Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant

Final report - December 2017

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December 2017

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Ipsos MORI and WISERD were commissioned by the Welsh Government in April 2013 to conduct a process and impact evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG). The PDG was launched in 2012 and provides additional funding to schools based on the number of pupils on their roll eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) or who are Looked After Children (LAC). Schools are provided with funding per eFSM pupil, and are directed to spend the additional funds on evidence-based interventions to help close the attainment gap. The evaluation aims to understand how the grant is being used by schools, and its impact on eFSM pupils.

1.2 This report is based on the third and final year of evaluation activity, and focuses on reporting on in-depth case studies with 22 schools conducted in 2013/14 and 2014/15, and follow-up visits to 14 of these schools in 2015/16 allowing for consideration of progress made or change in approach that may have occurred in the meantime. The report also contains findings from an analysis of data from the National Pupil Database conducted in 2015. Where relevant, we refer to findings from a survey of 201 schools conducted in 2014 during the first year of the evaluation. In March 2017 the PDG was renamed the Pupil Development Grant[1].

Key findings

1.3 When considering this analysis, it is important to bear in mind that the PDG is a relatively recent (and with regard to schools being able to plan for future spending; short term) grant aiming to effect improvements on a long-standing and large attainment gap. Evidence from case study schools highlights that a longer-term view of pupils' progress is essential in evaluating the effectiveness of the grant; and that systems to tackle disadvantage will continue to evolve over time. In March 2017 the Welsh Government announced that the grant would be guaranteed until the end of the current Assembly term.[2]

Inputs

1.4 PDG represents a significant source of funding for schools to invest in approaches to tackle disadvantage and is considered an 'invaluable' source of funding for specific types of activity to reduce the attainment gap. Schools often pool PDG

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[1] http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/pupil/?lang=en
[2] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170324-pdg-letter-to-schools-en1.pdf

funds with other funds and general school budgets; as such, as a part of the full suite of funding provided to schools the impact of the PDG is reliant on the existence of other funding streams with similar or complementary aims. The PDG involves significant financial inputs from the Welsh Government; staff and resource inputs from local authorities (LAs) and regional education consortia (REC) which support and challenge schools in their spending of the grant; and from schools themselves. Survey evidence shows that schools top up the funding used to run PDG activities from their own budgets and/or other funding streams by substantial amounts[3]. Schools' contributions were significant, representing 50-100% of the Government PDG allocation; more recent qualitative work among a smaller sample suggests that schools continue to supplement the PDG in this way, pooling funding from grants with complementary aims.

1.5 Local support has helped in forming effective regional partnerships; Challenge Advisors are helping to inform school leaders but the evaluation found little evidence of the 'challenge' role in practice. Schools found the guidance received from the Welsh Government, their LAs and regional consortia helpful in guiding their spending. There is evidence in more recent case studies of significantly more regional partnership activity that has been instigated by consortia, LAs and schools. This included the pooling of PDG funds across local school networks, information- and evidence-sharing sessions to share information about practices used in effective schools, and in one case a whole-cluster literacy and numeracy strategy. Case study schools welcomed the opportunity to discuss plans with Regional Challenge Advisors; while some schools mentioned the Advisors introducing them to new sources of evidence to inform their PDG planning (including the Sutton Trust Toolkit), none of the case study schools reported that the input from Advisors had changed their PDG spending decisions. Notably, the support that Advisors provide to schools to close the gap varies by region, and by the category of the school[4]. Given that some schools do not make full use of the most cost-effective initiatives to close the gap, there may be scope for Advisors to further develop their mechanisms for challenging school strategies and spending.

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[3] The survey of schools conducted in 2014 found that around nine in ten schools (86% primary, 91% secondary) supplemented the funding of PDG-funded activities, usually from the general school budget and/or the Schools Effectiveness Grant. Primary schools on average added £10,240 from other funds, and secondary schools added an average £44,356. Considering this in the context of the value of the PDG funding for schools: primary schools received an average of £12,676, and secondary schools an average £61,311 in PDG funding in 2012-13.

[4] Schools who require the most significant support are categorised as red, schools who are being challenged to improve are categorised as yellow, and schools who are being challenged to maintain their current status are categorised as green.

Management of the PDG

1.6   Some schools continue to use their own discretion in applying broader definitions of disadvantage or deprivation to target activities than eFSM status alone. As a result, the overall impact of the PDG specifically on eFSM pupils' outcomes could be diluted as schools target interventions to counter 'disadvantage' more broadly. Schools understand the stated WG aim that the PDG is intended to benefit disadvantaged pupils, however case study schools considered eFSM status as a proxy used by government as a way of distributing funds. When deciding on how to spend the funds they use a much broader definition of disadvantage that encompasses other factors such as home circumstances and other measures of socio-economic disadvantage. Case study schools were using sophisticated tracking systems alongside their own knowledge of pupils' circumstances to identify pupils they considered disadvantaged and/or in need of targeted additional support. Decisions about providing additional support were often made on a pupil-by-pupil basis, with the relative weighting given to eFSM status varying widely between schools. Schools that had the best track records in closing the gap explained that eFSM had been a priority for them prior to the PDG. A few other schools explained that the PDG had helped to prioritise the role of schools in tackling pupil disadvantage, and that eFSM had become more significant in their decisions about targeting additional support. In contrast, case study schools with lower attainment levels continued to target PDG spending at lower-attaining pupils in general - regardless of disadvantage or eFSM status – on the grounds that there is often a substantial overlap between disadvantage and lower levels of attainment. However, it is worth reiterating that schools top up PDG funding by a considerable amount. It is therefore difficult to assess the extent to which the additional funding works with PDG to support a wider cohort of learners, who, schools consider, experience broader disadvantage than just being e-FSM.

1.7   There remains some ambiguity in schools about whether the PDG should be used to help *lower attaining* eFSM pupils or help *all* FSM pupils fulfil their potential[5]. Where schools regarded the PDG as a grant to close the attainment gap, they concentrated on low attaining (eFSM) pupils; where schools perceived it as a grant to help eFSM children fulfil their potential the funds were used for all eFSM pupils. In more recent case studies a few schools with better attainment records took the

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[5] The latter is closer to the WG aim for PDG to help poorer pupils overcome the additional barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential.

latter view and also provided support to More Able and Talented (MAT) eFSM pupils, although most schools continued to focus on low-attaining disadvantaged pupils. In line with this, the NPD impact analysis shows that the gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils attaining the highest grades (A* or A) remains large and has not changed over the past five years, despite the overall attainment gap at Key Stage 4 closing.

1.8   Head teachers and teaching staff felt that pupils, regardless of their attainment levels, could be classified as 'disadvantaged' for a number of reasons, including pupils that were not able to get the same chances as their peers, pupils who found any aspect of learning difficult, pupils just above the poverty line, and pupils impacted by short-term circumstances such as family breakdown. Case study schools relied heavily on their staff's knowledge of individual pupils and families to target the PDG, and felt that the eFSM indicator does not capture all children of disadvantage that need additional support.

1.9   The PDG has encouraged schools to develop more sophisticated data tracking systems and enhanced the skills of teachers in analysing data they collect. There is evidence of good monitoring and evaluation of activities at the school level. Case study schools explained they had initially invested PDG in resources and establishing data monitoring systems to track pupils' progress using the funds, but that funds are now concentrated on the delivery of interventions. Case study schools had strong tracking systems to monitor attainment and attendance. All case study schools monitored pupil-level data against individual targets. A few schools explained that they had not previously monitored eFSM pupils separately, or that they had not previously monitored the impact of specific interventions. There are examples of schools making spending decisions, and changing the way in which interventions operate, on the basis of the data they have collected to improve effectiveness.

1.10   Local partnerships are helping to disseminate evidence of what works. However, there is still scope to improve schools' use of formal robust external data and evidence to ensure they are using the most effective approaches to tackling the attainment gap. In line with greater levels of local partnership activity observed in more recent years of the evaluation, recent case study visits demonstrated evidence of schools taking evidence from their local networks about what works well in closing the attainment gap. In some cases, it appeared that staff found this type

of evidence more credible than formal external evidence sources – such as the Sutton Trust Toolkit – because it had worked in settings similar to their own.

1.11 A few case study schools were using the Sutton Trust Toolkit effectively to identify cost-effective approaches, and to consider how those approaches could be adapted within their own settings. These were often schools with a culture of using evidence, challenging existing practice, and making good progress in closing the gap. However, some other case study schools were sceptical about the Toolkit; in several cases this was because they disagreed with its recommendations about the value and in particular the most effective use of TAs in classrooms. Others felt that the Toolkit endorsed what they were already doing, was not applicable to their setting, or was less helpful than their own experience. As a result, few of the case study schools were incorporating the low-cost high-impact strategies suggested in the Toolkit – such as enhanced feedback – into their approaches, which in turn could limit the impact of the PDG.

Activities

1.12 Recent case studies highlight many examples of very effective practice in closing the attainment gap. The most effective strategies had evolved over many years, and sometimes pre-dated the PDG. They included an example of whole-cluster literacy and numeracy strategies that had been developed by a secondary school. The strategies draw on meta-cognitive approaches to help decompose literacy and numeracy skills for children. The strategies were developed and tested within the school's own English and Maths departments, before being rolled out to other departments at the school, and then to local feeder primary school staff. All staff, parents, governors and pupils across the region are trained on the strategy. The strategies have helped to ensure a consistent approach to literacy and numeracy across the cluster, eased transitions from primary to secondary level, and have helped to raise attainment significantly, both at the point primary pupils enter secondary school, and at the end of Key Stage 4.

1.13 Across the case studies there were many examples of schools developing innovative approaches to engaging with pupils and parents in ways that are recommended in the PDG guidance, including:

- whole-school strategies to improve teaching and learning;
- methods to engage parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning;

- innovative uses of technology to engage and motivate children and parents;
- focusing on attendance and behaviour, and in particular methods to engage pupils with the school and learning more effectively to incentivise good attendance and behaviour; and,
- supporting the social and emotional skills of learners.

1.14   Case study schools appreciated the benefits of using the PDG to invest in family and pupil engagement and pastoral support for pupils and their parents. Case study schools often used PDG funds to employ Teaching Assistants (TAs) in a range of roles including family liaison roles and/or pastoral support roles for disadvantaged pupils: this gave TAs and the wider teaching staff insights into the home lives and specific barriers faced by individual pupils.

Outputs

1.15   There have been a variety of different impacts on school culture and attitudes to disadvantage as a result of the PDG. Some schools considered they already had a strong focus on disadvantage and that the grant provided them with extra funding. However, other schools felt that the PDG had significantly raised the profile of disadvantage and how schools should cater for disadvantaged learners. In these cases, it appeared that an increased focus on data monitoring was as responsible for changes in attitudes as the PDG activities. A few schools acknowledged they now have a much greater focus on eFSM than they did earlier in the life of the grant, and put this down to clearer guidance from the Welsh Government and their regional consortia. As well as schools' own pre-existing commitment to tackling disadvantage, contextual factors – such as schools' financial security and overall attainment levels – are significant in determining how much focus is placed on tackling disadvantage and the PDG. Where there were significant competing priorities, tackling disadvantage was not always a high priority.

