school analysis for 2025/26. English/literacy attainment was reported as a key challenge by 92.3% of North East schools compared with 92% nationally; attendance by 79.2% compared with 83%; and SEMH and wellbeing by 80.2% compared with 82%. There are, nevertheless, potentially important differences in reported provision. Small-group and one-to-one tuition were somewhat more frequently reported in the North East than nationally, while peer tutoring was substantially less common: 2.5% regionally compared with 13% for peer-to-peer tuition in the EEF national data. Given the strength of the evidence associated with structured peer tutoring, this represents a clear area for further investigation into awareness, feasibility and implementation barriers rather than an assumption that the approach should be adopted irrespective of school context.

Publication compliance and use of evidence

Publication compliance remains an important regional issue. 139 primary schools could not be included in the analysis because a current 2025/26 strategy statement was either unavailable on their website or substantially out of date when data were collected in June 2026. This was six months after the Department for Education's 31 December publication deadline, and therefore represents substantive non-compliance rather than a short delay in publication. Of the 134 schools whose statements were available but out of date, 98 had published an eligible statement in the previous year and 34 were missing or out of date in both annual reviews. Non-publication should therefore not be understood solely as a problem associated with a small, fixed group of schools. Rather, compliance appears capable of varying from one reporting cycle to the next: schools that met the requirement in one year did not necessarily do so the following year. This strengthens the case for annual monitoring of publication rather than relying on previous compliance as an indicator that requirements continue to be met. Missing statements also reduce the completeness of the regional evidence base and may introduce bias if non-publishing schools differ systematically from those included.

A separate but related issue concerns how evidence is communicated within published statements. As in 2024/25, many schools cited EEF evidence or Toolkit estimates without clearly demonstrating how that evidence related to diagnostic information about their own pupils, why a particular strategy had been selected, how it would be implemented, or how its effectiveness would be monitored. This should not be interpreted as evidence that schools are necessarily making poor decisions or implementing approaches ineffectively; the published statement may not capture the full decision-making process. It does, however, limit the usefulness of the statement as a transparent account of evidence-informed planning, implementation and evaluation.

Implications and recommendations

The findings point to six priorities for schools, local partners and regional education leaders:

1. Strengthen annual publication compliance: Establish an autumn-term process to confirm that every school has published a current Pupil Premium strategy statement that meets Department for Education requirements.
2. Move from citing evidence to evidence-informed decision-making: Schools should make the pathway from identified need and diagnostic evidence to strategy selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation explicit. Regional exemplars could show what strong application looks like in a North East context.
3. Strengthen the targeted use of well-evidenced approaches: Low reported use of Peer Tutoring and Metacognition and Self-Regulation warrants further investigation. Schools should be supported to consider a wider range of evidence-informed approaches where appropriate, while keeping strategy selection rooted in pupil need and implementation feasibility.
4. Develop regional implementation support and shared learning: There is value in regional professional learning, practical guidance and peer-to-peer sharing. This review's gap map could help identify where particular approaches are especially underused.
5. Combine universal priorities with targeted support: Literacy, attendance and SEMH and wellbeing were prominent across the region, supporting shared regional improvement activity. However, literacy and attendance were more frequently reported in schools serving higher concentrations of disadvantaged pupils, suggesting the need for additional targeted support in these settings.
6. Develop longitudinal regional monitoring: Repeating the analysis annually would help track publication compliance, persistent challenges and whether strategy gaps are narrowing or widening. Future work should increasingly complement statement analysis with evidence about implementation and pupil outcomes.

Introduction

Educational disadvantage remains a substantial challenge for primary schools across the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA). It is also unevenly distributed: the North East Evidence Hub's analysis of the 2025 English Indices of Deprivation estimates that 18% of residents in the authority's area live in neighbourhoods within the most deprived tenth nationally (North East Evidence Hub, 2026). This regional context makes it important to understand both the needs schools identify and the approaches they plan to use in response.

The Pupil Premium provides additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in England. Schools develop strategies suited to their pupils within the Department for Education's (DfE) requirement that funded activity is evidence-informed and drawn from its menu of approaches (Department for Education, 2026). Published strategy statements provide a way to examine the priorities and reasoning schools communicate publicly, although they cannot establish what was delivered in classrooms or its effect on pupils.

The first North East regional analysis examined primary-school statements for 2024/25 (Harrison et al., 2026). This report extends the programme to 2025/26. A second annual cycle enables comparison of reported challenges and strategies, identifies patterns that recur across school contexts and highlights changes that merit closer investigation. It also allows the availability of current statements to be examined across successive publication cycles. The study provides an emerging account of reported Pupil Premium planning over time, rather than an evaluation of the effectiveness of individual schools or interventions.

Background

Pupil Premium strategy and public reporting

Department for Education guidance requires schools to spend Pupil Premium on evidence-informed activity in line with a menu organised around three broad areas: high-quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies. Schools receiving the grant must publish an updated strategy statement using the DfE template by 31 December each academic year, including where they are working to a multi-year strategy (Department for Education, 2025, 2026a). The statement is intended to make the school's assessment of need, planned activity and review of outcomes visible to its community.

To support schools in making these decisions, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) developed the Teaching and Learning Toolkit, a widely used evidence summary that ranks educational interventions according to their average impact on attainment, their cost, and the strength of the underlying evidence base (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025). Alongside the Toolkit, the EEF's Guide to the Pupil Premium sets out a tiered approach to spending, encouraging schools to prioritise high-quality teaching, followed by targeted academic support, and finally wider strategies addressing non-academic barriers to learning such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional wellbeing (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025).

The publication of these strategy statements has taken on further significance under the revised Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (effective from November 2025) and the accompanying School Inspection Toolkit, both of which place greater emphasis on evaluating how well school leaders understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils and how deliberately they select, implement, and evaluate strategies in response to those needs (Ofsted, 2025).

The developing evidence base

In the absence of a national, centrally maintained repository of Pupil Premium strategy statements, understanding of how schools across England allocate this funding each year remains incomplete, relying instead on periodic sampling exercises conducted at the national and regional level. The EEF analysed samples of statements nationally across both the 2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years. Its second-cycle research provides a contemporary comparator for this report, including findings on the challenges schools identify and the activities they report funding. Comparisons require care: differences in sampling, coding definitions and the composition of the schools analysed may contribute to differences between national and regional estimates.

This study serves a different, complementary purpose. It examines available current statements from primary schools across the MSA’s seven local authority areas and considers variation by geography, area-level deprivation and free school meal (FSM) eligibility. Its repeated regional design also permits comparison with the 2024/25 review, examining patterns of strategy adoption and reported challenges, and considering how these findings relate to national trends and to the region’s own findings from the previous academic year.

Regional significance

The North East’s 2025–30 Child Poverty Action Plan connects action on poverty with reducing the costs of education and widening access to opportunity (North East Combined Authority, 2025). It identifies the £5 million *Excellence in Education* programme, funded to 2028, with priorities concerning inclusion; literacy, oracy, mathematics and personal development; and teacher wellbeing, development and retention. Its education and enrichment commitments also address access to after-school activity and travel costs. These are wider regional commitments, not activities that schools are expected to fund through the Pupil Premium alone.

Repeated analysis of school Pupil Premium statements can help regional partners understand how schools’ reported priorities relate to this wider agenda. Comparison across local authorities and measures of disadvantage can distinguish challenges reported widely from those more prominent in particular contexts. This can inform discussion about shared and targeted support while preserving each school’s responsibility to diagnose the needs of its own pupils.

The second review cycle also provides an opportunity to examine recurring patterns, changes warranting follow-up and gaps in the availability of current statements. Such comparisons can guide professional enquiry by local authorities, multi-academy trusts, school improvement partners and the North East MSA. Such comparisons provide signals for professional enquiry and support; they do not establish why a pattern changed or whether a regional initiative caused it. Over successive years, a consistently defined dataset could make those enquiries more focused and help the region assess whether its stated priorities are reflected in schools’ published planning.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study examines how primary schools across the North East MSA report the challenges facing disadvantaged pupils and the strategies selected to address them in their 2025/26 Pupil Premium statements. It builds on the 2024/25 regional baseline and considers the findings alongside the EEF’s national Pupil Premium statement research. It also examines the availability of current published statements as part of assessing the completeness of the regional evidence base.

The study addresses five research questions:

1. What challenges do North East MSA primary schools report for disadvantaged pupils, and how do these vary by local authority and level of disadvantage?
2. Which approaches from the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit do schools report in their Pupil Premium strategy statements, and how does reported use vary by local authority and level of disadvantage?
3. How do reported challenges and strategy use in 2025/26 compare with the aggregate findings from the 2024/25 regional review?
4. How many primary schools across the North East MSA had a current 2025/26 Pupil Premium strategy statement available at the time of data collection, and how does this compare with 2024/25?
5. How do the North East findings compare with the EEF’s national analysis of 2025/26 Pupil Premium strategy statements?

These questions are descriptive. The study analyses what schools recorded in their published statements; it does not measure audited expenditure, implementation quality, causal effects or pupil outcomes. The two annual analytical samples differ in size and composition, so year-on-year comparisons describe differences between annual samples rather than changes within a matched group of schools.

Methods

Study design

This study used a descriptive, comparative analysis of publicly available Pupil Premium strategy statements published by primary schools across the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA). Statements for the 2025/26 academic year were systematically collected, coded and analysed to examine the challenges schools identified for disadvantaged pupils and the approaches they reported selecting to address them.

The analysis examined variation by local authority, area-level deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Findings were also compared with the region's 2024/25 analysis and the EEF's national Pupil Premium statement research. The study describes schools' reported priorities and planned provision; it does not directly measure expenditure, implementation quality or impact on pupil outcomes.

Sample and data sources

The study sought to identify all state-funded primary schools across the seven local authority areas within the North East MSA: County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

School details for 660 schools were obtained from the Department for Education's *Get Information About Schools* database, including school name, phase, local authority and unique reference number (URN). These identifiers were used to locate schools' websites and retrieve their published Pupil Premium strategy statements.

Statements were eligible for inclusion where:

1. The school was a state-funded primary school within one of the seven North East MSA local authority areas.
2. A statement covering the 2025/26 academic year was publicly available on the school's website.
3. The statement broadly followed the DfE template and contained the sections needed for analysis, including "Challenges", "Intended outcomes" and "Activity in this academic year".

A research assistant manually reviewed each school website to identify an eligible statement. Missing, outdated or incomplete statements were recorded during this process. Eligible documents were downloaded in PDF or Microsoft Word format and stored securely for coding and analysis.

Data collection was completed in June 2026, yielding a final analytical sample of 519 primary schools. 141 schools did not meet the inclusion criteria. The analysis therefore covered schools with eligible published statements rather than the entire regional primary–school population. The possibility that excluded schools differed systematically from those included was considered when interpreting the findings.

Deprivation and FSM classification

To analyse variation by deprivation level, socioeconomic data were obtained from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) *Mapping Income Deprivation at a Local Authority Level* dataset (Office for National Statistics, 2024). Each school was assigned the deprivation classification of its corresponding local authority. The ten national deprivation deciles were grouped into three categories:

- Most deprived: deciles 1–4.
- Middle: deciles 5–6.
- Least deprived: deciles 7–10.

This classification provided a broad measure of local authority context. It does not capture variation within local authorities or directly measure the socioeconomic circumstances of individual pupils.

School-level free school meal (FSM) eligibility provided a separate measure of the concentration of disadvantage within each school. Schools were grouped into those with fewer than 25% of pupils eligible for FSM and those with 25% or more. The deprivation and FSM classifications were analysed separately because they describe different aspects of school context: deprivation within the surrounding local authority and the proportion of pupils meeting FSM eligibility criteria.

Coding framework

Statements were coded for the presence or absence of 30 strategies drawn from the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit. Definitions and illustrative examples were developed for each strategy to support consistent identification across statements.

School-reported challenges were coded using the 20 challenge categories identified in the EEF’s Pupil Premium statement research. Adopting these categories provided a common framework for describing schools’ reported needs and supported comparison with the national findings.

Each strategy and challenge was recorded as “Yes” where it was identified in the statement and “No” where it was not identified.

Multiple strategies and challenges could be recorded for each school. Consequently, percentages across categories were not expected to sum to 100%.

These codes captured the content of published statements. A “No” code did not establish that an approach was absent from school practice or that a challenge did not affect its pupils. Similarly, a “Yes” code did not indicate the scale, frequency or quality of provision.

AI-assisted extraction and validation

Coding was undertaken using a Claude Sonnet model, supported by prompts containing the coding definitions and illustrative examples of each of the codes. The prompts were refined iteratively through comparison with researcher coding. This process involved adapting the instructions supplied to the model, rather than retraining the underlying model.