1.16   The case studies suggest that the biggest impact of the PDG on staffing has been to increase the number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) employed by schools and enhance and develop their skills. Recent case studies also highlighted strategies for tackling disadvantage through the training and development of teaching staff as well as TAs. TAs are often trained on implementing and evaluating the impact of the interventions they deliver and as a result are becoming highly skilled members of the school staff. The PDG has led to an increase in the size of the school staff in virtually all case study schools. Schools often stressed that TAs were ideally skilled

for a range of roles they undertook, and in particular pastoral and family liaison roles, because they live in the same communities as parents, have strong relationships with families already and are perceived as less threatening than teachers.

1.17   Overall, the impact of the PDG on teachers appears to have been less significant than that seen with Teaching Assistants. However, a few recent case studies highlighted a shift in practice, with a move away from using TAs to deliver literacy and numeracy interventions in favour of using very highly skilled teachers (such as the Head of English or Maths). Recent case study visits also highlighted schools investing in staff training on assessment for learning and meta-cognitive approaches that are recommended in the guidance and Sutton Trust Toolkit as being disproportionately beneficial for disadvantaged learners.

1.18   Case study schools noted that while quantifiable evidence of impact is a long-term goal that will need time to emerge, in the short term they have noted substantial improvements in 'softer outcomes' such as pupil well-being, confidence and self-esteem. Staff in case study schools consistently report that pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem as a result of the interventions they have introduced; in some cases, pupils are more likely to participate in lessons afterwards. In addition, schools note that there are knock-on impacts for those pupils who remain in class (as they are not eligible for the PDG) when other pupils are withdrawn to take part in PDG interventions, as there are then fewer interruptions or disturbances for the remaining pupils and teachers.

Key strengths of the PDG

1.19   The PDG is associated with an increased focus on tackling disadvantage in both schools' budgets and development plans, as well as within the role of Regional Consortia and Challenge Advisors. This has led to numerous positive impacts, including:

- Increased and more tailored support being offered to schools to close their attainment gap;
- Schools being challenged and held more accountable for the spend and impact of initiatives to tackle disadvantage. This has led to interventions being increasingly evidence-based, well-targeted and monitored effectively with data tracking systems;

- Evidence of schools developing close working relationships with local authorities, consortia and communities, who supported the management of PDG and the implementation of PDG-funded initiatives. In line with this, there has been increased sharing of best practice;

- Beyond the immediate use of the PDG to fund a wide range of interventions, the grant has been significant in changing schools' culture in some instances. The most successful case study schools placed a strong emphasis on the PDG, with the school leaders' vision being clearly articulated, shared and acted upon by all members of the staff in the school and wider partnerships.

- An increased focus on whole-school strategies to improve areas such as behaviour, attendance, family engagement and restorative approaches. Among case study schools where established behaviour/engagement systems were already in place, there was greater evidence of schools using PDG to invest in improved teaching and learning approaches.

1.20   Overall, PDG is considered hugely valuable by schools, and 'invaluable' for many case study schools. Its significance is primarily as a source of funding that is used to increase staffing which allows schools to provide tailored support for disadvantaged pupils to cater for a wide range of academic, emotional, and social needs. Schools have actively embraced the WG directive to focus on pupils' wider needs, and not just academic attainment: interventions cover pastoral activity, family support, as well as literacy and numeracy skills for example. Over time, case study schools have engaged in greater efforts to engage parents: while this involved some trial and error, these schools had developed a range of effective approaches to involve parents in the life of the school and their children's learning.

Impact analysis

1.21   Findings from analysis of the outcomes of eFSM and non-FSM pupils from the National Pupil Database are summarised below. The aim of this analysis is to monitor the size of the educational attainment gap between e-FSM and non-FSM pupils at the national level prior to, and during the life of, the PDG in order to evaluate whether the PDG appears to be contributing to a narrowing of the gap. The analysis can only demonstrate trends over time rather than attribute changes to the introduction of the PDG: no comparison group of pupils or schools not receiving the PDG is available, and many other concurrent initiatives in Welsh education may also contribute to any improvements observed.

1.22   In general, the analysis finds that the gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils has narrowed over the past five years. However, the analysis shows that this trend of improvement pre-dated the introduction of the PDG in most cases, and so cannot at this stage be confidently attributed solely to the effects of the Grant. It should be noted however that:

- Despite the results being mixed across different measures there is now an emerging pattern of success in reducing the 'effect' of being eligible for free school meals on measures of educational progress between KS2 and KS4 in English, Maths and Science.

- In none of the outcomes has the apparent influence of being eligible for eFSM consistently got worse since the introduction of the PDG.

Table 1.1. Key findings from analysis of National Pupil Database

Area	Impact
Absence	Attendance has improved every year (prior to and after the introduction of the PDG and has improved for non-FSM and eFSM pupils at the same rate. Although it is possible that the PDG is having some impact on overall attendance (e.g. in preventing the gap from widening further) unfortunately it is not possible to isolate the impact of the PDG from other policies improving attendance. It does appear that the PDG could be having an important impact on unauthorised absence. This has improved significantly for eFSM pupils between 2011 and 2015[6]. This contrasts with the rate for non-FSM pupils where the rate has remained fairly constant. While there have been significant improvements in the levels of persistent absence in Wales for all pupils, including eFSM pupils, the results suggest that other policies to improve attendance could be having a greater impact than PDG alone.
Key Stage 2 achievement	In English/Welsh, Maths and Science, the attainment 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils has reduced considerably over the past five years, with the rate of improvement greater for eFSM than non-FSM pupils. Although, the gap was closing before the introduction of the PDG the rate of improvement for eFSM pupils achieving Level 4 in all three core subjects markedly increased in the last year of analysis which may suggest that improvements in KS2 attainment of eFSM pupils is beginning to speed up.
Key Stage 4 achievement	The attainment 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in all three 'core' GCSE subjects has narrowed over time and figures for 2015 show this trend continuing. Although the attainment gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 remains large there is evidence that it is beginning to improve and much of this improvement has occurred since the PDG was introduced. The attainment 'gap' at GCSE is especially large when considering pupils gaining the highest grades (A* or A) rather than 'pass' grades (C or above), with non-FSM pupils more than four times as likely to achieve the highest grades. There is little change here since before the PDG was introduced.
Value-added	In Maths and English/Welsh the relative progress of eFSM pupils compared with non-FSM pupils has improved in the past year. However, the trends for eFSM pupils' relative progress have been unstable over time: if this trend were to continue next year then we could be more confident about the association with the PDG.

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[6] In 2011 there were a number of changes to attendance policy that would impact on this including the attendance codes being revised; the Attendance Analysis Framework was introduced; the All Wales Attendance Framework was published; and the attendance grant was given to consortia between 2013-2015.

2.   Introduction

2.1   Ipsos MORI and WISERD were commissioned by the Welsh Government in April 2013 to conduct an evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) is a central element of the Welsh Government's policy efforts to close the educational attainment gap between children from more and less affluent families. The PDG was launched in 2012 and provides additional funding to schools based on the number of pupils on their roll eligible for Free School Meals (e-FSM) or who are Looked After Children (LAC). As of April 2015, PDG funding for eFSM pupils and LAC is delivered through two separate channels: PDG funding for eFSM pupils is delivered directly to the school, whilst PDG funding for LAC is provided to the consortia. In April 2016, PDG and EYPDG was made available to eligible learners in Pupil Referral Units; some of Wales' most disadvantaged learners are educated in Pupil Referral Units and previously had not been supported by the additional funding provided by PDG. This evaluation focuses primarily on PDG funding for eFSM pupils.

2.2   Welsh Government guidance to schools suggests that schools should aim to spend the additional funds on evidence-based interventions to help close the attainment gap.

2.3   This is the final report of a three-year programme of evaluation of the PDG, two previous reports covering Year 1 and Year 2 are available on the Welsh Government website[7].

2.4   The rest of this chapter outlines the aims and methodology of the evaluation, and provides an overview of the contents and scope of this report.

The Pupil Deprivation Grant

2.5   The Pupil Deprivation Grant reflects education priorities within the Tackling Poverty Development Plan to address the causes and lived effects of poverty. It also addresses one of the three key priorities for education in Wales: closing the achievement gap between socio-economic groups.[8] As such, it formed a key part of

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[7] http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant/?lang=en
[8] The other priorities are improving standards of literacy and numeracy. As expressed by the then Minister for Education and Skills in his speeches Teaching Makes a Difference (February 2011) and Raising School Standards (June 2011), and in the Programme for Government.

2012's *Improving Schools* plan,[9] which outlined a range of initiatives to improve standards in response to concerns about both Wales' overall educational performance,[10] and the widening/persisting gap in the attainment of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (e-FSM) and other pupils (non e-FSM). Improving literacy and numeracy and closing the educational attainment gap are the two priorities underlining the plan. 2014's *Rewriting the future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* plan recognises closing the educational attainment gap as an ongoing priority, stating that: "the attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds in Wales is far too low and progress to improve outcomes is far too slow".[11]

2.6 *Rewriting the future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* highlights the significance of schools' role in reducing the effects of poverty on children's educational outcomes: the gap in attainment widens as children progress through the education system, but effective school practice has been shown to narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged learners and their more affluent peers. *Rewriting the future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh schools* sets out a number of strategies to help improve the attainment of disadvantaged learners, including: family and community engagement; a focus on early years; high-quality learning and teaching; and setting high expectations and aspirations for children. The Pupil Deprivation Grant, and the associated guidance for spending the grant, aims to help ensure that improving the outcomes of disadvantaged learners becomes a higher priority for LAs and schools, and that schools are encouraged to work more effectively by diverting funds into activities that are proven to work.

2.7 Together with the *Education Improvement Grant* (EIG)[12], the Pupil Deprivation Grant represents the Welsh Government's principle means of providing financial support for improving educational outcomes in schools. The EIG is aimed at supporting measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning and school leadership, while the Pupil Deprivation Grant's key priority is to reduce the impact of poverty on educational achievement.

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[9] A more recent version of the plan, Qualified for Life, was published in 2014: http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/141001-qualified-for-life-en.pdf

[10] For example, Wales' performance relative to other nations in the 2009 and 2012 PISA assessments: Wales performed relatively poorly compared with other UK nations, and its overall ranking – and in particular rankings for mathematics scores – fell. https://www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/PISA-2012-results-UK.pdf

[11] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140616-rewriting-the-future-raising-ambition-and-attainment-in-welsh-schools-en.pdf

[12] The EIG encompassed 11 discrete grants, one of which was the Schools Effectiveness Grant. The Schools Effectiveness Grant in particular had aims which complement the focus of the PDG, with a focus on improving teaching standards, and the teaching of literacy and numeracy in particular.

2.8   Similar initiatives are associated with success: for example, an Ofsted report on the Pupil Premium in England showed that the introduction of the Pupil Premium coincided with significant improvements in the attainment of the pupils targeted: the proportion of e-FSM pupils gaining five A*-C grades at GCSE rose from 57% in 2011 to 80% in 2012, which reduced the gap between e-FSM and other pupils from 27 to 8 percentage points.[13]

2.9   PDG was preceded in Wales by Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE), which funded schools in Wales' most deprived areas to fund initiatives to support socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.[14] However, an evaluation of RAISE found that the money was not always spent effectively, or on the target group of pupils, and lessons from RAISE have directly contributed to the guidance and governance arrangements for the PDG.[15]

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

2.10   The evaluation of the PDG is investigating issues around the implementation of the PDG, as well as the grant's impact. The evaluation looked at how the PDG is being interpreted and implemented, and what impact it has had on pupil performance and school practice. The specific aims were to:

- Assess the extent to which the overall aims and objectives of the PDG have been met;
- Determine the impact of the PDG on improving the educational outcomes of pupils receiving support through PDG-funded provision;
- Determine the impact of PDG by assessing its contribution to improvements in standards of education and any long-term capacity building in improving the educational attainment of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.
- Identify how effective LAs, regional consortia and clusters have been in ensuring the grant is used effectively;
- Identify the key strengths of PDG and any constraints/ issues that may have impeded its effectiveness; and

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[13] The Pupil Premium: How schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement. Note that the Pupil Premium has a number of different features to the PDG: the funds were greater per pupil (£900) before the PDG was increased), and eligibility is defined slightly differently (the Pupil Premium uses the 'Ever6' rule whereby any pupil eligible for eFSM in the past 6 years attracts the funding, while the PDG operates on the previous year's eFSM eligibility only).
[14] http://www.raise-wales.org.uk/raise/raise-about.htm
[15] Route Map for Breaking the Link between Poverty and Educational Attainment (Internal WG)

- Provide recommendations as to how the Welsh Government, LAs and schools can best build upon the PDG in meeting the priority to reduce the impact of deprivation on academic attainment.

Methodology

2.11   The evaluation comprised three main elements:

- School survey: a survey of 201 schools in the first year of the evaluation (2014) provided in-depth evidence about the initiatives funded via PDG.
- Impact analysis: analysis of the National Pupil Database looked for evidence of the impact of the PDG in terms of narrowing the attainment gap. This analysis has been conducted for each year of the evaluation, using the latest attendance and attainment data available for each cohort.
- Case studies in 22 schools between May 2013 and June 2015, including longitudinal repeat visits to 14 schools in 2016[16]. These investigated how the PDG is being used in practice, teachers' perceptions of the impact of PDG-funded initiatives, and schools' own measures of impact. The follow up visits in 2016 allowed for an understanding of any changes over time. For more details, see Annex A.
- Focussed interviews with Regional Consortia representatives

Scope and limitations of this report

2.12   The quantitative survey data used in this report is based on a survey of 201 schools conducted from February to April 2014. The commentary on this data in this report is based primarily on findings at the aggregate level for primary and secondary schools. While the survey findings are referenced throughout this report, the evidence presented here is based primarily on more recently-gathered qualitative evidence from the 14 follow up school case study visits undertaken in the spring/summer term of 2016. The survey findings were reported in detail in the Year 1 Evaluation report[17].

2.13   The case studies do not aim to provide evidence about a representative sample of schools. Qualitative research is designed to be exploratory and provides insight into people's perceptions, feelings and behaviours. The research is not designed to provide statistically reliable data, but to provide in-depth understanding of a

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[16] Budget pressures meant that repeat visits to all 22 were not possible

[17] http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant/?lang=en

particular topic. It is possible that schools agreeing to participate in the case studies have a particular interest in the PDG or its aims, or feel they are using the PDG in particularly innovative ways. Where participating schools indicated their practices had changed over time, we have drawn attention to any patterns in this. However, as evidence about change is limited to a small number of selected schools we cannot assert that similar changes are taking place in schools across Wales.

3. Inputs

3.1 The PDG has changed during the lifetime of the evaluation. The most significant changes include increases in the per-pupil funding available (from £450 in 2012 to £1,050 in 2015); and changes in the way schools are supported via written guidance, and LA and regional scrutiny and assistance.

Table 3.1 Key policy changes since the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant

Year	Key policy changes
2012-13	PDG introduced. Guidance issued as part of a combined guidance document with School Effectiveness Grant.
2013-14	PDG extended to Looked After Children (LAC)[18]. New guidance issued to schools December 2013: The guidance recommends that the additional Grant funds made available in 2014-15 are spent on the CPD of staff to better enable them to support this group of learners, and to generate a sustainable impact from the increase.
2014-15	PDG funds doubled to £918 per eligible pupil for 2014-15 academic year. Welsh Government and LA support and challenge to schools strengthened: consortia expected to take a more pro-active role in tackling the effects of poverty on attainment, and Estyn reports to comment on how well schools use resources (including PDG) to support e-FSM learners.
2015-16	PDG funding increased to £1,050 per eligible pupil for 2015-16 academic year. Early Years PDG introduced, extending funding of £300 per pupil to eligible 3- and 4- year olds[19].
2016 -17.	PDG funding increased to £1,150 per eligible pupil for the 2016-17 academic year. In April 2016, PDG was made available to eligible learners in Pupil Referral Units; some of Wales' most disadvantaged learners are educated in Pupil Referral Units and previously had not been supported by the additional funding provided by PDG

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[18] This element is not in scope for this evaluation
[19] This element is not in scope for this evaluation.

3.2   Increases in the per-pupil funding rate have meant the total financial contributions from the Welsh Government to the PDG have increased substantially over the grant's lifetime (see table below). In 2015-16 over £78m was distributed to schools in Wales, of which 58% went to primary schools (£44,994,900), 40% to secondary or middle schools (£31,495,050) and 2% to special schools (£1,697,400).

3.3   In addition, schools in Communities First clusters could apply for matched funding grants of up to £75,000 per cluster. In total, £ 4,547,671 was distributed via Communities First matched funding.

Table 3.2 Total funding from Welsh Government over the lifetime of the grant

Year	Total funding from Welsh Government to schools[20]	Funding per eligible pupil
2012-13	£32,432,850	£450
2013-14	£33,289,200	£450
2014-15	£68,519,520	£918
2015-16	£78,187,350	£1,050

3.4   This means primary schools received an average of £38,755 in PDG funding, secondary and middle schools received £147,864, and special schools received £43,523 in 2014-15. The survey conducted in the first year of the evaluation found that 9 in 10 schools 'topped up' the PDG with funds from their general school budget, and/or the School Effectiveness Grant/ EIG. Schools' contributions were significant, representing 50-100% of the Government PDG allocation; more recent qualitative work among a smaller sample suggests that schools continue to supplement the PDG in this way. The survey and qualitative work both highlighted that, although the PDG may represent a relatively small proportion of the overall school budget (an average of 4% in the first year of the evaluation), school leaders considered it an invaluable source of funding for specific types of activity to reduce the attainment gap and was prioritised in Programme for Government.[21]

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[20] LAC PDG and EYPDG funds are not included in these figures as they are not distributed directly to schools.
[21] http://gov.wales/about/programme-for-government/?lang=en

3.5   The survey and qualitative work highlight that the PDG's effectiveness and impact relies on the existence of other complementary funding streams, which are often pooled to fund interventions that fulfil the requirements of multiple grants. The case studies showed that PDG is often used in conjunction with other school grants, such as the Education Improvement Grant (EIG)[22]: "the PDG identifies e-FSM students in terms of literacy and numeracy interventions, but if we then fund those interventions through EIG then we can use these literacy and numeracy interventions for the whole school rather than just those pupils... [we then get] more bang for our buck." Another case study school indicated that they would use a proportion of their PDG and their EIG to form a new teacher's salary. The use of a mix of funding streams in this way makes it difficult to isolate the impact of individual programmes, such as the PDG.

3.6   **The role of regional consortia** in supporting local networks of schools has become more significant during the lifetime of the grant. For example, one consortium worked closely with ten 'Hub' schools to promote a region-wide focus on closing the educational attainment gap. The designated Hub Schools benefitted from a range of activities, including an action research programme for senior school leaders, workshops for staff at all levels, a coaching programme for eFSM children that helps to develop meta-cognitive skills, and greater support for schools via Schools Challenge Advisors. The Hub schools were tasked with providing school-to-school support to share practice with, and support, other schools in the region. More than 20 other schools in the region were provided with supply cover so that teachers could receive training on evidence-based approaches to closing the gap, and particularly those contained within the Sutton Trust Toolkit: the consortium provided funding for supply cover, which allowed these teachers to carry out action research to identify which of the Toolkit's recommendations could be implemented to greatest effect in their own schools.

3.7   **Challenge Advisers** have also taken a greater role in challenging and supporting schools in their efforts to close the attainment gap. Their role is to scrutinise schools' analysis and use of performance data; monitor school leaders' strategies to improve outcomes for eFSM pupils; help to identify and share good practice across

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[22] The EIG aims to improve educational outcomes for all learners and reduce the impact of deprivation on learner outcomes by improving the quality of teaching and learning; addressing learners' barriers to learning and improving inclusion; improving the leadership of educational settings; and improving the provision for learners and the engagements of learners.

schools. One consortium staff member, who looks specifically at PDG within their region, noted that there are numerous models and initiatives available for closing the gap, "the challenge is finding what works amidst a sea of information" and "to create systems which facilitate sharing best practice and information across the region". The Challenge Advisers focus in particular on support and intervention in schools where closing the gap has been given a high priority.

3.8 The support regional consortia and Challenge Advisors provide schools to close the gap varies by region; the strategies in place are formulated based on data and best practice. The case study below demonstrates how ERW implements these strategies; similar strategies are in place across all consortia.

Case Study Theme: Input from regional consortia and Challenge Advisors

ERW is an alliance of six local authorities governed by a legally constituted joint committee: Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port-Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Swansea. The six local authorities work together to agree a regional strategy and business plan to deliver school improvement services.

The Challenge Advisors in ERW are directly employed by local authorities, but their work is directed centrally by ERW as a region. ERW is responsible for all training, systems and accountability of the Challenge Advisors. Approximately 60 Challenge Advisors work across the region: some work in primary, some with secondary, and some across both. Challenge Advisors are the direct link between ERW and schools. They may support up to 15 schools in some local authorities, and will be responsible for the core visits.

Core visits

The main focus for challenge and support in primary and secondary schools takes the form of two core visits every year. The first one is in Autumn (CV1), and this focuses on the categorisation of the school; their performance in regards to FSM pupils; then 'challenging' or 'supporting' through identifying and facilitating what support the school will require based on their categorisation. During the Autumn core visit, each Challenge Advisor is expected to write a short report on compliance with PDG and its impact on pupils. The school then signs off on this. CV1 is based on intelligence/data (gathered and held by the school, as well as from the Welsh Government), including the performance of FSM pupils. The Challenge Advisor is trained to look at disadvantaged learners and their performance. If, for example, performance of FSM pupils at KS3 is poor, or in a specific subject, that is written into the report and the school is provided with the advice and resources (such as training and books) needed to tackle this. The Challenge Advisor evaluation includes how much money is spent, what it is spent on and the direct impact. Though our work in

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the field found that 'impact' needs to be understood as the Challenge Advisor looking at the school's data – often focussing on individual pupils – to determine the effectiveness.

The second core visit (CV2), which takes place in Spring or Summer, is more about provision itself (such as books, observing lessons, and talking about school leadership), and is always carried out by the same Challenge Advisor.

It was emphasised that the core visits do not focus solely on children who are below a certain threshold, but also those who are above, as not all FSM children are below this threshold.

Challenge and support

The Challenge Advisor role focusses on challenge and support. Depending on the school, 'challenge' or 'support' will be the key objective. One of the consortium staff in ERW highlighted that it is likely that red or amber schools will receive very bespoke advice and support, whilst yellow schools will be challenged to improve and green schools will be challenged to maintain their green status. The Challenge Advisor signposts schools to best practice, or signposts one school to another as most schools have pockets of good practice to learn from, regardless of whether they are of red or green status.