An initial random sample of 30 statements was coded for Toolkit strand independently by a researcher and the AI model. Overall percentage agreement for strategy coding was approximately 80%, with lower agreement for some individual strategies. The research team reviewed discrepancies and refined the relevant prompts to clarify category definitions and coding decisions.

A second validation exercise used a further independent sample of 30 statements. Following prompt refinement, overall agreement for strategy coding was approximately 95%, with agreement exceeding 90% for every individual strategy. Discrepancies were reviewed and resolved by the expert coder. The refined prompts were then used to code the remaining statements.

An identical extraction and two-phase validation process was applied independently to the coding of the school-reported challenges as per the EEF coding guidelines. Overall agreement for challenges coding was 95%.

Percentage agreement was used as an indicator of consistency between researcher and AI coding. It does not adjust for agreement occurring by chance and may be influenced by the frequency of each category. The validation findings therefore provide evidence of coding consistency within the validation samples, rather than a guarantee of equivalent performance across every statement. The coding framework and extraction prompts are provided in the appendices.

Comparative Analytical Methods

Analyses were descriptive and organised around the study’s research questions. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each strategy and challenge across the full sample. Subgroup percentages were calculated using the number of schools in the relevant group as the denominator.

Reported strategies

The analysis identified the most and least frequently reported strategies across the region. Further comparisons examined the five strategies classified as high impact and the fourteen classified as moderate impact within the study’s coding framework. For high-impact strategies, the analysis examined the frequency of each approach and the distribution of schools according to the number reported. For moderate-impact strategies, the mean number reported per school was calculated. Patterns were examined by local authority, deprivation category and FSM eligibility band, as presented in the results. These classifications were used to organise the analysis. The number of strategies reported was not treated as a measure of the quality or effectiveness of a school’s Pupil Premium provision.

Reported challenges

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each of the 20 challenge categories. The most frequently reported challenges were then compared across local authorities and FSM eligibility bands to examine whether the profile of reported need differed by geography and concentration of disadvantage.

Comparison across academic years

Aggregate findings for 2025/26 were compared with those from the 2024/25 regional review (Harrison et al., 2026). The earlier analysis included 552 schools, compared with 519 in the current study. Because the annual samples differed in size and composition, comparisons were interpreted as differences between annual samples rather than changes within a matched cohort of schools. The comparisons examined reported strategies, the number of strategies recorded and the most frequently identified challenges. Apparent changes could reflect differences in school practice, reporting, sample composition or coding, and were not interpreted as evidence of causal effects.

National comparison

Regional findings were compared descriptively with the EEF’s national analysis of 2025/26 Pupil Premium statements, using primary-school findings where available (Education Endowment Foundation, 2026b). Comparisons focused on corresponding challenge categories and broadly comparable strategies. Differences in terminology, coding and sampling were considered when interpreting similarities and differences.

Statement availability

The number of schools with an eligible current statement was recorded alongside the number with missing or outdated statements. Publication availability was compared with the previous annual review, including whether schools excluded in 2025/26 had been included in 2024/25. Availability at the point of collection was distinguished from evidence that a statement had been published by the annual deadline.

Software

Data preparation, analysis and visualisation were conducted in R using RStudio. Packages included dplyr, tidyr, stringr and ggplot2 from the tidyverse, with readxl and here used for data import and file management.

Gap map development

To complement the tabulated and graphical analyses, an interactive gap map was developed to provide a visual overview of Pupil Premium strategy use across the North East MSA. Local authorities are displayed as rows and strategies as columns, with strategies grouped according to their EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit impact category. Bubble size represents the proportion of schools within each local authority reporting use of a strategy, rather than the raw number of schools, allowing more meaningful comparison between local authorities of different sizes. Colour is used to indicate deprivation level. To draw attention to particularly low levels of reported uptake, local authority–strategy combinations falling below a predefined threshold were identified as gaps. Cells in which fewer than 5% of schools reported use of a strategy are highlighted with a pale red background and red outline. The interactive version also includes a companion strategy–ranking chart and filters that allow the data to be explored by local authority, deprivation level and school phase. The gap map was intended as a descriptive visualisation rather than a measure of strategy effectiveness. Its purpose was to make patterns of adoption and underuse easier to identify across the region and to support comparison between local authorities and deprivation groups.

Ethics and data management

The study was internally reviewed for ethical considerations. It involved secondary analysis of publicly available school documents, with no direct recruitment of participants and no collection of individual pupil data. The research focused on school–level reporting. Downloaded statements and the resulting analytical dataset were stored securely within the project database. Data handling was undertaken in accordance with the organisation’s data protection and information governance procedures.

Results

At the time of data collection, 660 primary schools were identified across the North East MSA area. Of these, 519 (78.6%) had an accessible Pupil Premium strategy statement covering the 2025/26 academic year and were included in the analysis. 134 schools (20.3%) were excluded because the available statements related to previous academic years. Statements could not be accessed or located for five schools (0.8%), including cases involving broken web links. Two schools (0.3%) were excluded because five or less pupils were in receipt of Pupil Premium funding. The final analytical sample therefore comprised 519 primary schools (Figure 1).

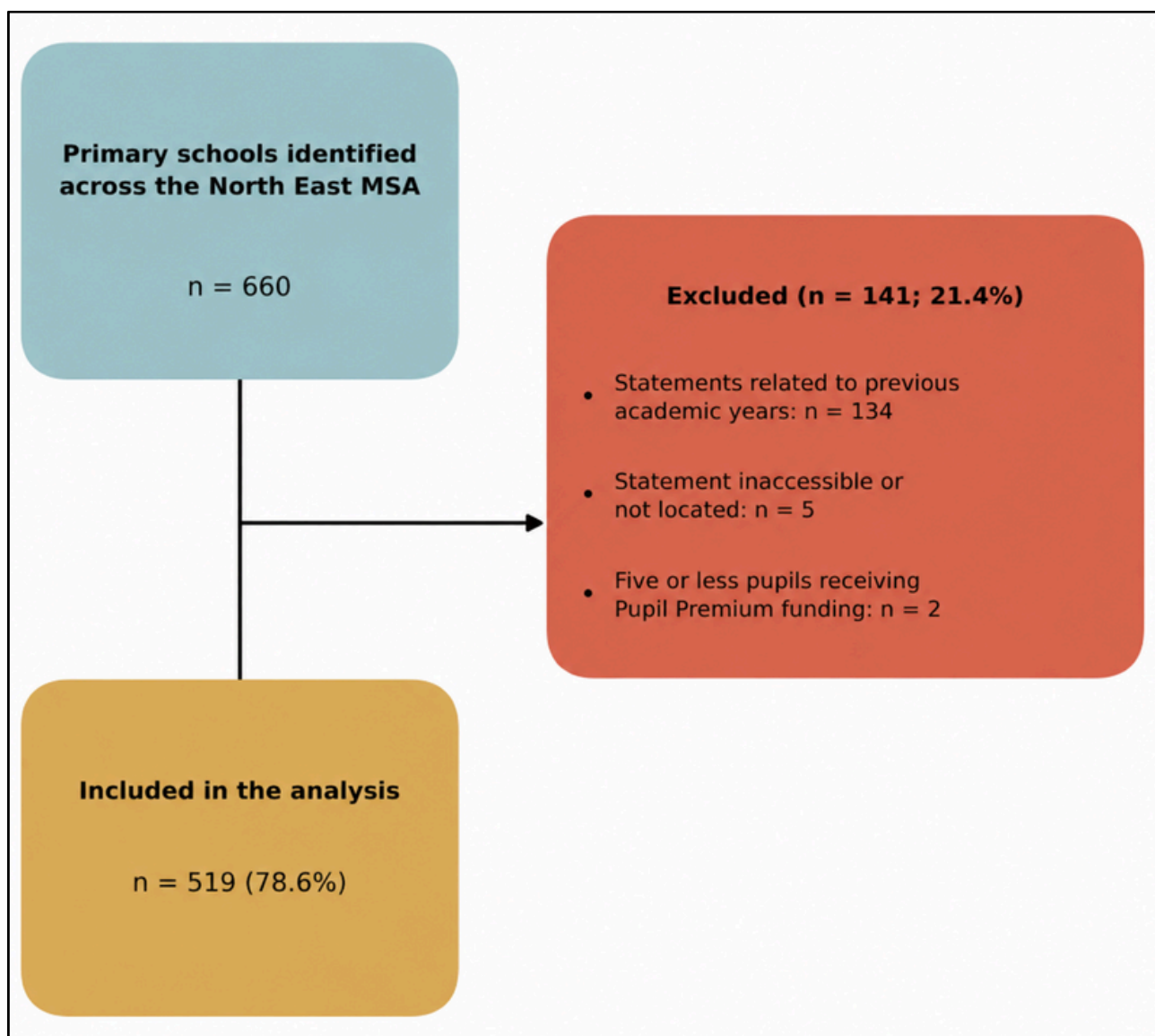


Figure 1. PRISMA inclusion flow diagram

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the schools included in the analysis. Of these, 33.1% were located in County Durham (172 schools), 13.5% in Sunderland (70 schools) and 11.2% in Gateshead (58 schools). In terms of deprivation, 322 schools (62.0%) were located in the most deprived areas, while 122 (23.5%) were situated in the least deprived areas and 75 (14.5%) in the middle deprivation category.

Characteristic	Category	Number of Schools (%)
Region	Durham	172 (33.1%)
	Gateshead	58 (11.2%)
	Newcastle upon Tyne	52 (10.0%)
	North Tyneside	49 (9.4%)
	Northumberland	75 (14.5%)
	South Tyneside	43 (8.3%)
	Sunderland	70 (13.5%)
Deprivation	Least Deprived	122 (23.5%)
	Middle	75 (14.5%)
	Most Deprived	322 (62.0%)

Table 1. School characteristics

Regional Pupil Premium Strategies

Figure 2 presents the five most frequently reported Pupil Premium strategies among primary schools across the North East MSA. Phonics and Social and Emotional Learning were each identified in 87.5% of statements, followed by Small-Group Tuition (84.6%), interventions led by Teaching Assistants (77.3%) and Feedback (70.9%). Within the study’s EEF Toolkit-based classification, Feedback was the only high-impact strategy among these five; the remaining four are classified in the Toolkit as having a moderate impact on pupil attainment. Frequencies and percentages for all strategies are presented in Appendix A.

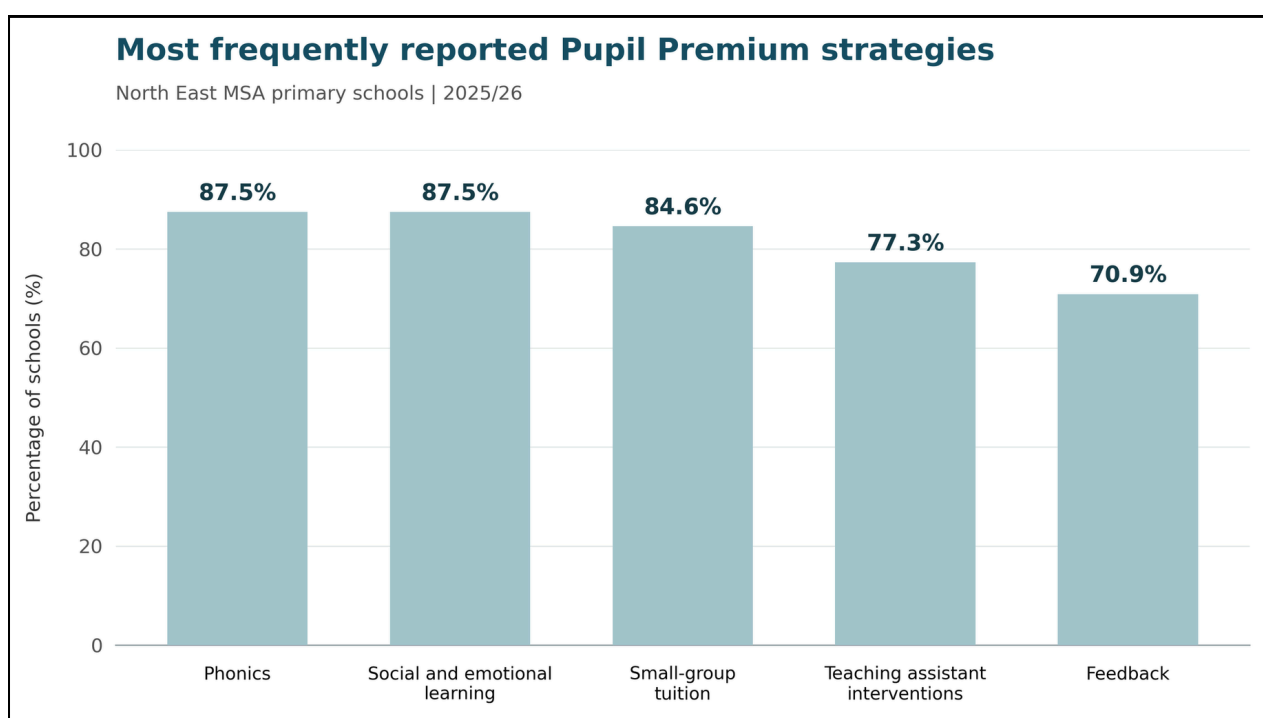


Figure 2. Five most frequently reported Pupil Premium strategies among North East MSA primary schools, 2025/26

Implementation gap map

To provide an overview of how reported Pupil Premium strategy use varies across the North East MSA, the coded strategy data were also presented as an interactive gap map (Figure 3). The map displays local authorities as rows and strategies as columns, with strategies grouped according to their EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit impact category. Bubble size represents the proportion of schools within each local authority reporting use of the strategy, allowing comparisons between areas of different sizes. Colour indicates deprivation level, while cells highlighted in red identify local authority–strategy combinations in which fewer than 5% of schools reported use of the approach. The gap map therefore provides a visual summary of both widespread and underused approaches across the region.