Sharing best practice

Mechanisms for sharing best practice includes the 'menu of support grid', which is completed by the Challenge Advisor during each visit and signed off by the school. As such, the school will know where they can go to access items which will help them carry out the recommendations that the Challenge Advisor has made. These can be resources (for example, buying in intervention packages such as 'Jollyphonics'); it can be going to observe other schools or teachers within the same school; or it can relate to leadership and closing the gap more generally.

Training and resources

Training is often carried out centrally at ERW.

"Let's say differentiation is an issue. The Challenge Advisor is responsible for identifying the need, but the case will then go to our teaching and learning team or leads, who will then ensure that that school is provided with either direct training on differentiation, or they might bring in someone from the inclusion team within that school's local authority who might look at differentiation between ALN pupils. So as ERW we are able to bring in the holistic team which exists within each local authority so there is no overlapping training for PDG pupils."

The ERW website lists local resources and courses. Teaching support officers from all six authorities get together and create a menu, which is made available to schools. Schools may order a bespoke 'special' support package, as certain schools may not fit into a particular menu box. One consortium staff member noted that they "try to put on appropriate courses" which are free- although supply cover is not funded and schools are encouraged not to use PDG funds to cover supply support.

Impact and effectiveness

ERW has an electronic monitoring system that provides an overview of how schools across the six local authorities are spending their money, and the impact this is having on standards.

Overall as a region, FSM pupils are said to do well in their indicators at L2 inclusive compared to non-FSM pupils. However, both FSM and non-FSM groups were performing strongly. As such, they were not 'closing the gap' as a region because the performance of non-FSM pupils was also rising. It is noted that it is impossible to attribute the high performance of FSM pupils to one specific thing but it is felt that as a consortium they have succeeded in raising awareness of FSM and more vulnerable groups of learners, and that PDG was working to raise attainment of FSM pupils.

Tracking is said to have been central to their success, as well as working out the 'value added'. For example, "if there's excellent teaching and differentiation, aligned with really close tracking and interventions... that's where we really push forward."

The importance of working collaboratively was also emphasised- this may be in clusters of schools, or through building relationships between primary and secondary schools. It was noted that it is key to partner schools at complementary stages of development:

"Schools are on journeys…a lot of time and effort has been expended to get to that point… so you can't just pick initiatives off the shelf and expect overnight results"

"When you link a red school with a green school that won't work because they're too far apart…amber to red, yellow to amber, green to yellow are always the best transfers"

Impact of the PDG and areas for improvement are highlighted in the schools' development plans, submitted each September.

ERW also conduct significant data analysis, including a qualitative element wherein they record a written commentary about the impact of the PDG in all of their 560 schools and an online platform called 'Rhywd' that features the data from the core visits. It was noted they previously focussed on headline attainment figures for FSM

pupils, which did not provide any information about their progress, well-being, or their individual experiences. As such, the current system in place allows for a more sensitive appreciation of the impact of PDG by looking at impact beyond academic indicators.

"A lot of the pupils under the PDG aren't going to obtain a lot of the key (academic) indicators. So unless you measure their wellbeing, their health, happiness, attendance, you've got no indication of what's going on and what impact the funding is having."

Views on the PDG as a policy

The PDG was said to be a "lifeline" for local authorities who run their budget directly to improve FSM results.

"It's an extremely well designed policy and the guidance is clear. What's an appropriate spend is clear. I think the grid and flowchart at the back of the document is perfect- it's simple and clear what you can and can't spend things on. The monitoring system on that spend is crucial, and that's why the Challenge Advisor's role is important"

The PDG was said to be well-targeted, largely due to the increased accountability of Head teachers, the monitoring of Challenge Advisors, the role of School Governors, and Estyn: "with all of those watchdogs, accountability has become far more robust". As a result, schools' monitoring and evaluation data is considered significantly improved compared with five years ago.

3.9   The regional consortia staff interviewed noted that they have found the administrative requirements of PDG, in terms of their data gathering and reporting responsibilities, manageable. One stated that this was due to the "good system" they had in place for tracking data.

3.10   With regards to the effectiveness of the PDG, it was noted that it would be valuable to know whether they can incorporate the PDG funding in their long-term planning. One consortium staff member commented that the PDG is "only sustainable as long you've got the money... if you take that money away, I'd have to find the money from somewhere else if I value it." This sentiment was evident across all consortia interviews, as well as among staff in the case study schools. However, it was recognised that the sustainability of PDG-funded initiatives depended on what the schools provide: "if a school employed someone to get school-phobics to school, that initiative is not sustainable if you pull the grant. But good pedagogy, good differentiation and so on is sustainable." In addition to the initiatives, it was

emphasised that by removing the PDG funding, the relationships and partnerships that have developed as a result of it may also be impacted.

3.11   To further enhance the effectiveness of the PDG one consortium staff member argued that funding should be released directly to the regions, and then distributed to schools based on need, expertise, intelligence and good practice. They felt this was particularly relevant where the amount of funding to schools was smaller (such as £800 in total), as it was difficult for the Head teacher to implement effective strategies using this level of funding.

3.12   Moving forward, there is recognition that the consortia need to understand the different needs within their regions: "so it's not just calling it deprivation, it's slicing it up a little bit". For example, FSM pupils in affluent areas will have different experiences compared with FSM children in deprived areas, or different schools.

3.13   There is also an increased focus on the importance of the family liaison role:

"Unless you tackle the whole family when it comes to poverty and deprivation, and not just the whole child, I don't think you're going to create a helpful culture when that child goes back home…some of those parents are deeply in poverty…the majority of those parents want the best for their children, so by supporting the family, through health initiatives, through social services, transport, uniform…anything you can do to support the family- get them into school, because they may have had a bad experience themselves….when that child returns home the culture is better". (Consortium staff member)

3.14   In line with this, there is appetite to continue building on the partnerships developed as a result of PDG, to increase investments in well-being strategies, and to engage parents and families more by health, education and social services working together.

4. Management of the Pupil Deprivation Grant

4.1 This chapter looks at how schools manage their spending of the Grant, including the support and advice they receive, and the evidence used by schools to inform their spending.

Management of the Pupil Deprivation Grant

Input from local authorities, regional consortia and clusters

4.2 Case study schools had developed close working relationships with their local authorities, consortia, and communities, who supported the management of PDG and the implementation of PDG-funded initiatives.

4.3 Case study schools cited their local authority (LA) as a valuable source of advice on the administration of, and evidence base for, the PDG: LAs provided examples of good practice, signposted them to relevant documents, visited regularly, provided recommendations on spend and how to maximise impact, and could be approached for input on how to handle particular situations. One case study school utilised the 'Vulnerability Profile Index' provided by their local authority to identify at-risk pupils who required tailored support.

4.4 Across the case studies, there was some evidence of schools working effectively across clusters. These initiatives were sometimes led by LAs and consortia, and sometimes instigated by school leaders themselves. Cluster initiatives included consortia establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) with themes such as closing the attainment gap; school leaders pooling PDG to fund members of support staff to work across the region; and in one case a whole-cluster literacy initiative. However, case study schools with poorer records in closing the attainment gap had less constructive relationships with other local schools.

4.5 Case study schools, especially those with a focus on tackling disadvantage across the whole-school or cluster of schools, also linked with local businesses and organisations to deliver PDG-funded interventions, such as cookery courses or training for families. One case study school worked closely with Careers Wales to deliver a whole-school career programme, with the shared aim of reducing the proportion of pupils not in education, employment or training (NEET). This included work experience and mock interviews with a local business, development days, University visits, and career fairs and talks.

4.6   School Governors also played an important role in supporting the management of PDG, predominantly through providing feedback on the School Development Plan. One case study school explained that the school governors did not shape the strategy but rather acted as "critical friends" to the school by asking difficult questions about how the strategy was devised and delivered, and the outcomes it achieved.

Case Study Theme: Partnership and sharing effective practice:

As part of the case study visits undertaken, examples of a number of approaches to partnership working enabling the sharing of effective practice emerged:

Schools collectively funded an Engagement Worker, whose time is split across schools in the consortia. The Engagement Worker worked with a range of families in need, from those who needed literacy support and help filling in forms, to crisis support. The family outcomes were monitored alongside pupils' attainment.

A cluster of Primary Schools developed an initiative called 'Project Hero' to support their pupils as they transitioned to local secondary schools. The PDG funded the lead for this initiative, which facilitated group discussions (for example, discussing the pupils' fears about moving to secondary school) with Year Six pupils. The initiative was said to have noticeably improved the behaviour of pupils in their final term of primary school. One-to-one in-classroom support was also offered to those that needed it during the first term at their secondary school.

A cluster of a secondary school and six feeder primary schools developed a consistent literacy and numeracy strategy that was taught and embedded across the curriculum. To improve baseline skills of pupils, PDG funds across the cluster were pooled to provide a Cluster Literacy Learning Coach who supported the implementation of the strategy, provided training, modelled teaching practices, offered individual support, and created learning frameworks and resources. This raised the baseline level of achievement of primary school pupils entering secondary school, and allowed primary school teachers to benefit from secondary teachers' more specialist subject training. Teaching Assistants and School Governors also received training on the strategy, and parents were briefed on what it entailed. The effectiveness of the cluster strategy was demonstrated through attainment results, as well as the most recent Estyn report which recognised the strong links to literacy skills across all subject areas.

Input from financial and senior management teams

4.7   Across the case study schools, it was typical for senior management teams – led by the head teacher – to decide the priorities and allocation of PDG spend for the school. This was not necessarily the same team that monitored the impact of PDG spending, with case study schools funding PDG Managers, Inclusion and Achievement teams, Intervention Managers and Team Leaders to oversee PDG in practice. These teams were consulted to provide evidence that fed into the School Development Plan and the senior management team's decision-making process.

4.8   In some case study schools, Finance Officers or Business Managers took responsibility for monitoring the costs of school grants – for example, through inputting the costs on 'My School Improvement Dashboard' (MySID, designed by the Educational Achievement Service[23] in Wales), and then invoicing the various activities as the year progresses. As a result of this monitoring, one case study school realised they had significantly under-spent their funding during the academic year so allowed teachers to bid for funds to spend on their own project ideas.

4.9   A number of case study schools noted that their PDG-funding was "ring-fenced to close the attainment gap between eFSM and non-FSM" pupils. One school placed flags in their finances so that PDG-related spend is readily available for audits.

4.10   The financial and senior management teams work closely together to allocate and monitor PDG funding. The Financial Officer of one secondary case study school sat on the senior management board, which meets fortnightly, so was aware of the school philosophy and the impact the PDG funding has on school practice: "it is integral to the work we are doing: it is allowing us to try and get through to these pupils and give them the skills they need".

The School Development Plan

4.11   For each academic year, schools draft a school development plan (SDP) that outlines how they intend to allocate their school budget in order to meet their objectives. The development plan for PDG funding was previously a separate document, but the breakdown of spend for PDG-funded initiatives is now embedded as part of the SDP. This shift received positive feedback from case study schools: "narrowing the gap between e-FSM pupils and the whole cohort should be an

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[23] The five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Education Achievement Service (EAS).

essential part of any school's development plan so having the PDG Development Plan as part of this is great". (Assistant Head teacher, Secondary School)

4.12   Notably, the SDP refers to the academic year (September through to July), whilst PDG funding is based on a financial year (April through to March). As such, one case study school stated that they "plan for four terms and hope funding is available for the full school year", a sentiment shared across the visits. Case study schools consistently mentioned the difficulties of planning the funding, and particularly planning staffing, before they are aware of their PDG allocation for the year.

Contextual factors impacting schools' management of PDG

4.13   Recent work published by the Department for Education into the impact of the Pupil Premium in England highlighted that schools are at different points in an 'improvement journey' in terms of how they tackle educational disadvantage. They found that the schools that were most effective in closing the gap had started implementing strategies at an earlier point, and had more mature strategies in place to tackle the gap.[24] This pattern is endorsed through the PDG case studies.

4.14   The most successful schools placed a strong emphasis on the PDG. The school leaders' vision was clearly articulated and shared and acted upon by all members of staff in the school and wider partnerships. For example, one case study school had developed a whole-school and cluster strategy to improve literacy and numeracy standards under RAISE, which they continued to implement through the PDG. The strategies equipped pupils with independent learning skills, and a series of steps to decompose literacy and numeracy tasks. The deputy head teacher in this example highlighted the school's commitment to ensuring the strategy was delivered consistently and effectively: all staff members were aware of the strategy's aims, and could implement it across all school subjects and activities. The senior management team was accountable to the learners, school staff, parents, governors and local authority, who were all informed of what the strategy aimed to do and how. As such, a school culture that valued continued learning and improvement was expected and encouraged by all involved. Estyn has recognised the school as a hub for sharing good practice, and the proportion of e-FSM pupils achieving the 'Level 2+' indicator (5 A-Cs at GCSE, including English and Mathematics) has increased from 14% in 2012 to 54% in 2015.

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[24] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473974/DFE-RR411_Supporting_the_attainment_of_disadvantaged_pupils.pdf

4.15   Case study schools with a poorer track record were evidently at a much earlier point in their improvement journey, and in these cases the significance or priority afforded to the PDG was limited by school circumstances which may limit the impact in such schools. For example, one case study school was facing significant uncertainty about its future, with falling pupil numbers, staffing cuts, forecasted budget deficits, and poor academic performance in recent years. Tackling the attainment gap was secondary to some of the more pressing concerns threatening the school's future. As a result, the school had been given a 'Notice to Improve', which highlighted pupil attendance and performance, particularly among e-FSM pupils, as a key area for improvement. The 'Notice to Improve', as opposed to the PDG funding, had taken priority and acted as the catalyst for change and increased the focus on improving outcomes of e-FSM pupils. Strategies in this school focused on 'getting the basics right', including a focus on attendance and behaviour, and more effective identification and targeting of pupils requiring additional support. Although in this example PDG funding may have been used to deliver the changes, the presence of PDG was not the ultimate 'driver', rather the very challenging circumstances of the school was the driver for change.

4.16   The size of the school is also a key consideration in relation to the PDG and its intended outcomes. One case study school had a total of 34 pupils, of which eight pupils were e-FSM. The head teacher noted that standards overall were generally high and that there was rarely a discernible gap in attainment between eFSM and non-FSM pupils, potentially because due to the smaller class sizes, all pupils including those that were e-FSM, received tailored attention. Similarly, NFER's statistical analysis of factors associated with schools' effectiveness in closing the attainment gap also found smaller class sizes to be correlated with greater levels of success[25].

Targeting the Pupil Deprivation Grant

4.17   The Welsh Government Guidance[26] states that the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) must be used to fund measures to improve attainment by pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM pupils) and looked after children (LAC), and is not intended to tackle underachievement across the whole school population (though whole-school approaches that have a disproportionate benefit for eFSM pupils may be adopted).

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[25] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/473974/DFE-RR411_Supporting_the_attainment_of_disadvantaged_pupils.pdf
[26] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130426-school-effectiveness-grant-2013-2015-en.pdf

Intervention programmes for individual pupils can only use PDG funds for eFSM pupils.

4.18   Schools were aware that the Welsh Government intends the PDG should target disadvantaged pupils. When asked in the survey in 2014 (prior to the arrangement of the PDG funding being delivered to eFSM pupils and LAC through two separate channels) which group they thought the PDG is intended to benefit, 93% of primary and 98% of secondary school respondents cited eFSM pupils, and 15% of primary and 23% of secondary respondents said LAC. Just over half of schools (55% primary, 60% secondary) identified that both eFSM and LAC pupils are eligible for the Grant. Schools that reported having LAC pupils in their population were more likely than those with no LAC pupils to report that the grant targets this group[27]. As has been highlighted previously the funding mechanisms for PDG support for eFSM and LAC pupils changed in April 2015 into two discrete streams. This report focuses on eFSM and further work on the LAC stream will follow in future.

Figure 4.1 Perceptions of the intended beneficiaries of the Pupil Deprivation Grant
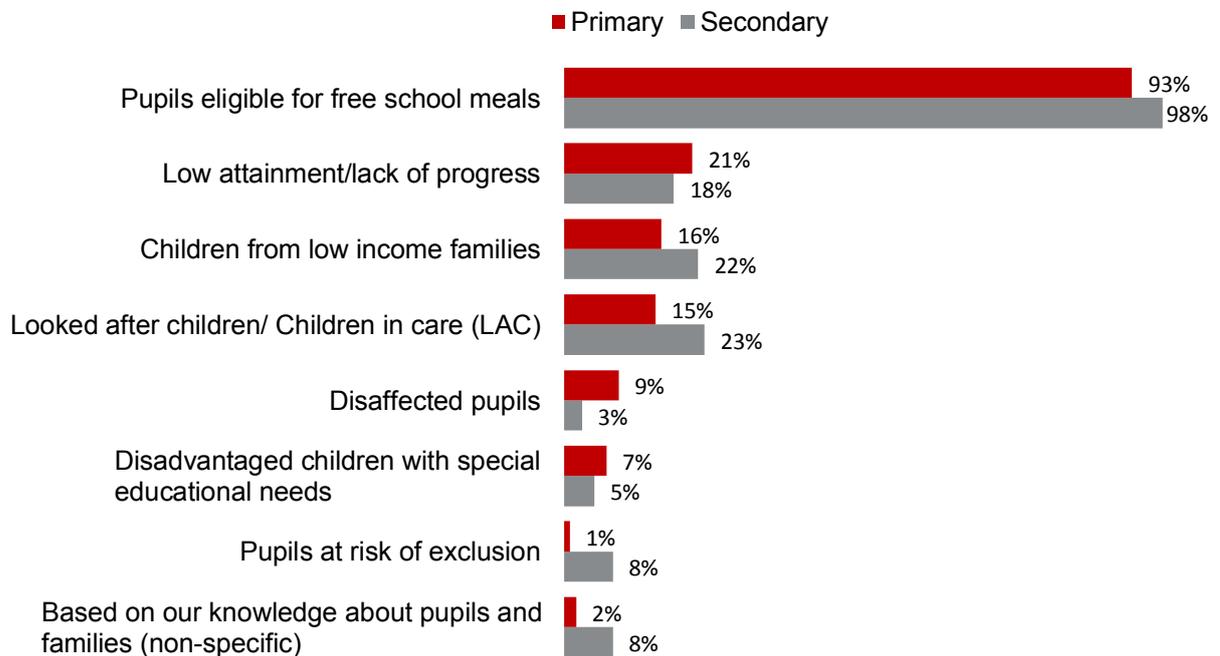
Base: 201 schools surveyed, Feb – Apr 2014. Figure shows responses mentioned by at least 5% of respondents
Question: First of all, based on your understanding of the Pupil Deprivation Grant guidelines, which groups of pupils is the PDG intended to benefit?

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[27] For example, 4% of primary schools with no LAC pupils were aware of the LAC criterion, compared with 27% of primary schools with LAC pupils on roll.

4.19   While schools were aware that the target beneficiaries of the PDG are eFSM pupils, they used broader criteria when targeting interventions in their own schools: only 65% of interventions run in both primary and secondary schools were targeted specifically at eFSM pupils, and there were a significant number of other pupils benefiting from Grant-funded activity. There are two key reasons for this:

1. Schools considered the Grant aimed to tackle 'disadvantage' rather than 'financial deprivation', and used a wider range of indicators and personal knowledge of pupils and families to identify those in need of support, rather than FSM status alone. One case study school noted that "eFSM is a way of quickly defining students – they are economically deprived, but there is a much greater range of deprivation than that...whether it's their parents not being there or whether it's being disadvantaged through opportunity." This sentiment was shared by another case study school: "some of the more affluent pupils can be disadvantaged due to lack of support at home, and LAC may or may not be disadvantaged based on their background for being looked after... Overall, disadvantage is anything that means they're not able to get the same chances in the same way". These schools emphasised the importance of understanding the family's background and current circumstances when identifying whether the pupil was in need of support.

2. Schools considered the Grant aimed to improve attainment for all pupils and therefore targeted pupils with low attainment (regardless of FSM status): 38% of primary and 32% of secondary interventions were targeted at pupils with low attainment.

Figure 4.2 Groups targeted by PDG-funded initiatives
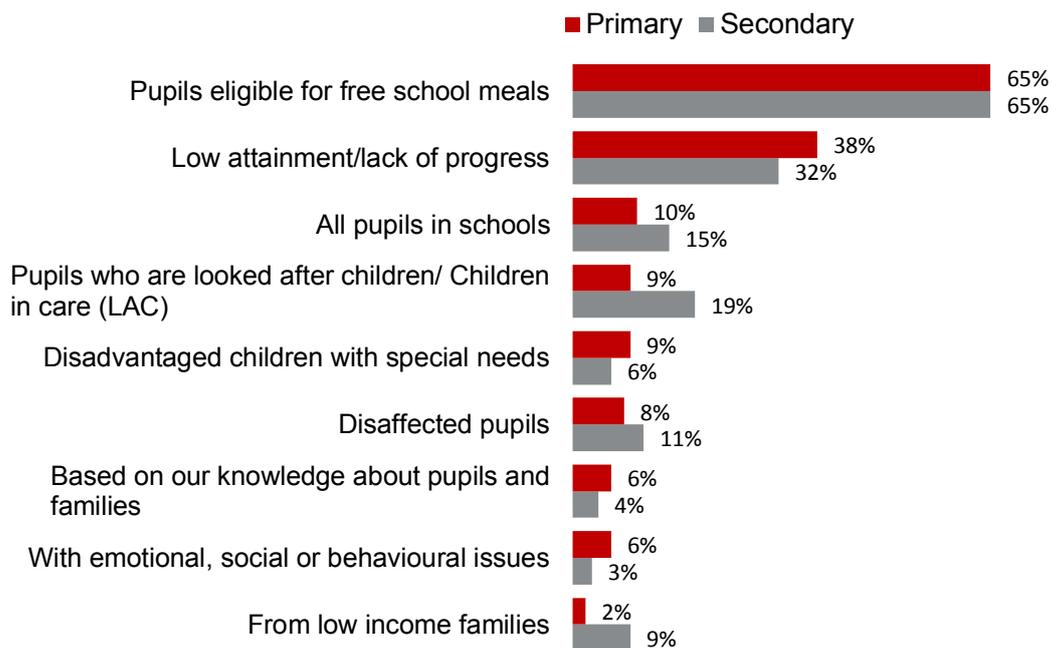
■ Primary ■ Secondary

Group	Primary	Secondary
Pupils eligible for free school meals	65%	65%
Low attainment/lack of progress	38%	32%
All pupils in schools	10%	15%
Pupils who are looked after children/ Children in care (LAC)	9%	19%
Disadvantaged children with special needs	9%	6%
Disaffected pupils	8%	11%
Based on our knowledge about pupils and families	6%	4%
With emotional, social or behavioural issues	6%	3%
From low income families	2%	9%

Base: 785 interventions across 201 schools surveyed (457 primary, 328 secondary interventions), Feb – Apr 2014. All responses with 5% or more (total)
Question: *Which groups of pupils, parents, or other groups are targeted as part of the intervention?*

4.20   The case study visits echoed the survey findings, in that schools understood the aim of the PDG was to tackle the attainment gap by targeting disadvantaged pupils. Head teachers and teaching staff interviewed were broadly supportive of the funding's core aim of specifically helping deprived pupils, but continue to use a broader definition of deprivation than FSM status alone.