The gap map makes the consistently low reported use of strategies such as peer tutoring immediately visible, while also showing whether low uptake is concentrated within particular local authorities or deprivation groups. The interactive version can additionally be filtered by local authority and deprivation level and viewed alongside a strategy-ranking chart. To explore the interactive gap map, visit: <https://whatworkededucation.shinyapps.io/GapMap/>.



Figure 3. Regional gap map of reported Pupil Premium strategy use across North East MSA primary schools, by local authority, EEF impact category and deprivation level, 2025/26.

High-impact strategies by local authority

Figure 4 presents the reported use of high-impact strategies across the seven local authority areas. Feedback and Oral Language interventions were generally the most frequently reported approaches. Feedback appeared in 61.4% of statements in Sunderland and 82.7% in Newcastle upon Tyne, while Oral Language interventions ranged from 59.2% in North Tyneside to 88.4% in South Tyneside. Reading comprehension strategies were reported by between 44.9% of schools in North Tyneside and 65.1% in County Durham. Metacognition and Self-Regulation was less frequently reported across all local authorities, ranging from 8.6% in Gateshead to 23.3% in South Tyneside. Peer Tutoring was the least frequently reported high-impact strategy in every area and was not identified in any statements from Newcastle upon Tyne or Sunderland. Frequencies and percentages by local authority are provided in Appendix B.

Number of high-impact strategies reported by local authority

Figure 5 presents the proportion of schools reporting none, one, two to three, or four to five of the five high-impact strategies identified in the EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit. Across the North East MSA, most schools reported two to three strategies (64.7%, $n = 336$). Smaller proportions reported none (5.2%, $n = 27$) or four to five (8.5%, $n = 44$). This pattern was broadly consistent across local authorities. South Tyneside (74.4%) and Newcastle upon Tyne (73.1%) had the highest proportions of schools reporting two to three strategies. Every school in the South Tyneside sample reported at least one high-impact strategy, while Northumberland had the highest proportion of statements in which none were identified (9.3%).

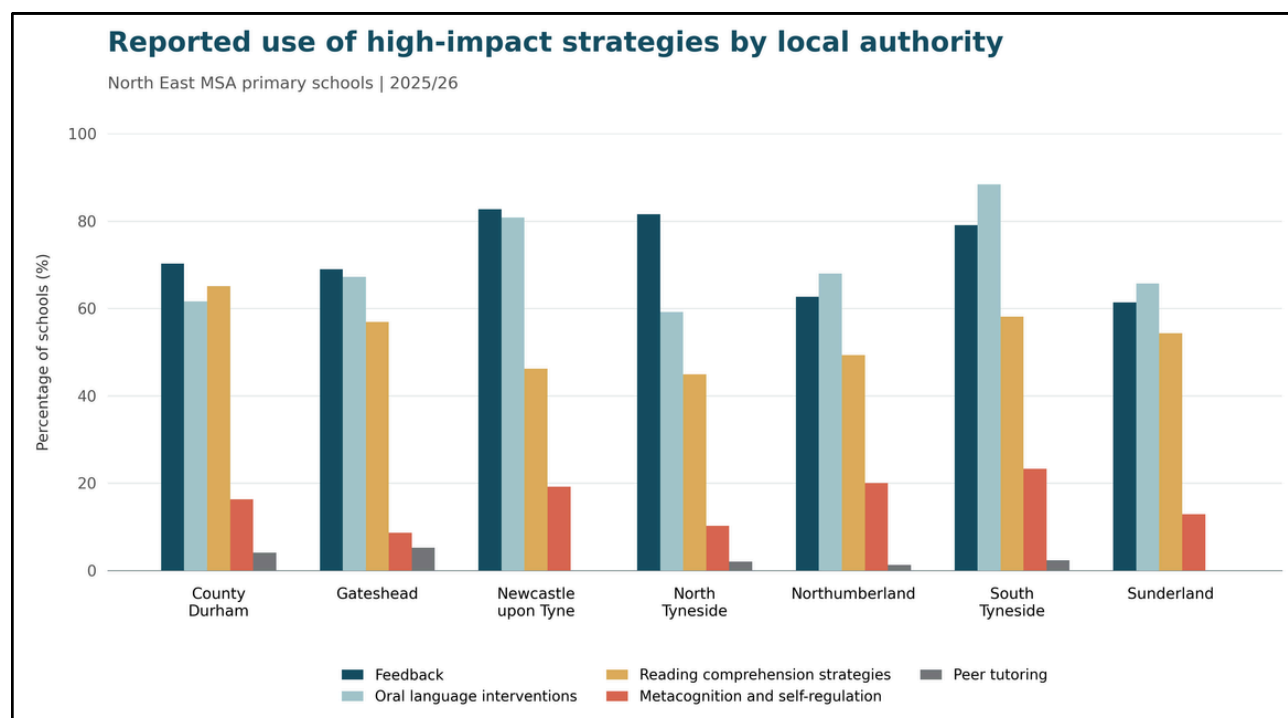


Figure 4. Reported use of high-impact Pupil Premium strategies by local authority across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

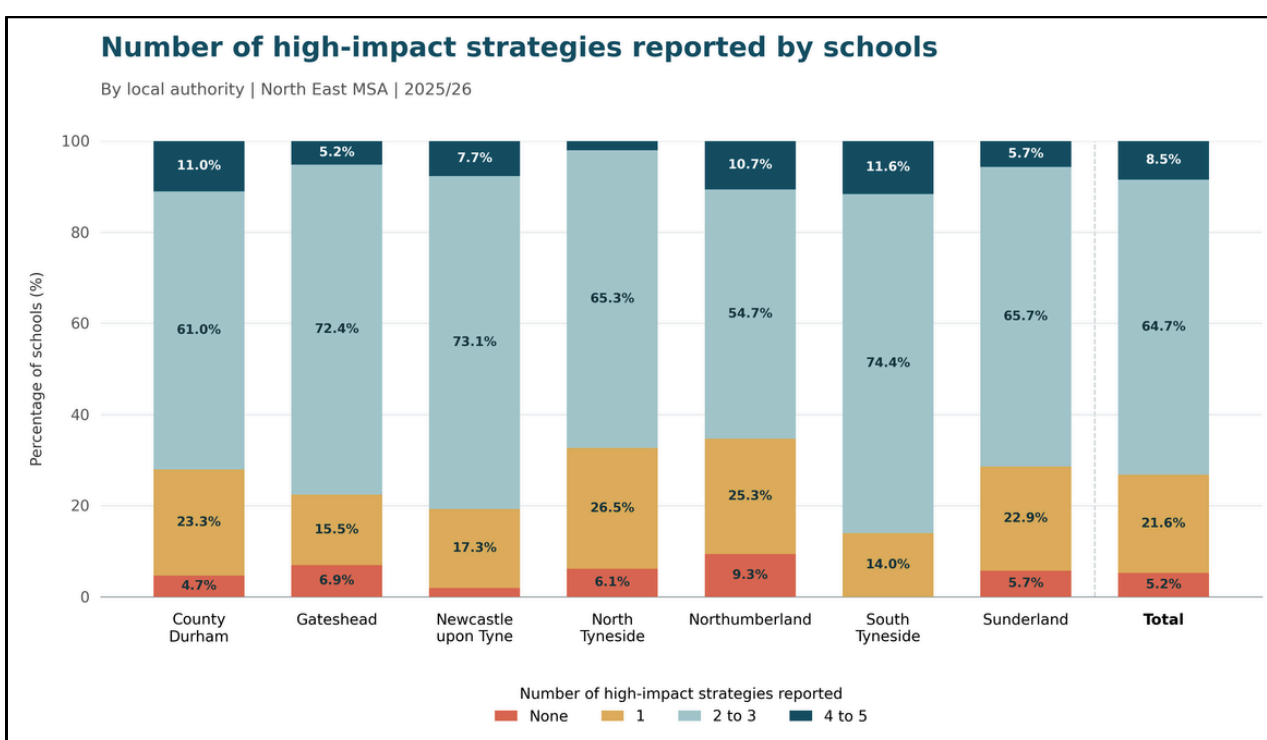


Figure 5. Number of high-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by schools, by local authority and overall across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Number of moderate-impact strategies reported by local authority

Table 2 presents the mean number of moderate-impact strategies reported by schools in each local authority, out of the fourteen identified in the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, rounded to the nearest whole number. Schools in County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside reported an average of seven strategies, compared with six in Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland. These rounded averages suggest limited variation between local authorities in the number of moderate-impact strategies reported.

Local authority	Schools (n)	Mean strategies reported
County Durham	172	7
Gateshead	58	7
Newcastle upon Tyne	52	7
North Tyneside	49	7
Northumberland	75	6
South Tyneside	43	6
Sunderland	70	6

Table 2. Mean number of moderate-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by schools, by local authority across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

High-Impact strategy adoption by deprivation level

Figure 6 shows the proportion of schools using each high-impact strategy across the three deprivation groups. Feedback was the most commonly reported strategy in all groups, with adoption rates very similar across deprivation levels (70.2%–72.1%). Use of Oral Language interventions and Reading Comprehension strategies was also broadly consistent between groups. Metacognition and Self-Regulation was reported less frequently, ranging from 13.3% to 16.8%, while Peer Tutoring was the least commonly used strategy across all deprivation categories (1.9%–4.0%). Overall, there was little variation in the pattern of high-impact strategy use by deprivation level.

Moderate-Impact strategy adoption by deprivation level

The mean number of moderate-impact strategies used was very similar across deprivation groups (Table 3). High-deprivation schools reported an average of seven strategies, compared with six in both middle- and low-deprivation schools, indicating only minimal variation by deprivation level.

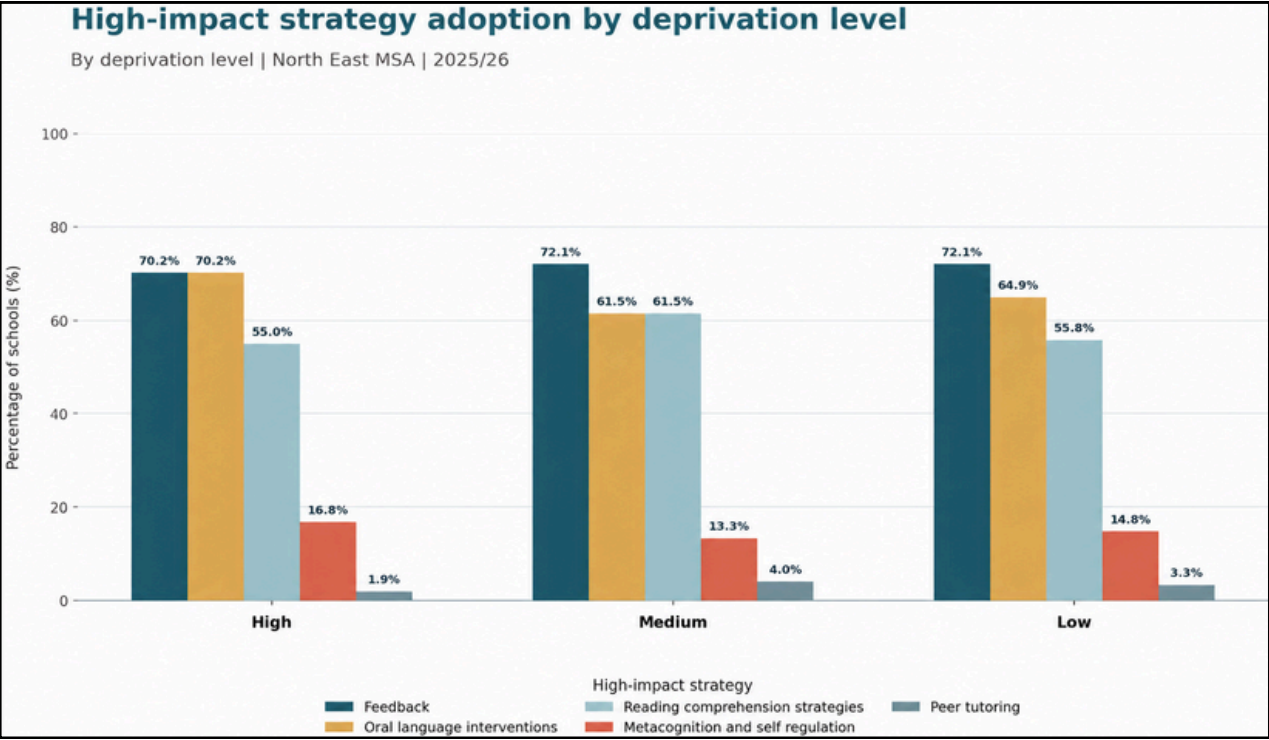


Figure 6. Number of high-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by schools, by deprivation level across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Deprivation level	Number of schools (n)	Mean number of moderate strategies used
High	322	7
Medium	75	6
Low	122	6

Table 3. Mean number of moderate-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by schools, by deprivation level across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

High impact strategies by proportion of FSM pupils

High-impact strategy use was examined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), comparing schools with fewer than 25% FSM to those with 25% or more (Table 4). Feedback was the most widely used high-impact strategy in both groups, adopted at almost identical rates (71.5% vs 71.1%), indicating that this strategy is applied consistently regardless of the level of pupil disadvantage. Oral Language interventions were similarly prevalent across both groups, though adoption was marginally higher among lower-FSM schools (70.9% vs 67.2%).

By contrast, Reading Comprehension strategies were used more frequently in higher-FSM schools (58.5% vs 51.7%), suggesting that schools serving a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils may be placing relatively greater emphasis on literacy-focused comprehension support. Metacognition and Self-Regulation strategies were adopted at broadly similar, comparatively low rates in both groups (around 16%), while Peer Tutoring remained the least used strategy overall, with minimal variation by FSM level (2.6% vs 2.5%).

Proportion of pupils eligible for FSM	Strategy	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
FSM <25%	Feedback	108	71.5%
	Oral language interventions	107	70.9%
	Reading comprehension strategies	78	51.7%
	Metacognition and self-regulation	24	15.9%
	Peer tutoring	4	2.6%
FSM ≥25%	Feedback	254	71.1%
	Oral language interventions	240	67.2%
	Reading comprehension strategies	209	58.5%
	Metacognition and self-regulation	58	16.2%
	Peer tutoring	9	2.5%

Table 4. Top five high-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by primary schools, by proportion of pupils eligible for FSM across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Challenges reported by schools

Figure 7 shows the most commonly reported challenges affecting pupils eligible for Pupil Premium. English/literacy attainment was the most frequently identified challenge, reported by 92.3% of schools. This was followed by SEMH and wellbeing (80.2%), attendance (79.2%), access to enrichment (71.7%), and general attainment (54.1%). Frequencies and percentages for all reported challenges are provided in Appendix D.

Challenges faced by region

Table 5 (p25) presents the five most frequently reported challenges in each local authority area. Attainment in English/Literacy was consistently the most prevalent challenge across all seven regions, ranking first (or joint first) in every case, with prevalence ranging from 89.3% to 95.3%. SEMH and wellbeing, attendance, and access to enrichment also featured among the top challenges in nearly every region, reflecting a broadly shared set of core concerns across the North East MSA. Some regional variation was evident beyond these common challenges: North Tyneside was the only region to report personal circumstances within its top five, while attainment in maths/numeracy appeared prominently in County Durham, Northumberland, and Sunderland, and general attainment concerns featured more strongly in Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, and South Tyneside.

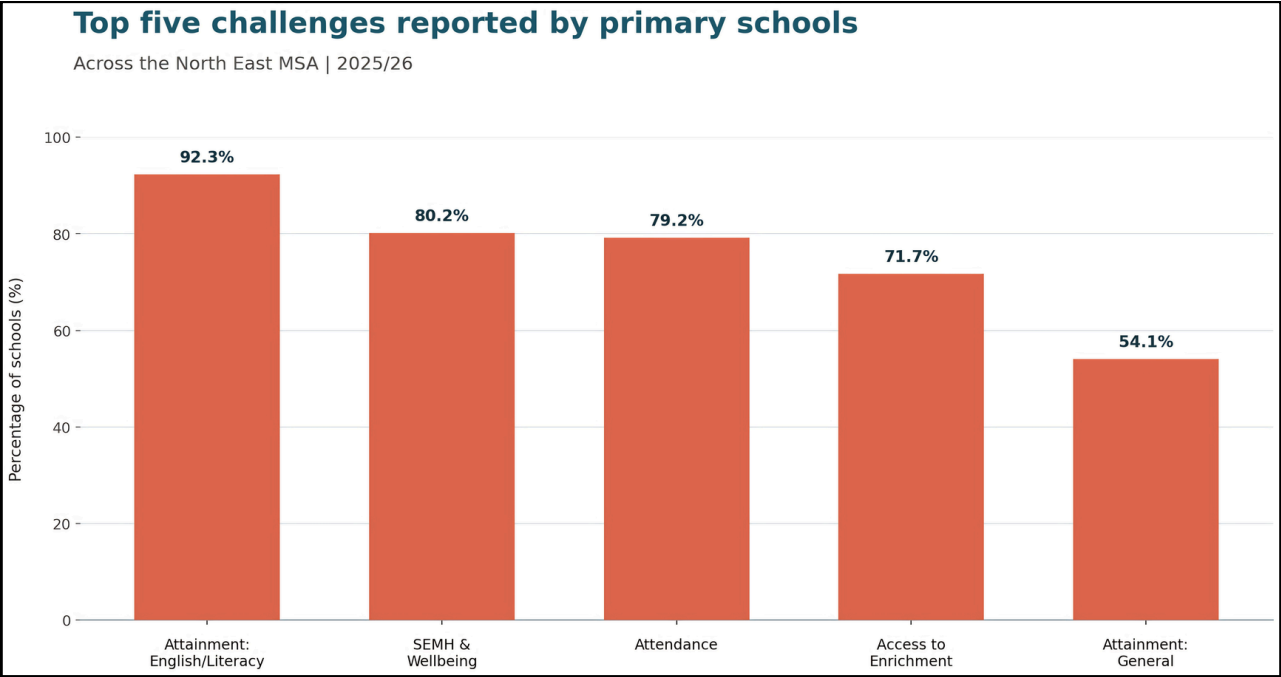


Figure 7. Top five challenges reported by primary schools across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Challenges faced by proportion of FSM pupils

Table 6 (p25) presents the top five challenges reported by schools, stratified by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Attainment in English/Literacy was the most commonly reported challenge in both groups, though its prevalence was notably higher among schools with $\text{FSM} \geq 25\%$ (94.7%) compared to those with $\text{FSM} < 25\%$ (86.8%), suggesting that literacy attainment concerns intensify with higher levels of disadvantage. Attendance similarly ranked higher and was more prevalent in higher-FSM schools (82.1% vs 72.8%), consistent with the well-established association between socioeconomic disadvantage and school attendance. In contrast, SEMH and wellbeing concerns were reported at broadly similar and high levels across both groups (82.1% vs 79.6%), while access to enrichment and general attainment challenges showed minimal variation by FSM level.

Challenge	County Durham	Gateshead	Newcastle upon Tyne	North Tyneside	Northumberland	South Tyneside	Sunderland
English/literacy attainment	162 (94.2%)	53 (91.4%)	48 (92.3%)	44 (89.8%)	67 (89.3%)	41 (95.3%)	64 (91.4%)
SEMH and wellbeing	147 (85.5%)	47 (81.0%)	42 (80.8%)	42 (85.7%)	61 (81.3%)	28 (65.1%)	49 (70.0%)
Attendance	138 (80.2%)	46 (79.3%)	48 (92.3%)	37 (75.5%)	50 (66.7%)	35 (81.4%)	57 (81.4%)
Access to enrichment	128 (74.4%)	41 (70.7%)	40 (76.9%)	31 (63.3%)	51 (68.0%)	33 (76.7%)	48 (68.6%)
Maths/numeracy attainment	92 (53.5%)	–	–	–	45 (60.0%)	–	36 (51.4%)
General attainment	–	34 (58.6%)	36 (69.2%)	–	–	29 (67.4%)	–
Personal circumstances	–	–	–	29 (59.2%)	–	–	–

Table 5. Top five challenges reported by primary schools, by local authority across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Challenge	FSM <25%	FSM ≥25%
English/literacy attainment	131 (86.8%)	338 (94.7%)
SEMH and wellbeing	124 (82.1%)	284 (79.6%)
Access to enrichment	110 (72.8%)	256 (71.7%)
Attendance	110 (72.8%)	293 (82.1%)
General attainment	82 (54.3%)	192 (53.8%)

Table 6. Top five challenges reported by primary schools, by proportion of pupils eligible for FSM across the North East MSA, 2025/26.

Comparison with the 2024/25 academic year

This section compares findings from the 2025/26 review with those reported in 2024/25, examining whether patterns in the challenges identified by schools and the Pupil Premium strategies they reported have remained broadly consistent or changed over time. As the schools included in each review are not identical, the comparisons should be interpreted as indicative of year-on-year patterns across the region rather than as a direct longitudinal comparison of the same schools.

Sample coverage

In the 2024/25 review, 552 primary schools had a Pupil Premium statement available on their website at the time of data collection. The 2025/26 review included 519 schools in the final analytical sample. Although the samples differ slightly in size and composition, both represent a substantial majority of primary schools across the North East MSA. County Durham accounted for the largest share of schools in both years, reflecting its position as the largest constituent local authority in the region.

High-Impact Strategy use: Year-on-year comparison

Figure 8 compares the five high-impact strategies reported in both the 2024/25 and 2025/26 reviews. The largest change was in the use of Feedback, which increased from 46.6% of schools in 2024/25 to 70.9% in 2025/26, a rise of 24.3 percentage points. Reading Comprehension strategies also increased, from 51.4% to 56.1%, while Oral Language interventions rose from 60.5% to 67.6%. These findings indicate greater reported use of three of the five high-impact strategies across the two review periods. Reference to the use of Peer Tutoring, however, remained largely unchanged, reported by 2.4% of schools in 2024/25 and 2.5% in 2025/26. It therefore continued to be the least frequently reported high-impact strategy by a substantial margin. Reference to Metacognition and Self-Regulation strategies decreased, from 25.5% in 2024–25 to 15.8% in 2025/26. Overall, the year-on-year comparison suggests increasing uptake of Feedback, Oral Language interventions and Reading Comprehension strategies, while the low level of Peer Tutoring identified in the previous review has persisted and reference to Metacognition and Self-Regulation has decreased.