4.21   Head teachers and teaching staff felt that pupils could be classified as 'disadvantaged' for a number of reasons, including pupils that were not able to get the same chances as their peers, pupils who found any aspect of learning difficult, pupils just above the poverty line, and pupils impacted by short-term circumstances such as family breakdown.

4.22   Case study schools relied heavily on their staff's knowledge of individual pupils and families to target the PDG, and felt that indicators such as eFSM were a "crude marker of children's development because it doesn't catch all the children who need extra help". Though eFSM does not encompass the broader definition of deprivation that head teachers and teaching staff used to target disadvantaged learners, many recognised that as "a yard stick" it was the best they had available.

Planning Pupil Deprivation Grant expenditure

Evidence used for planning PDG spend

4.23   The PDG encourages schools to make use of evidence-based approaches when planning how to spend the PDG. The guidance[28] requires that schools make intelligent use of data, use data tracking systems to identify learners' needs, target interventions and monitor impact. It also highlights a number of external sources of evidence that schools can use to plan their spending. Specifically, the guidance from the Welsh Government highlights the Sutton Trust Toolkit, Estyn thematic reports and Save the Children Wales's Communities, Families and Schools Together report.

4.24   At the time of the survey in 2014 when asked unprompted what sources of evidence they use when deciding how to spend the grant, schools typically reported using their own data monitoring systems (79% primary and 74% secondary), and a significant proportion mentioned their past experience (29% primary, 29% secondary). A minority of schools spontaneously mentioned external sources of evidence: for example, 12% of primary and 25% of secondary schools reported using the Sutton Trust Toolkit, and 4% of primary and 6% of secondary schools cited Estyn reports. Schools with a higher proportion of e-FSM pupils were more likely to use both the Sutton Trust Toolkit and Estyn reports (27% with a large proportion of e-FSM used the Sutton Trust Toolkit, and 13% used Estyn reports). The guidance does suggest that schools use their own data alongside external sources, but 66% of primary schools and 46% of secondary schools reported only using their own, or informal, sources of evidence, and did not spontaneously mention using external or formal evidence[29].

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[28] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130426-school-effectiveness-grant-2013-2015-en.pdf

[29] We have defined formal / external sources of evidence as that which the Welsh Government has advised schools use (e.g. the Sutton Trust Toolkit), and published academic evidence. Other sources of evidence, such as school data, past experience, or good practice shared with local schools is defined as internal or informal.

Figure 4.3 Evidence used by schools when planning how to spend the Pupil Deprivation Grant (unprompted responses)
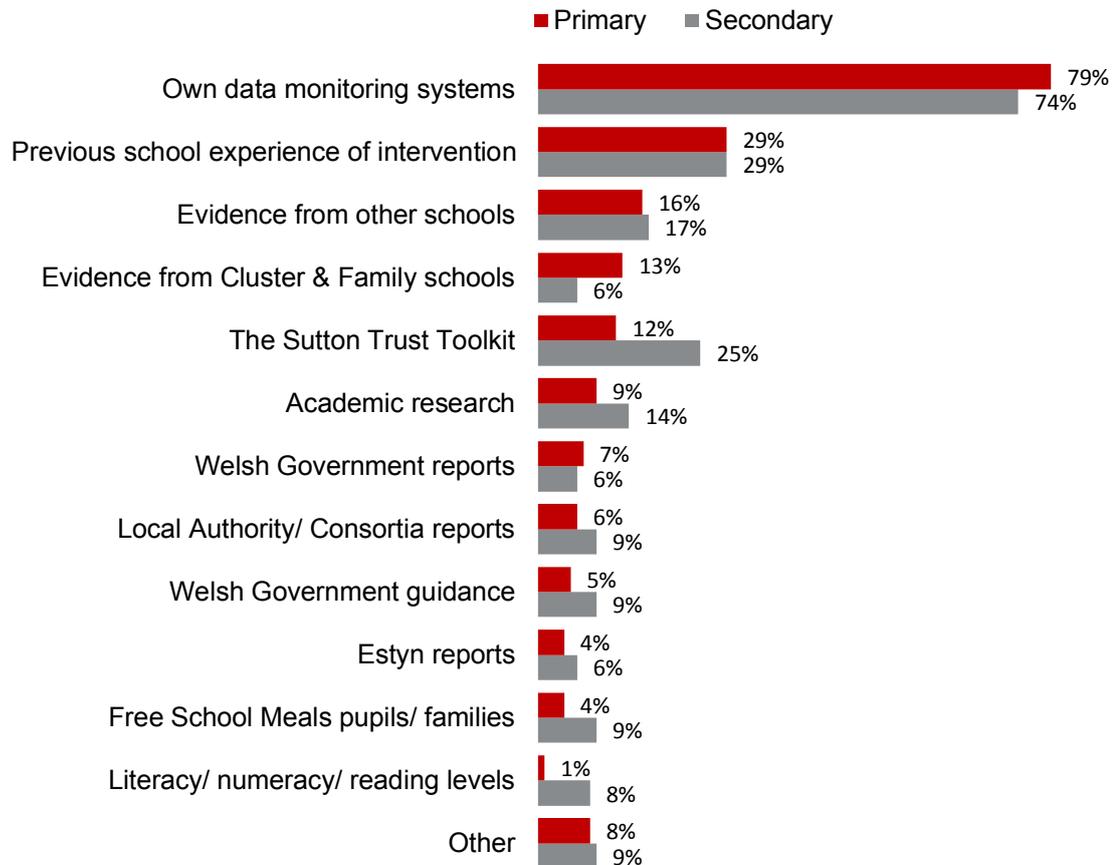
Base: 201 schools surveyed, Feb – Apr 2014. Figure shows responses mentioned by at least 5% of respondents

Question: *What evidence or information, if any, did you use when deciding how to spend the PDG? (Unprompted)*

4.25   However, on prompting, 83% of primary schools, and 85% of secondary schools reported using Welsh Government guidance; 36% of primary and 49% of secondary schools reported using the Sutton Trust Toolkit; and 60% of primary and 74% of secondary school respondents said that they used Estyn reports.

4.26   This conforms with findings from case study visits: schools primarily planned PDG-funded interventions based on their own data and experience. For example, schools typically used their own data monitoring systems in conjunction with anecdotal feedback from pupils and staff, to identify pupils who could benefit from extra support and/or to identify the types of support required across the school population. Case study schools reported that, as a result of the increased focus on data monitoring, teachers had been upskilled in data management and in using evidence to identify at-risk pupils. The data collected for this purpose included

assessment data, national test scores, CATS data (Cognitive Ability Tests), PASS survey findings (Pupil Attitudes to School and Self), and pastoral data. Teachers noted that the increased focus on data monitoring had helped to raise their own awareness of disadvantage and eFSM, and the importance of tailoring strategies for eFSM pupils. Head teachers in schools that had not previously had a significant focus on eFSM as an issue recognised that the PDG and associated monitoring activities had helped to change the culture of their schools in the way they tackled the deprivation gap.

4.27   The PDG has ensured that teachers have a greater awareness of eFSM pupils as a specific group of learners to track and monitor. Many case study schools highlighted that, as a result of PDG, all teaching staff were now aware of which pupils were eFSM. Case study schools reported that teachers were meeting regularly to monitor the performance of individual pupils, and in some cases schools used visual aids, such as notice boards displaying photographs of eFSM pupils with the needs of each pupil noted,[30] or attaching colour-coded spreadsheets to the wall where the senior management board meet. Progress was also monitored through observation; in one case study school the head teacher took 'learning walks' to see how the interventions were working in practice.

4.28   Schools used data in conjunction with their professional judgement and their understanding of pupils and their family backgrounds. Case study schools often employed TAs in family liaison roles and/or pastoral support roles for disadvantaged pupils: this gave TAs and the wider teaching staff insights into the home lives and specific barriers faced by individual pupils. One case study primary school used PDG to fund a higher level TA (HLTA) to work as their Family Engagement Officer. The school provided a dedicated 'Family Room' so parents could come in and speak to the Family Engagement Officer whenever they needed. The Family Engagement Officer referred to her role as being "like a big hug for most families". Another case study primary school carried out home visits before each child started school to understand the various factors affecting each child's life such as parents' employment status and education level, whether a single-parent family, whether there is any long-standing illness or disability in the family, and whether the child has access to books, extra-curricular activity and fruit. They then tailored interventions around these: "it gives an overview really, just a snapshot judgement

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[30] in an area learners do not access.

of the child and a family so we can highlight perhaps those children that don't apply for FSM or don't quite meet the FSM threshold and we would consider at risk". Schools also emphasised the importance of effective communication between staff to ensure information regarding pupils' progress and well-being is shared appropriately. For example, one case study used a postcard system, whereby teaching assistants running interventions added each child's progress into the teacher's register. In this case there were also strong links between pastoral support and senior management teams.

4.29   All schools placed a strong emphasis on collecting and using their own data, including data from specific interventions (see following section). The most effective schools however, supplemented their own data and experience with other, external, sources. In contrast, schools with a poorer track record in closing the gap were either more sceptical of the conclusions of external evidence, or used external evidence in a more limited way (see later in this chapter).

Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions

4.30   Most case study schools took a critical approach to evaluating interventions they had run in previous years to determine whether or not to continue or rescale their activities – for example, many used pre- and post-intervention testing as well as a mix of gathering feedback from beneficiaries and/or observation of activities. One secondary case study school cited using a long-term approach to trialling, refining and rolling out interventions: they devised and tested their literacy strategy in the English department, before rolling it out to test in the Humanities department (that already had higher levels of confidence in literacy compared to other departments), and then rolled it out to the whole school, before finally rolling it out across the cluster. The literacy strategy evolved throughout this period based on evidence of its effectiveness.

4.31   In addition, schools demonstrated a willingness to remove interventions that were not working or providing additional value. For example, one case study school no longer funded the Place2Be intervention for well-being as Estyn highlighted that although it made a positive impact on well-being, it did not add value to attainment or closing the gap. Another case study school reallocated PDG spend that was being used to fund an off-site course for families as there was no evidence that families were engaging with this idea after three weeks.

4.32   Schools' effective use of data helped to maximise the impact of the interventions they ran. One primary school, for example, noted that interventions run immediately after lunch were less effective, and that most behavioural incidents in the school also occurred in the same period. The school subsequently found the same intervention was far more effective when run earlier in the school day.