Mean number of strategies used: Year-on-year comparison

Figure 9 compares the mean number of high-impact and moderate-impact strategies reported per school in 2024/25 and 2025/26, rounded to the nearest whole number. The overall breadth of strategy use was similar across the two years, with schools reporting an average of two of the five high-impact strategies and seven of the fourteen moderate-impact strategies in both review periods. This suggests that the year-on-year differences were driven primarily by changes in the uptake of particular strategies, such as feedback and reading comprehension, rather than by an increase in the overall number of strategies reported by schools. 26

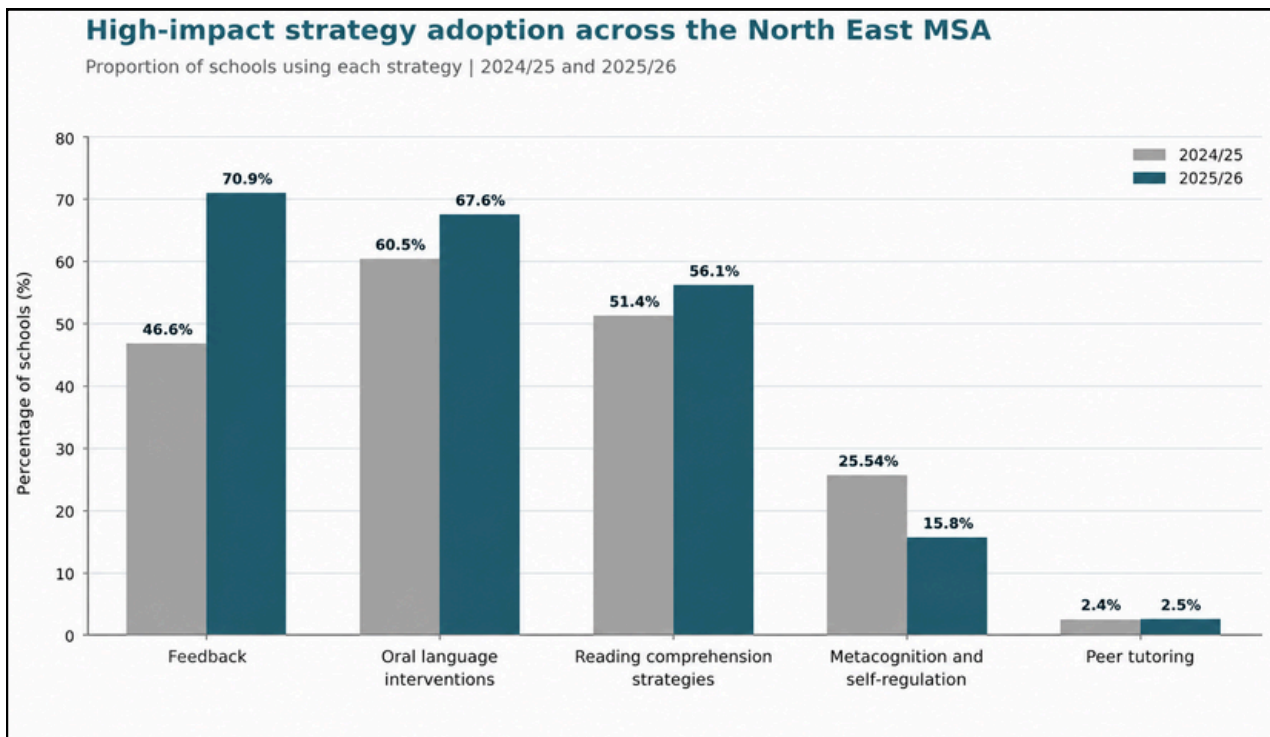


Figure 8. High-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by primary schools across the North East MSA, comparing 2024/25 and 2025/26.

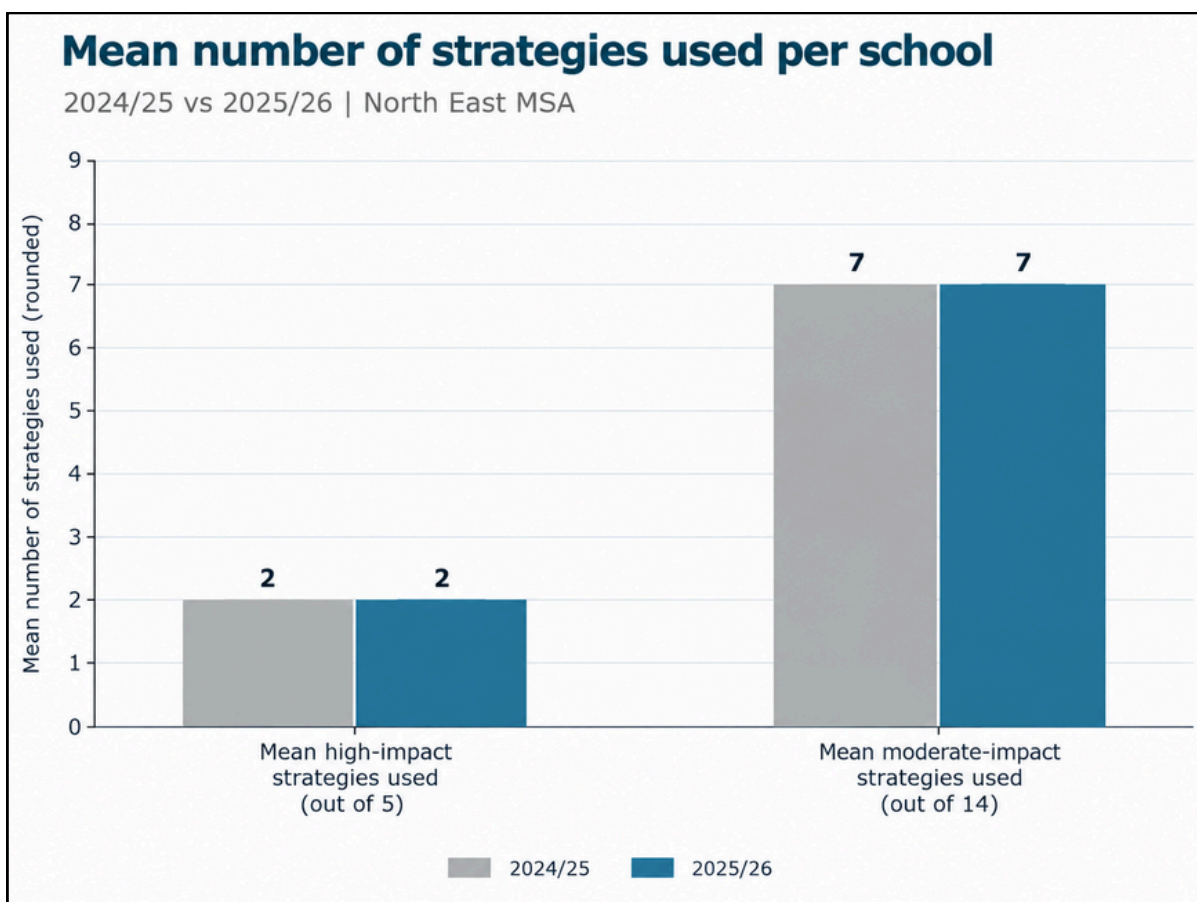


Figure 9. Mean number of high-impact and moderate-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported per primary school across the North East MSA, comparing 2024/25 and 2025/26.

High-Impact Strategy use by region: Year-on-year comparison

Table 7 compares the reported use of each high-impact strategy across the seven North East local authority areas in 2024/25 and 2025/26. Feedback increased in every area, with the largest rise in South Tyneside, from 24.3% to 79.1%. Reading Comprehension strategies increased in five of the seven areas, with the largest gains in North Tyneside and Northumberland. Oral Language interventions also increased in five areas, most notably in South Tyneside, where reported use rose from 62.2% to 88.4%. In contrast, Metacognition and Self-Regulation declined across all seven local authority areas, making it the only high-impact strategy to show a consistent regional decrease. Peer Tutoring remained very uncommon in both years, with only small increases in two areas (County Durham, Gateshead) and negligible reported use in Newcastle upon Tyne and Sunderland.

Region	Feedback		Oral Language Interventions		Reading Comprehension Strategies		Metacognition & Self-Regulation		Peer Tutoring	
	2024/25 (%)	2025/26 (%)	2024/25 (%)	2025/26 (%)	2024/25 (%)	2025/26 (%)	2024/25 (%)	2025/26 (%)	2024/25 (%)	2025/26 (%)
County Durham	47.7	70.3	58.1	61.6	61.0	65.1	25.0	16.3	2.9	4.1
Gateshead	42.4	69.0	57.6	67.2	52.5	56.9	20.3	8.6	1.7	5.2
Newcastle upon Tyne	47.8	82.7	74.6	80.8	52.2	46.2	31.3	19.2	0.0	0.0
North Tyneside	59.6	81.6	48.9	59.2	34.0	44.9	27.7	10.2	4.3	2.0
Northumberland	44.8	62.7	59.4	68.0	36.5	49.3	25.0	20.0	4.2	1.3
South Tyneside	24.3	79.1	62.2	88.4	64.9	58.1	27.0	23.3	2.7	2.3
Sunderland	51.4	61.4	63.5	65.7	51.4	54.3	24.3	12.9	0.0	0.0
Total	46.6	70.9	60.5	67.6	51.5	56.1	25.54	15.8	2.4	2.5

Table 7. High-impact Pupil Premium strategies reported by primary schools, by local authority across the North East MSA, comparing 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Challenges: Year-on-year comparison

The challenges reported by schools were broadly consistent across the two academic years. In 2024/25, the most frequently identified challenges included English/literacy attainment, attendance, SEMH and wellbeing, access to enrichment, mathematics/numeracy attainment, parental engagement, and local factors. A very similar pattern was evident in 2025/26, with English/literacy attainment remaining the most commonly reported challenge (92.3%), followed by SEMH and wellbeing (80.2%), attendance (79.2%), and access to enrichment (71.7%). The association between deprivation and attendance concerns was also evident in both years. In 2024/25, attendance was reported as a challenge by 83.2% of schools in the most deprived areas, compared with 64.0% of schools in the least deprived areas. The same overall pattern was observed in 2025/26, with attendance concerns more commonly reported among schools serving higher-deprivation communities.

Comparison with EEF national statistics (2025/26)

This section compares the findings from the North East MSA review with national evidence from the EEF's 2025/26 Pupil Premium Statement Research. The EEF study analysed a stratified random sample of 1,395 schools across England and reported findings separately by school phase, providing a national primary-school benchmark against which patterns in the North East can be considered. The EEF's 2025/26 report presents its strategy data using merged, broader categories rather than reporting each individual EEF Toolkit strand separately as in this report. As a result, direct like-for-like comparisons with regional findings were only possible for a limited number of measures, specifically small-group and peer tutoring use and the top reported challenges, where the EEF's reporting categories aligned closely enough with strand-level coding to allow a meaningful comparison. Where the EEF's aggregated categories did not correspond clearly to an individual strategy in the coding framework, no comparison has been drawn, to avoid presenting a misleading or imprecise match between the two datasets.

Tuition-based approaches

Figure 10 compares the reported use of three tuition-based approaches in North East primary schools with the national primary-school picture. Small-group tuition was more commonly reported in the North East (84.6%) than nationally (79%), as was one-to-one tuition (66.7% compared with 60%). In contrast, peer tutoring was reported much less frequently in the North East, at 2.5% compared with 13% nationally. Overall, the comparison suggests a stronger regional emphasis on small-group and one-to-one tuition, alongside substantially lower use of peer-led tutoring approaches.

Use of EEF evidence

The proportion of schools citing EEF evidence in their Pupil Premium statements was very similar in the North East and nationally. EEF evidence was referenced by 94% of North East primary schools, compared with 93% nationally, indicating similarly high levels of reported engagement with EEF evidence sources.

Challenges

Figure 11 compares the three most frequently reported challenges in North East primary schools with the equivalent national primary-phase findings from the EEF. English/literacy attainment was reported at almost identical levels regionally and nationally, at 92.3% and 92% respectively. Attendance was reported slightly less frequently in the North East (79.2%) than nationally (83%), while SEMH and wellbeing showed a similarly small difference (80.2% compared with 82%). Overall, the regional pattern closely mirrors the national picture across all three challenges, suggesting that the main issues identified by North East schools are broadly consistent with those reported across England.

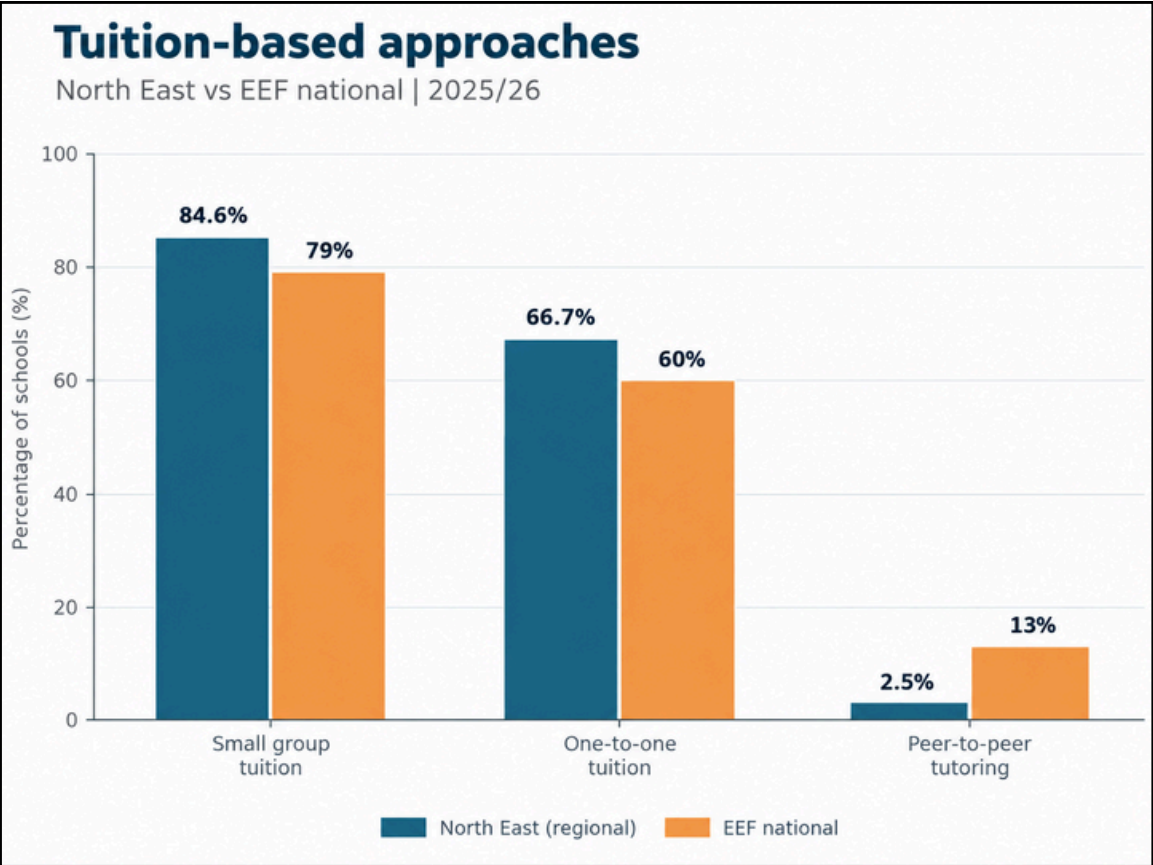


Figure 10. Tuition-based approaches reported by primary schools in the North East MSA compared with EEF national primary-school findings, 2025/26.

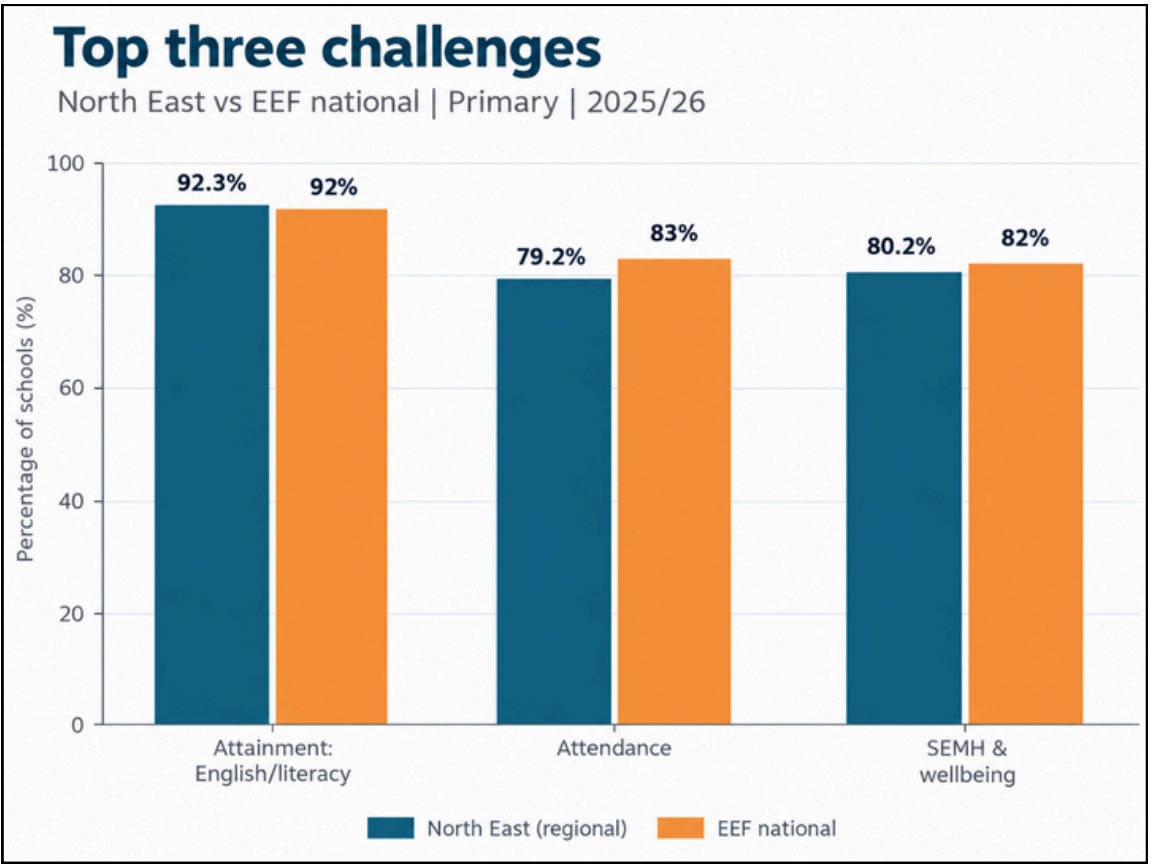


Figure 11. Most frequently reported challenges among primary schools in the North East MSA compared with EEF national primary-school findings, 2025/26.

Discussion

Coverage, publication compliance and the quality of Pupil Premium reporting

The 2025/26 review provides a substantial regional picture of Pupil Premium priorities and practice, drawing on 519 primary-school strategy statements across the North East MSA. However, the findings also highlight an important issue before the content of those statements is considered: the availability and currency of the statements themselves. A total of 134 schools were excluded because an up-to-date 2025/26 Pupil Premium strategy statement could not be identified. The scale of this issue varied considerably between local authority areas, with the proportion of missing current statements ranging from 2.2% in one area to 39.7% in another.

Pupil Premium strategy statements are intended to function as current planning, accountability and communication documents. Where statements are missing or substantially out of date, it becomes more difficult for governors, school improvement partners, local authorities and other stakeholders to understand how schools are identifying disadvantage-related needs, allocating funding and reviewing impact. It also reduces the completeness of any regional assessment of Pupil Premium practice and may introduce bias if schools without current statements differ systematically from those included in the analysis.

The year-on-year picture is particularly informative. Of the 134 schools excluded in 2025/26, 98 had published a statement in time to be included in the previous year's review. This suggests that non-publication is not confined to a fixed group of schools that repeatedly fail to comply; rather, timely publication can lapse from one year to the next. For regional and local school-improvement teams, this points towards the value of annual monitoring, rather than assuming that schools which were compliant in one cycle will remain so. A longitudinal approach could distinguish persistent non-publication from occasional delay and allow support or challenge to be targeted more appropriately.

There is also an important distinction between citing evidence and demonstrating evidence-informed decision making. Across the statements reviewed, schools frequently referred to the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit and to headline evidence estimates, but the rationale connecting identified pupil need, strategy selection, implementation and evaluation was often less explicit. This matters because a strategy statement is potentially much more useful when it explains not only what evidence has been consulted, but why a particular approach has been selected for a particular problem, how it will be implemented, and how leaders will know whether it is working.

This should not be interpreted as evidence that schools are making poor decisions in practice. The published statement may not capture the full reasoning taking place within leadership teams, and standardised wording may partly reflect the administrative pressures associated with statutory reporting. Nevertheless, the same pattern was identified in the 2024/25 review, suggesting that it is a recurring feature of regional reporting rather than an isolated issue. For schools and those supporting them, there is therefore an opportunity to strengthen statements by making the sequence from identified need, to an evidence-informed response, implementation, monitoring and evaluation much clearer.

A concentrated and persistent profile of disadvantage-related challenges

One of the clearest findings from the review is the consistency of the challenges reported by schools. English/literacy attainment was identified by 92.3% of schools, followed by SEMH and wellbeing (80.2%), attendance (79.2%), access to enrichment (71.7%) and general attainment (54.1%). The same broad pattern was visible across local authorities, with English/literacy attainment ranking first or joint first in every area and never falling below approximately nine in ten schools.

For teachers and school leaders, this suggests that the challenge landscape is not dominated by highly localised or idiosyncratic concerns. Rather, schools across very different parts of the North East are identifying a common set of barriers centred on literacy, attendance and wellbeing, with enrichment and wider attainment concerns layered around them. At system level, this degree of consistency has implications for collaborative improvement activity. There may be substantial scope for shared professional development, cross-school learning and regional infrastructure in these areas because large numbers of schools are attempting to address similar problems.

At the same time, the findings caution against treating disadvantage as uniform. The overall challenge profile was similar across FSM groups, but some differences were meaningful. English/literacy attainment was reported by 86.8% of schools with fewer than 25% FSM-eligible pupils compared with 94.7% of schools at or above 25% FSM. Attendance showed a similarly clear difference, increasing from 72.8% to 82.1%. By contrast, SEMH and wellbeing was reported at broadly similar levels in the two groups (82.1% and 79.6%). This distinction is potentially useful for school-improvement planning. It suggests that wellbeing is a widespread concern across school contexts, whereas literacy and attendance difficulties become more prominent as the concentration of disadvantage increases. That does not establish that deprivation causes these patterns, but it does indicate where schools serving higher-FSM populations may require particularly intensive support.

The year-on-year findings reinforce the importance of these challenges. English/literacy attainment, attendance and SEMH/wellbeing remained among the most prominent issues in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. The association between higher deprivation and greater attendance concern was also evident across both reviews. The persistence of these issues across two annual cycles makes them more important than a one-year snapshot alone would suggest as they appear to represent enduring regional priorities.

Strategy changes

The review also reveals an important distinction between which strategies schools report using and how many strategies they use overall. At regional level, the most commonly reported high-impact approaches in 2025/26 were Feedback (70.9%), Oral Language interventions (67.6%) and Reading Comprehension strategies (56.1%). Metacognition and Self-Regulation was reported much less frequently (15.8%), while Peer Tutoring remained uncommon at 2.5%.

This distribution is not simply a feature of one or two local authorities. Feedback and Oral Language interventions were among the leading approaches across the region, while Peer Tutoring consistently remained at or near the bottom. However, there was meaningful variation in the breadth with which high-impact strategies were combined. Some local authorities had substantially higher proportions of schools reporting four or five high-impact approaches than others. This may be more useful for school-improvement teams than focusing solely on the ranking of individual strategies: schools appear relatively similar in the approaches they prioritise, but differ more in how extensively they draw on the wider set of evidence-informed strategies.

The deprivation and FSM analyses add an important qualification. Use of Feedback was almost identical in schools below and above the 25% FSM threshold (71.5% and 71.1%), while the average number of moderate-impact strategies also varied little by deprivation level. This suggests that the low use of particular approaches such as Peer Tutoring is not confined to a small subset of schools serving specific communities: it appears to be a broader regional pattern.

Despite substantial changes in some individual strategies between years, the overall number of strategies reported per school remained stable. In both 2024/25 and 2025/26, schools reported an average of approximately two of the five high-impact strategies and seven of the fourteen moderate-impact strategies. The change, therefore, appears to be in the composition of schools' strategy portfolios rather than their overall breadth.

Feedback showed the most substantial change, increasing from 46.6% of schools in 2024/25 to 70.9% in 2025/26. Oral Language interventions increased from 60.5% to 67.6%, while Reading Comprehension strategies increased from 51.5% to 56.1%. The regional analysis suggests that some of the largest increases occurred in areas that had comparatively low adoption in the previous year. For example, reported use of Feedback in South Tyneside increased from 24.3% to 79.1%.

These changes are potentially encouraging, but they should not automatically be interpreted as improvements in effectiveness. Pupil Premium statements record reported strategy choice, not implementation quality, fidelity or pupil outcomes. An increase in the number of schools naming an evidence-informed strategy does not in itself demonstrate that it is being implemented well or producing greater attainment. The next question for school and system leaders is therefore not whether evidence-based approaches are being named, but how they are being enacted and evaluated.

Metacognition and Self-Regulation declined in every local authority between 2024/25 and 2025/26, making it the only high-impact strategy to show a universally downward regional pattern. It may reflect changes in terminology or coding, different priorities in current statements, uncertainty about how to implement the approach, or a genuine reduction in planned use. This review cannot determine which explanation is correct, but the consistency of the decline requires further exploration.

Reference to Peer Tutoring remained almost unchanged, from 2.4% in 2024/25 to 2.5% in 2025/26. This persistent absence contrasts with the substantial increase in reference to Feedback and other approaches. Rather than assuming schools should simply adopt Peer Tutoring because it has a favourable evidence base, a more useful regional response would be to investigate the implementation barriers involved: for example, whether schools lack suitable models, training, curriculum materials, staff capacity or confidence in organising structured peer-to-peer approaches.