External evidence, including the Sutton Trust Toolkit

4.33   The Welsh Government guidance recommends applying the Sutton Trust Toolkit, and other evidence-based approaches, to ensure that PDG investment makes a lasting impact on outcomes for disadvantaged learners. The toolkit is a summary of robust impact studies which provides guidance on the relative impact and cost of a number of strategies to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

4.34   Case study schools were aware of the Sutton Trust Toolkit, with many being informed of this guidance by their local authority and consortium. One case study school had heard about the Sutton Trust Toolkit through head teacher training courses. In the most recent wave of case study visits, schools that had not previously been aware of the Toolkit often referred to it; many had been introduced to the Toolkit via the activities of their regional consortium.

4.35   Head teachers in schools with a poorer track record of closing the gap typically reported that the toolkit guidance was taken with a "pinch of salt" – this view appeared to develop from any evidence that did not align with their own experience of interventions and applying their own judgement of success. An example cited on a number of occasions was the limited support in the literature for teaching assistants fulfilling certain tasks or roles. The publication 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants Guidance Report'[31] cites that "the typical deployment and use of TAs, under everyday conditions, is not leading to improvements in outcomes". This refers to TAs deployed in more informal, unsupported and instructional roles. The report also notes that "there is emerging evidence that TAs can provide noticeable improvements to pupil attainment. Here, TAs are working well alongside teachers in providing excellent complementary learning support, although, importantly, this is happening in a minority of classrooms and schools". School leaders in more successful schools appeared to be less sceptical of the Toolkit and a few even referenced the toolkit as informing their decisions to move away from

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[31] https://v1.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/TA_Guidance_Report_Interactive.pdf

using TAs and back to teachers for some specific interventions (such as Heads of Maths leading targeted interventions to improve attainment in mathematics).

4.36   In addition to the Toolkit, other external sources were also used. For example, case study schools, who appeared open to innovating changes, cited using John Hattie's academic research[32] to inform their implementation of 'visible learning' practices. These schools typically learnt about 'visible learning' through conference presentations.

4.37   Across the board, schools appeared to be more receptive to evidence from other local schools and networks about what works well in raising the attainment of disadvantaged learners. This coincides with what appears to be stronger networks of local schools emerging over the lifetime of the evaluation, sometimes established via regional consortia. The consortia's role here will continue to be important, as some schools and leaders (often in the more successful schools) are better linked to local networks than others, and ensuring that all leaders can access networks to share good practice will help.

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[32] John Hattie is Professor of Education and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne. His research includes the synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses of quantitative measures looking at the effect of different factors on educational outcomes. This resulted in his publication 'Visible Learning', which summarises evidence-based educational practices for improving students' learning. For more information, please see http://visible-learning.org/.

5. Activities

5.1   This chapter sets out the key activities carried out by schools using PDG funding, including the types of interventions they run; the pupils that schools have decided should receive PDG-funded interventions; and how and by whom the interventions are delivered.

Types of PDG-funded interventions

5.2   The Welsh Government Guidance[33] states that the PDG "is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential". This section outlines a number of key strategies schools have implemented to effectively achieve this, and examples of the interventions and approaches used to support these strategies. These include:

- Focusing on the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and learning skills to improve attainment
- Strategies for deploying staff effectively
- Improving attendance and behaviour
- Engaging parents and carers of disadvantaged learners
- Using technology to engage learners and their parents
- Developing and supporting the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners
- Providing an alternative curriculum
- Early targeting

Focusing on the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and learning skills to improve attainment

5.3   In line with national priorities and as evident in the previous evaluation reports, case study schools continued to demonstrate a drive to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy. In the most recent case study visits, there was a particular focus on literacy as being the key to children being able to access the rest of the curriculum.

5.4   Case study schools varied in their approaches to raising attainment, and in the types of pupils targeted. Schools with larger attainment gaps and lower attainment levels generally focused on underachieving pupils or underachieving eFSM pupils; schools with higher attainment levels also focused on maximising the potential of all

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[33] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150323-pdg-essential-guidance-en.pdf

eFSM pupils, including More Able and Talented (MAT) eFSM pupils as well as those at lower ability levels. Case study schools typically used PDG to fund TAs to deliver small-group interventions to pupils needing additional support in literacy and numeracy. Case study schools with a strong track record in closing the attainment gap also had strategies in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school, and a few schools used PDG to fund highly skilled teachers – such as Heads of English or Maths – rather than TAs to deliver interventions.

5.5   The benefits of using small-group interventions were allowing more tailoring of approaches to specific pupils' needs, providing teachers or TAs with better knowledge of how to engage each pupil, closer monitoring of behaviour and attainment, and increased attention and feedback to pupils. Pupils participating in these groups expressed that they felt the smaller class sizes provided a safe environment for them which helped to build their confidence: *"In normal classes if you are struggling, a lot of people will keep on laughing at you, being horrible. In literacy and numeracy with the small class and people on the same level then it is easier to ask for help"* and *"Because there are [fewer] people in the class it makes me more confident and the teacher helps you more".* (Pupil, Secondary School) One school noted that they had shifted from one-to-one to small-group tuition to provide better value for money with similar outcomes for pupils.

5.6   Schools often used PDG funding to buy learning resources for TAs or teachers to deliver during these sessions. A number of programmes were cited across the participating schools, including Fresh Start, Read Write Inc. and Cumbria Reading Intervention. Children taking part in Fresh Start said their confidence had grown as a result of the intervention, with one particular student moving from a reading age of nine to eleven. Those responsible for delivering interventions were typically tasked with monitoring and assessing their effectiveness (predominantly through pre- and post-intervention scoring on measures such as reading age), with schools adapting their approaches and using a mix of resources to tailor their approaches as needed.

5.7   Schools scheduled interventions so that they did not impact on the timetable for core subjects, while aiming to ensure that pupils did not miss classes in non-core subjects they enjoy the most. This was typically done by varying the time and day of week the intervention was held so that the same subject or lesson was not missed each week. Case study schools also offered after-school sessions in literacy and numeracy that could be attended by both the child and their parent. This ensured

that the strategies for improving literacy and numeracy skills could be reinforced at home.

5.8   In the latest wave of case study visits, there appeared to be an increased focus on developing learning and meta-cognitive skills, alongside targeting attainment in the core subjects.

Intervention outcomes 1: Developing learning and meta-cognitive skills

'Visible learning' (based on the academic research by John Hattie), was implemented across schools that were more open to innovating change. This placed greater emphasis on children (and their parents) understanding what an effective learner is. The Head teacher of one of these schools said they could see huge differences, with children now being able to articulate what learning is all about: one child explained that "it's someone who can concentrate, who's a hard worker, who makes mistakes but doesn't give up".

In addition to increasing children's awareness of their learning styles, schools were aiming to equip children with **learning strategies they can use across all subjects**, such as deconstructing passages of text so they can understand the key elements of good writing and duplicate this in their own work. For example, in a Science lesson, children were shown an example of an experiment methodology and collectively analysed what worked well. They then drafted their own methodology for an experiment being conducted in-class.

Strategies for deploying staff effectively

5.9   Broadly, there appeared to be two main strategies for deploying staff across the case study schools.

> **1. Funding teaching assistants (TAs):** Based on the case study visits to date, one of the most common uses of the PDG was to fund TAs to deliver one-to-one or small group activities, to support classroom learning, or in pastoral roles.

> **2. Additional teaching staff:** Over time, there appears to have been a shift in case study schools, with more established literacy and numeracy strategies, moving away from exclusively funding TAs in favour of funding teachers with specific subject knowledge to deliver interventions (Intervention outcomes 2).

> *Intervention outcomes 2: Additional teaching staff case study*
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> In one secondary school, the most significant change since the visit in 2015 had been in the provision of additional support across the core curriculum; this plan has been developed much further in that time. In the most recent visit, the PDG had been used to fund:
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> - An additional teacher on 0.6 timetable (as opposed to two TA salaries) to provide bespoke literacy and numeracy tutoring to one or two individuals at a time.
> - The Head of Mathematics does not have a form class, and instead takes pupils who have not yet achieved a grade C for three mornings a week for some quick-fire mathematic questions.
> - Four mathematics teachers to deliver additional support to eFSM pupils who have not yet achieved a grade C, held on a Saturday. These teachers set up multiple maths-related activity stations, and the pupils move around the stations in a circuit.
> - Higher level TAs to take small classes to free up the timetable of mathematic teachers.
> - Mathematics teacher regularly provides support to the vocational pupils – the hours of this have been increased for next year.
> - An additional hour of mathematics on the timetable for all pupils, equating to seven hours a fortnight.
> - Overstaffing the English and Mathematics faculties by a teacher and a half to reduce class sizes.
> - Allocating time for teachers to be delivering specific interventions, for example to pupils who have struggled on a recent algebra test, when they are not timetabled to teach.
>
> At the time of the most recent case study visit, 53% of eFSM pupils had achieved at least a grade C in mathematics. This was the same average that was seen across their family of schools at the time (notably, due to the school being in the lowest category this included schools with no or low numbers of eFSM pupils).

5.10   Case study schools noted the importance of matching the skills of staff to suit the roles being asked of them. As in the example above, this meant using the most highly skilled teachers – such as the Head of Maths or English – to deliver

numeracy and literacy interventions or catch-up classes, rather than TAs. Schools stressed how TAs were ideally suited for particular roles they were undertaking: for example, one school employed a TA who was also a trained Maths teacher to deliver small group numeracy interventions; and another school utilised a TA who was a trained counsellor in a pastoral role to support disengaged pupils. Case study schools highlighted that TAs were often much better placed than teachers to do outreach, family engagement, behavioural and pastoral support work. This is because, in many areas, the TAs came from the same communities as the families – they knew the families and their backgrounds, and they were perceived as less threatening or official than a teacher.

5.11   In line with ensuring that the most appropriate staff member was delivering the right intervention, the most effective case study schools also focused on up-skilling staff (both teachers and TAs) through specialist training. Teachers across these schools were trained on whole-school strategies, including literacy and numeracy strategies, improved methods of providing feedback to pupils, and meta-cognitive techniques. In other instances, training was related to the specific needs of current learners. For example, one case study school was training a staff member to deliver literacy and numeracy interventions specifically to children with dyslexia. There was also evidence of training being used to continue the professional development of teachers, and ensure their teaching practices are up-to-date in line with school strategies. For example, one case study school provided training on 'visible learning' for all teachers on INSET days.

5.12   This is supported by findings from the survey: 70% of primary school interventions and 58% of secondary school interventions involved some form of staff training or development. Schools described a variety of training practices, including external and internal training, as well as specialist training on literacy/numeracy and pastoral support.

Table 5.1 Staff training and development involved in delivery of main PDG interventions (showing top six responses)

Type of training	Primary interventions %	Secondary interventions %
External training/ LA training/ short course/ away day	26	13
In house training/ on the job training	11	13
Specialist literacy and numeracy training	9	8
One/a few staff members were trained, then trained others ('Train the trainer')	5	5
Software or IT training	3	3
Specialist pastoral support training	2	5
Other training (not specified)	14	12
No training/ not applicable	30	42

Source: Ipsos MORI survey
Base: 457 primary and 328 secondary interventions funded by PDG, Feb – Apr 2014.