The North East and the national picture

Nationally, English/literacy attainment (92%), attendance (83%) and SEMH/wellbeing (82%) were the three most frequently reported challenges. These are the same three dominant challenges identified in the North East, with the regional figures of 92.3%, 79.2% and 80.2% respectively closely aligned with the national pattern. Schools in the region appear to be responding to many of the same pressures identified nationally. Likewise, 94% of North East schools cited EEF evidence compared with 93% nationally, indicating similarly widespread engagement with EEF sources.

The comparison of tuition approaches, however, reveals a more distinctive regional pattern. Small-group tuition was reported by 84.6% of North East schools compared with 79% nationally, and one-to-one tuition by 66.7% regionally compared with 60% nationally. Peer-to-peer tutoring moved in the opposite direction: 2.5% regionally compared with 13% nationally.

This finding does not demonstrate a causal “evidence-to-practice gap”, nor does the high proportion of schools citing EEF evidence imply that schools ought necessarily to choose Peer Tutoring. Strategy selection should follow diagnosed pupil need and local context. It does, however, identify Peer Tutoring as an unusually large difference between regional and national practice. For school-improvement teams, this could be a useful topic for further enquiry as it would be valuable to understand why adoption is so much lower in the North East.

Implications and recommendations

The findings from this review point to several practical priorities for schools, local authorities, trusts and regional school-improvement partners. Importantly, the recommendations should not be interpreted as suggesting that schools should adopt a greater number of strategies. The analysis indicates that the more important issue is the quality of the connection between identified pupil need, diagnostic information, evidence-informed strategy selection, implementation and evaluation. The aim should be to support schools to make more deliberate choices about where Pupil Premium funding is likely to have the greatest benefit for their pupils.

Recommendation 1

Strengthen compliance with publishing Pupil Premium strategy statements

A substantial number of schools did not have a current Pupil Premium strategy statement available at the point of data collection. In total, 134 schools were excluded because their statements were missing or out of date, with most exclusions relating to statements from the previous 2024/25 academic year. The scale of non-publication also varied considerably between local authority areas, reaching approximately 40% in one part of the North East MSA. This does not appear to reflect a fixed group of schools that consistently fail to publish. Of the schools without a current statement in 2025/26, 91 had published in time for inclusion in the previous year's review. This indicates that compliance can lapse from one year to the next and should therefore be monitored annually rather than inferred from previous publication behaviour.

School leaders and Pupil Premium leads could incorporate a routine autumn-term check into the annual planning cycle to confirm that the school's statement has been updated, meets current Department for Education requirements and accurately reflects current needs and spending priorities. Trusts, local authorities and school-improvement partners could reinforce this through light-touch annual monitoring and timely reminders, with additional support directed towards schools or areas where publication problems are more common.

Improving compliance is more than an administrative requirement. A current strategy statement provides governors, families and those supporting school improvement with a transparent account of how disadvantage is being addressed and creates a clearer basis for subsequent review of whether planned activity has been implemented and had the intended effect.

Recommendation 2:

Move from citing evidence to demonstrating evidence-informed decision making

The very high proportion of schools referring to EEF evidence is encouraging and closely mirrors the national picture. However, the analysis also identified a recurring distinction between referencing evidence and showing how that evidence has informed a school-specific decision. As in 2024/25, statements frequently reproduced general EEF or Teaching and Learning Toolkit information without making the reasoning between identified need and selected strategy sufficiently explicit.

Schools should be encouraged to make the decision-making pathway visible within their Pupil Premium strategies. This is consistent with the EEF's updated Guide to the Pupil Premium, which sets out a five-stage process of diagnosing pupils' needs, using reliable research evidence, developing the strategy, delivering and monitoring it, and evaluating and sustaining it (Education Endowment Foundation, 2026a). For each major priority, the statement should enable the reader to understand:

- What is the problem? What diagnostic information indicates that this is a significant barrier for disadvantaged pupils?
- Why has this response been selected? What evidence supports the approach, and why is it appropriate for this particular group of pupils?
- How will it be implemented? What needs to happen in practice for the strategy to be delivered as intended?
- How will implementation and outcomes be monitored? What indicators will tell leaders whether the approach is being delivered effectively and whether pupils are benefiting?
- What will happen next? How will findings inform whether the approach is sustained, adapted, scaled or stopped?

The EEF's revised guidance and associated monitoring and reflection resources provide schools with practical support for following this progression throughout the year, rather than treating the Pupil Premium statement as a one-off reporting exercise (Education Endowment Foundation, 2026a; Education Endowment Foundation, 2026b). Regional guidance and worked examples could build on this national framework by showing what strong application looks like in a North East context. This would help schools move from simply citing evidence to demonstrating how identified need, evidence, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are connected within their strategy.

Recommendation 3:

Use diagnostic assessment to strengthen selection and implementation

The year-on-year findings show encouraging changes in the strategies schools report using. References to Feedback increased substantially between 2024/25 and 2025/26, while Oral Language interventions and Reading Comprehension strategies also became more common. These changes occurred without a corresponding increase in the average total number of high-impact strategies reported per school, which remained around two of the five approaches in both years. This suggests that schools are changing the composition of their strategy portfolios rather than simply adding more activity. The objective should not be for every school to use all five high-impact approaches. Strategy selection should instead be driven by robust assessment of pupil need and the feasibility of effective implementation within the school context.

Peer Tutoring was reported by fewer than 3% of schools, while Metacognition and Self-Regulation was reported by only around one in six. Peer Tutoring remained almost unchanged across the two annual reviews, whereas Metacognition and Self-Regulation declined in every local authority between 2024/25 and 2025/26. These patterns were not concentrated within a particular deprivation group or locality, suggesting that they warrant investigation at regional rather than individual-school level.

Schools should therefore be supported to consider the full range of evidence-informed approaches when diagnostic information suggests that they are appropriate. This should include practical guidance on implementation rather than simply communicating headline evidence estimates. For Metacognition and Self-Regulation in particular, the universal year-on-year decline warrants further exploration to establish whether it represents a genuine reduction in practice, changes in terminology or reporting, or challenges in translating the approach into school-level provision.

Recommendation 4:

Build regional implementation networks around underused approaches

The consistency of strategy patterns across the seven local authorities creates an opportunity for regional collaboration. Peer Tutoring is particularly notable: its use remained extremely low across local authority areas, FSM groups and both annual review periods, and at 2.5% was also substantially below the national primary-school figure of 13%. This does not mean that Peer Tutoring should automatically be adopted by every school. It does, however, suggest that its unusually low regional use is worth understanding.

Similarly, the decline in Metacognition and Self-Regulation across every local authority suggests that any barriers are unlikely to be confined to an individual area. Regional professional-learning networks could therefore focus on the implementation challenges associated with currently underused approaches. Schools with relevant experience could share practical models, resources, implementation processes and lessons learned, while regional partners could help distinguish between circumstances in which an approach is appropriate and those in which another response is better suited to the identified problem. This would align well with wider regional school-improvement activity, including the North East MSA Excellence in Education Programme. It would also offer a targeted way of addressing a regional pattern without encouraging indiscriminate adoption of interventions simply because they have a strong evidence base.

Recommendation 5:

Prioritise common regional challenges while retaining more intensive support where disadvantage is concentrated

The consistency of the challenge profile provides a strong basis for shared improvement activity. English/literacy attainment, SEMH and wellbeing, attendance and access to enrichment were prominent across the region, with English/literacy identified by around nine in ten schools in every local authority. The close correspondence with the EEF's national primary-school findings indicates that these are not unique to the North East, but they nevertheless represent major priorities for regional primary education.

At the same time, the FSM analysis suggests that the intensity of some challenges varies according to the concentration of disadvantage. English/literacy attainment was identified by 86.8% of lower-FSM schools compared with 94.7% of higher-FSM schools, while attendance increased from 72.8% to 82.1%. SEMH and wellbeing, by contrast, was reported at broadly similar levels across the two FSM groups.

For regional and national school-improvement teams, this suggests a combination of universal and targeted responses. Literacy, attendance and wellbeing are sufficiently widespread to justify shared regional infrastructure and professional learning, but schools serving larger concentrations of disadvantaged pupils may require additional intensity of support around literacy and attendance in particular. Attendance is especially important because the relationship with disadvantage has now appeared across two consecutive annual reviews. This persistence strengthens the case for treating attendance as an issue requiring sustained attention alongside academic and wellbeing support.

The gap map produced as a result of findings from this review provides a practical tool for moving from description to targeted regional action. By showing where particular strategies are rarely reported, and whether those gaps are concentrated within specific local authorities or deprivation groups, it can help regional partners identify where professional development, implementation support or peer-learning networks may be most useful. As bubble size reflects the proportion of schools using each strategy rather than raw numbers, the map also allows fairer comparison between local authorities of different sizes. Rebuilding the gap map annually would add further value by showing whether particular implementation gaps are closing, remaining stable or widening over time. Alongside wider longitudinal analysis, this could provide a practical basis for monitoring regional priorities and assessing where additional support or follow-up enquiry is needed.

Recommendation 6:

Develop longitudinal regional monitoring

Repeating the analysis across successive years provides considerably more information than a single annual snapshot. The 2025/26 findings demonstrate this clearly: some features have remained stable, including the dominant challenge profile and very low use of Peer Tutoring, while others have shifted substantially, such as reference to Feedback, or moved in the opposite direction, such as Metacognition and Self-regulation. A longitudinal regional dataset could therefore become a useful school-improvement resource. In addition to annual prevalence figures, future analyses could distinguish schools that consistently report particular approaches from those adopting or discontinuing them, track publication compliance over time and examine whether patterns of strategy use change alongside identified challenges.

Strengths and Limitations

The scale and consistency of the findings provide a valuable picture of Pupil Premium practice across the North East MSA, but several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

Descriptive data and causal inference

The analysis is descriptive. It identifies patterns in the challenges and strategies that schools report in their Pupil Premium statements but cannot establish causal relationships between strategy use, school characteristics or pupil outcomes. An increase in the proportion of schools reporting Feedback, for example, cannot be interpreted as evidence that feedback has caused improvements in attainment. Equally, differences in strategy adoption between deprivation groups or local authority areas do not demonstrate that deprivation itself caused those differences. The findings should therefore be used to identify patterns, areas of common practice and priorities for further enquiry, rather than as estimates of intervention effectiveness.

Strategy statements measure reported practice rather than implementation

The analysis is based on publicly available Pupil Premium strategy statements. These provide an important source of information about schools' stated priorities and plans, but they do not provide a direct measure of what happens in classrooms. A strategy may be implemented without being clearly identified in the statement, while a strategy included in the statement may vary substantially between schools in its intensity, fidelity and quality of implementation. Changes between years may also partly reflect changes in language or reporting practice rather than changes in provision itself. This distinction is especially important when interpreting the low prevalence of particular approaches. The finding that 2.5% of schools reported Peer Tutoring, for example, should be understood as the proportion whose statements were coded as describing the approach, rather than definitive evidence that peer-to-peer activity occurred in only 2.5% of schools.

Self-reported and publicly available data

Pupil Premium statements are produced by schools themselves and published publicly. As with other forms of self-reported data, this may influence how provision is described. Schools may emphasise evidence-informed elements of their strategies, use language drawn from national guidance, or provide less detail about areas in which implementation has been difficult. Consequently, the statements should not be treated as an independent audit of practice. Their value lies in showing how schools publicly articulate their understanding of disadvantage and the strategies they intend to use in response.

Multiple funding sources

It is not always possible to attribute a strategy described in a Pupil Premium statement exclusively to Pupil Premium funding. Schools routinely combine funding streams and wider school resources when responding to pupil need. For example, literacy activity described within a statement may also be supported through English Hub provision or other funding. The findings therefore provide a picture of the broader strategies that schools associate with their provision for disadvantaged pupils rather than a precise account of activity purchased solely through Pupil Premium expenditure. This also means that the analysis cannot estimate the funding-specific impact of particular approaches.

Missing and outdated statements

A total of 134 schools were excluded because an appropriate current statement could not be identified. The final analytical sample therefore does not represent every primary school in the North East MSA. This creates a potential source of selection bias. Schools without a current statement may differ systematically from included schools in leadership capacity, administrative resource, Pupil Premium practice or other characteristics. If so, the prevalence of particular challenges or strategies among all North East primary schools may differ somewhat from the estimates reported here. The substantial variation in statement availability between local authorities reinforces the importance of this limitation when making comparisons between areas.

Year-on-year comparisons involve different samples

The 2024/25 review included 552 schools, whereas 519 schools were included in the 2025/26 analytical sample. The two samples are therefore similar but not identical. Year-on-year differences should consequently be interpreted as changes in regional patterns of reported practice, rather than as estimates of within-school change for a fixed cohort. The particularly large shifts observed for some strategies are nevertheless informative, but a matched longitudinal analysis of schools appearing in both annual datasets would provide stronger evidence about school-level change.

AI-assisted coding

AI-assisted coding enabled a large volume of strategy statements to be analysed consistently, but it introduces the possibility of misclassification, including false positives and misinterpretation of ambiguous wording. Several safeguards were used to mitigate this risk. Coding instructions were designed to minimise interpretive judgement, initial coding was subjected to human validation, and models were retrained in response to identified errors before full-scale coding. Human oversight was maintained to identify and correct systematic problems. Following refinement, human–AI agreement was approximately 95% overall, with agreement for every individual strategy exceeding 90%.

Strengths of the study

These limitations should be considered alongside several important strengths. First, the study sought full regional coverage rather than drawing a small sample of North East schools. All identifiable primary schools within the North East MSA were considered for inclusion, with the final analytical sample comprising those for which a suitable current statement was available. This provides a much more comprehensive picture of regional Pupil Premium reporting than would be possible from a small sampled study and allows meaningful examination of local-authority and deprivation-related patterns.

Second, the high level of coding agreement following validation and model refinement provides confidence that the resulting dataset reflects the content of the underlying statements with a high degree of consistency. Third, the availability of two consecutive annual reviews enables the analysis to distinguish potentially persistent patterns from findings that appear in only one year. The continued prominence of literacy, attendance and wellbeing, the persistent low use of peer tutoring and the repeated issues surrounding publication and evidence application are particularly noteworthy.

A further strength is the development of the interactive regional gap map. Unlike a conventional table or chart, the map brings together strategy adoption, local authority, EEF impact category and deprivation within a single visualisation, making patterns of widespread and low reported use easier to identify. It adds a practical decision-support element to the analysis: regional leaders can move from aggregate findings to identifying where particular gaps are concentrated and where implementation support may be most useful. Because the map can be reproduced using the same framework in future review cycles, it also provides a consistent visual method for tracking whether gaps change over time.

Finally, the close correspondence between several North East findings and the independently conducted EEF national analysis provides an important external check. The leading primary-school challenges were almost identical in prevalence regionally and nationally, and the proportion of schools citing EEF evidence was similarly close. This convergence strengthens confidence that the principal patterns identified in the North East analysis reflect genuine features of Pupil Premium reporting rather than artefacts of the coding approach or regional sample.

This review's greatest value is in identifying system-wide patterns, changes over time and areas warranting closer investigation. Future work that links these data to implementation evidence and pupil outcomes would provide the next step in understanding not simply which strategies schools select, but which approaches are implemented successfully, for whom, and under what conditions.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive regional view of Pupil Premium priorities across primary schools in the North East MSA. By analysing 519 current strategy statements and examining differences by local authority, deprivation and FSM profile, as well as change over time and comparison with national evidence, the review provides a detailed picture of how disadvantage is being understood and addressed across the region.

Findings point to a high degree of commonality across North East primary schools. Despite differences in geography and school context, schools repeatedly identify the same fundamental barriers for disadvantaged pupils, particularly English/literacy attainment, attendance, and SEMH and wellbeing. The close correspondence between these findings and the EEF's national primary-school data is significant. It suggests that the challenges identified within the North East form part of a wider national picture of disadvantage, while the regional analysis adds greater detail about how these challenges vary within the North East itself.

There are also signs of change in how schools report responding to these needs. Reference to utilisation of Feedback increased substantially between the two review periods, alongside smaller increases in Oral Language interventions and Reading Comprehension strategies. These changes occurred while the average number of high-impact strategies reported by each school remained broadly unchanged. This suggests that particular approaches are being prioritised. For Pupil Premium planning, the aim should not be to maximise the number of strategies in use, but to select a manageable set of approaches that respond closely to diagnosed pupil need and can be implemented well.

The persistence of other patterns raises different questions. Peer Tutoring remained uncommon across local authorities, deprivation groups and both annual reviews, and its reported use was considerably lower than in the EEF's national primary-school review. Metacognition and Self-Regulation was also relatively uncommon and, notably, declined across every local authority between 2024/25 and 2025/26. These findings do not imply that every school should introduce these strategies. Rather, their consistency suggests a useful area for further regional enquiry: whether low reported use reflects differences in need, terminology or reporting, or whether schools face particular barriers to understanding, selecting or implementing these approaches.

More broadly, the review suggests that the next stage of evidence-informed Pupil Premium practice should focus less on access to evidence and more on its application. EEF evidence was referenced by the majority of schools, comparable to that found nationally. The priority is therefore to strengthen the connection between diagnostic assessment, strategy selection, implementation and evaluation, so that schools can show which evidence they have consulted *and* how it has informed decisions for their pupils. Pupil Premium strategy statements can support this process by setting out a clear rationale for action and providing a framework for monitoring and review. The continued use of generic evidence statements suggests that this potential is not yet being fully realised. Similarly, the exclusion of 134 schools without a current statement highlights the need for publication to be treated as part of the annual school-improvement cycle rather than a one-off administrative task.

Continuing this review annually would allow the region to move beyond single-year snapshots and identify which challenges and strategy patterns persist, change or emerge over time. A valuable next step would be to complement analysis of published statements with evidence about implementation and outcomes, enabling the region to examine not only what schools report doing, but how approaches are delivered and with what results.

The Pupil Premium remains a central mechanism for supporting disadvantaged pupils. The North East already shows substantial engagement with evidence-informed practice; the opportunity now is to make that practice more precise through stronger diagnosis, clearer rationale, better implementation support and more systematic evaluation. Progress should be judged not by the number of strategies or evidence references included in future statements, but by how coherently schools connect identified need, strategy choice, implementation and impact.

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Appendix A: Frequency and Percentage of All Pupil Premium Strategies Used by Schools

Strategy	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
Phonics	454	87.5
Social and emotional learning	454	87.5
Small group tuition	439	84.6
Teaching assistant interventions	401	77.3
Feedback	368	70.9
Oral language interventions	351	67.6
One to one tuition	346	66.7
Individualised instruction	314	60.5
Reading comprehension strategies	291	56.1
Arts participation	253	48.7
Parental engagement	207	39.9
Mastery learning	194	37.4
Behaviour interventions	172	33.1
Physical activity	143	27.6
Outdoor adventure learning	105	20.2
School uniform	104	20
Aspiration interventions	87	16.8
Metacognition and self regulation	82	15.8
Extending school time	63	12.1
Homework	61	11.8
Reducing class size	49	9.4
Collaborative learning approaches	26	5
Mentoring	26	5
Setting and streaming	17	3.3
Peer tutoring	13	2.5
Within class attainment grouping	8	1.5
Summer schools	7	1.3
Performance pay	1	0.2
Learning styles	1	0.2
Repeating a year	0	0

Appendix B: High-Impact Strategy Use by Region

Region	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
County Durham	Feedback	121	70.3
	Reading comprehension strategies	112	65.1
	Oral language interventions	106	61.6
	Metacognition and self-regulation	28	16.3
	Peer tutoring	7	4.1
Gateshead	Feedback	40	69
	Oral language interventions	39	67.2
	Reading comprehension strategies	33	56.9
	Metacognition and self-regulation	5	8.6
	Peer tutoring	3	5.2
Newcastle upon Tyne	Feedback	43	82.7
	Oral language interventions	42	80.8
	Reading comprehension strategies	24	46.2
	Metacognition and self-regulation	10	19.2
	Peer tutoring	0	0
North Tyneside	Feedback	40	81.6
	Oral language interventions	29	59.2
	Reading comprehension strategies	22	44.9
	Metacognition and self regulation	5	10.2
	Peer tutoring	1	2
Northumberland	Oral language interventions	51	68
	Feedback	47	62.7
	Reading comprehension strategies	37	49.3
	Metacognition and self regulation	15	20
	Peer tutoring	1	1.3
South Tyneside	Oral language interventions	38	88.4
	Feedback	34	79.1
	Reading comprehension strategies	25	58.1
	Metacognition and self regulation	10	23.3
	Peer tutoring	1	2.3
Sunderland	Oral language interventions	46	65.7
	Feedback	43	61.4
	Reading comprehension strategies	38	54.3
	Metacognition and self regulation	9	12.9
	Peer tutoring	0	0

Appendix C: High-Impact Strategy Use by Deprivation Level

Deprivation	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
High	Feedback	226	70.2
	Oral language interventions	226	70.2
	Reading comprehension strategies	177	55
	Metacognition and self regulation	54	16.8
	Peer tutoring	6	1.9
Low	Feedback	88	72.1
	Oral language interventions	79	64.8
	Reading comprehension strategies	68	55.7
	Metacognition and self regulation	18	14.8
	Peer tutoring	4	3.3
Neutral	Feedback	54	72
	Oral language interventions	46	61.3
	Reading comprehension strategies	46	61.3
	Metacognition and self regulation	10	13.3
	Peer tutoring	3	4

Appendix D: Frequency and Percentage of All Challenges Reported by Schools

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Attainment English Literacy	479	92.3
SEMH and Wellbeing	416	80.2
Attendance	411	79.2
Access to Enrichment	372	71.7
Attainment General	281	54.1
Attainment Maths Numeracy	269	51.8
SEND	203	39.1
Parental Engagement HLE	198	38.2
Independent Learning	158	30.4
Personal Circumstances	154	29.7
Lack of Financial Means	150	28.9
Personal and Social Development	111	21.4
Aspiration	103	19.8
Behaviour	88	17
Physical Health	79	15.2
EAL	40	7.7
Local Factors	38	7.3
Other	25	4.8
School Factors	24	4.6
Attainment Other Subject	8	1.5

Appendix E: Coding Framework

Coding framework: contextual variables and high-impact strands

Appendix coding guide | Pupil Premium strategy statement analysis

Code	Variable / strand	Type	Coding instructions
1.1	Local Educational Authority	Categorical, single-code	Code one: 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.
HI1	Feedback	High impact	Code Y where strategies provide structured, actionable feedback beyond routine marking. Not general marking policy.
HI2	Metacognition and Self-Regulation	High impact	Code Y for explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies, self-regulation routines or learning-to-learn approaches.
HI3	Oral Language Interventions	High impact	Code Y for vocabulary, NELI, structured dialogic talk, S&L programmes. Not general literacy.
HI4	Peer Tutoring	High impact	Code Y when older or same-age peers tutor others using a structured instructional model. Not paired work.
HI5	Reading Comprehension Strategies	High impact	Code Y when structured comprehension strategy instruction is described.

Coding framework: moderate-impact strands

EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit coding

Code	Label	Coding instructions
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.
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.

Coding framework: low, null, negative and unclear-impact strands

EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit coding

Code	Label	Impact category	Inclusion / coding rules
LI1	Mentoring	Low impact	Non-academic mentoring relationships; pastoral guidance.
LI2	Performance Pay	Low impact	Pay linked explicitly to pupil performance.
LI3	Physical Activity	Low impact	PP-funded sports or exercise intended to impact learning.
LI4	Reducing Class Size	Low impact	PP funds reduced numbers taught by a teacher. Not extra TA.
LI5	Within-Class Attainment Grouping	Low impact	Attainment-based table groups within a class.
NI1	Setting and Streaming	Null impact	Attainment grouping across classes.
NEG1	Repeating a Year	Negative impact	Only code if explicitly referenced as practice or policy.
UI1	Aspiration Interventions	Unclear impact	Code Y only for structured programmes (e.g., careers mentoring, university access). Not generic aspiration statements.
UI2	Learning Styles	Unclear impact	Code Y for VAK or teaching matched to learning styles.
UI3	Outdoor Adventure Learning	Unclear impact	Code Y for adventure-based residential or outdoor challenge programmes. Not forest schools unless adventure-focused.
UI4	School Uniform	Unclear impact	Only where PP funds uniform to address inclusion/attendance.

Coding framework for challenges (1 of 3)

Taken directly from the recent EEF Pupil Premium 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.	-
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).	-

Coding framework for challenges (2 of 3)

Taken directly from the recent EEF Pupil Premium study

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 / PSD 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 for equipment/learning resources needed for school use.	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
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

Coding framework for challenges (3 of 3)

Taken directly from the recent EEF Pupil Premium study

Code	Label	Description / coding instructions	Dependencies / notes
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.	-
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.
3.19	Local factors	Code Y for environmental / neighbourhood factors (services, transport availability, catchment).	-
3.20	Other	For uncategorised challenges, quote verbatim.	-