Improving attendance and behaviour

5.13   The Welsh Government PDG Guidance[34] outlines a clear rationale for targeting attendance and behaviour.

> "Evidence shows that certain factors which exist in children and young people's lives place them at a greater risk of disengagement from school. Children and young people exposed to these factors are over-represented amongst those who are absent from school, exhibit poor behaviour, and who are excluded from school. Disengagement from school serves can exacerbate what already difficult circumstances for the child or young person".

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[34] http://www.cscjes.org.uk/getattachment/efaad54c-1950-497d-a005-33e969df5526/130426-school-effectiveness-grant-2013-2015-en.pdf.aspx.

5.14   The guidance also states an expectation that schools will use the grant to improve attendance among eFSM pupils. Case study schools all monitored behaviour and attendance closely, and had whole-school strategies in place to improve them. The strategies used to improve attendance varied. Case study schools with more acute attendance problems appeared more likely to use punitive approaches, while other schools emphasised engaging pupils in the school environment in order to incentivise attendance. Over time, there appeared to be a shift in the schools with greater attendance problems, away from punitive strategies and towards a better understanding of the factors that might be leading to pupil disengagement. This was said to have a greater benefit as the new approach explored the reasons why pupils were not attending school, rather than simply disciplining poor attendance.

5.15   A range of approaches appeared to be successful in building pupils' engagement. One case study school provided lunchtime team activities, led by a teaching assistant in the school playground, to promote inclusion and softer skills, such as building confidence and resilience, that could be translated into classroom behaviour. Another school had set up a Learning House as a bridge between home and school for any pupil experiencing difficulties – pupils here kept up with material being taught in their main school lessons, with the aim of integrating them back into the classroom.

5.16   Schools with greater numbers of eFSM pupils often employed Attendance Officers, Behaviour Officers, and/or Family Engagement Officers that were funded by the PDG.

Intervention outcomes 3: Improving attendance and behaviour

In one secondary school:

- The Attendance Officer called parents when children were late or absent. This was a new role created using PDG funding. During the most recent case study visit, the Head teacher referred to the Attendance Officer as "still an effective role", but reported that attendance was still three percentage points lower than the local authority average of 93%.
- There were also rewards, such as pizza and film nights, for pupils with 100% attendance, and attendance cards were sent home to parents once a term.

The Head teacher noted that the Attendance Officer role would soon be shifting:

> "This is where we've been going wrong... we didn't focus on [family liaison] and why children weren't coming into school."

This shift in the focus of the Attendance Officer role was due to the success of their previous Emotional Resilience Officer (this role had been discontinued due to the removal of Communities First funding), and was inspired by hearing about the 'Family Learning Signature Approach', which rates families' attitudes to learning and helps to focus approaches on family engagement.

Engaging parents and carers of disadvantaged learners

5.17   The Welsh Government Guidance[35] highlights that "research indicates that effective family and community engagement can have a positive impact on outcomes for all but especially for learners from more deprived backgrounds." Many case study schools had strategies in place to engage and support parents and carers. These were often led by the school's Family Engagement Officer, who had specialist training in working with families to build rapport, relationships and skills. These programmes were offered to families identified as those with the greatest needs, a large proportion of which were families with eFSM children.

Intervention outcomes 4: Engaging parents and carers of disadvantaged learners

Directly communicating with parents and carers: schools reported using apps, emails, phone and post to contact parents. One school encouraged teachers to make one 'golden phone call' at the end of every school day to follow-up on any attendance concerns, or provide positive feedback about behaviour or performance.

Providing classes and courses for parents and carers: several schools offered practical skills training for parents, both to help get parents to engage with the schools and get them physically into schools, as well as equip them with skills for life and to support their children's learning. A wide range of training was offered across the case study schools. This included classes and courses on general skills, such as cooking, fitness, budgeting, and work-related skills. They also included skills to help parents support their children's learning, including numeracy and

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[35] http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/23239/1/150615-face-main-guidance-en.pdf

literacy, parental and child behaviour management, and family relationships. Teachers noted that in addition to the skills being taught, the courses often aimed to model behaviours and strategies that parents could use themselves at home. Parents were positive about these courses:

> "It's a link between school and home – can see what teachers are teaching kids. Kids used to bring back homework and you'd think, what's that?"

> "You're watching the video [about how to deescalate a situation] and thinking 'ah I could do that at home', whereas you wouldn't know about it if you hadn't seen the video."

In some schools, parents and children participated in courses together in order to improve their relationship. In one school, participating pupils said that the course helped them to build trust and taught them to compromise with their parents:

> "Me and my mother don't argue anymore, the group actually really helped benefit the relationship with me and my mum, built trust."

> "We played a lot of games and that was fun, but really I just liked spending time, it was something for me and my mum to do together."

Links with organisations and the community: one school delivered a 'family signature' course through an organisation that helps families identify their strengths and weaknesses. This helped the school to establish and track areas in which families need to develop. The organisation ran the course with the same families four years later to see if any progress had been made. These family-led courses were said to improve pupil attendance rates, as well as family relationships. The school also used links with the local community to provide families with places to visit. The parents at one case study school helped design the playground for a local museum.

Building relationships between the school and family: there was a focus on opening channels of communication with families. One school had a 'Family Room' in the school, where families could visit whenever they wished to speak to the Family Engagement Officer. In addition, the school had introduced a family café that provided families with the opportunity to regularly meet and chat with the Family Engagement Officer and other parents.

> **Offering specialist support to families:** in addition to delivering training on a broad range of skills, specialist support was provided to families. One school funded an Engagement Worker with schools in the consortia to offer crisis support and set specific goals with families. Another case study school worked closely with Team Around the Family to provide in-school pastoral support.

5.18   One case study school ran an 'Achievement for All' programme[36], whereby parents of six underachieving pupils per class were provided with learning resources and were shown how to use them at home to help children achieve their targets. The programme aimed to help pupils achieve a four-point progress in reading, writing and mathematics scores each academic year, as well as improve confidence and independence in the classroom. The programme is in its second year. In recognition of the whole-school improvements in literacy and mathematics, as demonstrated through the programme data, the school was awarded the 'Primary Quality Mark'[37] in December 2015.

Using technology to engage learners and their parents

5.19   A number of case study schools had invested in ICT resources to engage children using technology. For example, iPads had been used to stimulate in-school learning through enabling learners to conduct secondary research and complete digital literacy and numeracy programmes. These programmes could be tailored to each learner's needs, and could provide valuable monitoring data and feedback.

> *Intervention outcomes 5: Using technology to engage learners and their parents*
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> One secondary school **subscribed to the website 'My Maths'**, which is a fully interactive online learning resource written by practising maths teachers.
> **Pupils** were issued with a user name and password to access the website. Tasks for the pupils to complete were set by their teachers or TAs on a weekly basis, tailored to the particular needs of the individual. There were also optional tasks that the pupil could select to practise their skills.
> **Parents** had the facility to track their children's progress on the website, featured a system of traffic lights for each of the tasks to indicate how successful their child has

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[36] It was not specified whether this 'Achievement for All' programme was designed by the school or the programme supported by the Welsh Government https://afaeducation.org/
[37] http://www.qm-alliance.co.uk/Towards-the-Quality-Mark/Primary/Primary.html

been:

- If a green light appeared next to a topic, they had good skills in the area.
- If an amber light appeared they still had difficulties.
- If a red light appeared they ought to try the lesson again or ask their teacher for help with the topic.

The website also told parents which questions their child could and could not do, how many times they had attempted the task, and when they last tried it.

Teaching staff had the ability to monitor the progress of the pupils online; they were able to see who had completed their tasks and how they have done. This data was collated alongside school assessments and Welsh Government national test data meaning the school was able to determine the need for further numeracy interventions to improve attainment.

5.20 Furthermore, technology had been used to overcome barriers and to facilitate inclusion. For example, one case study school had an e-library that gave out e-readers to pupils because some pupils expressed feeling embarrassed taking a book out of the library that indicated their reading levels were lower than their peers. The e-reader allowed them to read suitable materials without peers seeing what they were reading. Another case study school had set up a fingerprint-scanner payment system so children were not aware who was and was not e-FSM.

5.21 Schools reported that technology also helped in engaging parents. Approaches that had worked well included setting maths puzzles for parents and children on the school Facebook page; and asking parents to trial new literacy packages with their children to encourage parents and children to read together, in some cases this was done using school-supplied iPads. Schools noted that social media had helped them to keep in touch with parents who might not want to attend the school itself.

Developing and supporting the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners

5.22 In line with the Welsh Government Guidance that asks schools to "recognise the relationship between well-being and standards", many case study schools had implemented programmes to develop and support the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners.

Intervention outcomes 6: Developing and supporting the social and emotional skills of disadvantaged learners

In one secondary school, the PDG funded a Student Assistance Co-ordinator who identified disadvantaged learners. This was done using data from the PASS survey (Pupil Attitudes to School and Self), eFSM register and Vulnerability Index, as well as risk behaviour and issues in the classroom. These pupils were then asked to complete an eight-week course that aimed to build the skills required to effectively progress through school. These included social skills, friendship issues, and emotional needs. Behaviour, attendance and attainment were monitored throughout the course, and up to 12-weeks post intervention. The participants also completed self-evaluation forms at the start and end of the course to highlight changes in perceptions. The feedback from pupils who had taken part was positive:

> "I liked that I could talk about anything."

> "It helped me with lots of problems"

> "If you had problems, sometimes you couldn't go to a normal teacher but you could go to [the Student Assistance Co-ordinator."

> "[If it wasn't for the Student Assistance Programme] I don't think I would be here."

This initiative was in place during the first case study visit to the school, and was continuing at the time of the subsequent follow up visit due to its success.

5.23   In another case study school, a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) was receiving specialist training from the local Educational Psychology Service in order to deliver the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants) programme to children with mild to moderate issues. This would be tailored to each student's needs, and clinical supervision would be provided every half term.

Providing alternative curriculum

5.24   A number of case study schools offered an alternative approach to the curriculum to improve the attendance and behaviour of groups of pupils. The form this took varied depending on the school phase.

> *Intervention outcomes 7: Providing alternative curriculum*
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> **At primary level**, one school provided eFSM pupils (and other pupils where there was availability) - from Reception to Year 3 with 'Forest School' classes. These took place outside in the school grounds, and entailed using nature and their environment to reinforce the subject area they were learning in the classroom. The practitioner who led these classes reported observing improved mental and physical well-being among the pupils, as well as reduced levels of anxiety.
>
> **At secondary level** the focus of the alternative curriculum provision shifted towards key employability skills. In one case study school, the Learning Coach expressed the view that "not everyone is suited to an academic environment." Some pupils spent two days a week on work placement to maintain their engagement with learning. In another school, a group of eFSM and NEET ('not in education, employment or training') young people were offered vocational training that results in a Level 2 qualification. It was reported that starting this qualification had provided new motivation and confidence to many of these pupils, which in turn had improved overall attendance at school. In addition to this, some pupils had individual mentoring through the Bike Shop Project, where, alongside vocational and technical skills, they also learnt numeracy and literacy skills by completing practical tasks such as calculating invoices. The vocational training at this school pre-dates PDG, and had been in place for a number of years at the first visit.

5.25   Across both phases, case study schools reported that this type of alternative activity helps to build the aspirations of their pupils: "we need to motivate children and raise aspirations, not just academically".

5.26   In addition to providing alternative curriculum, case study schools had put strategies in place to provide all pupils with the opportunity to experience enriching activities. This included subsidising educational visits to locations such as museums. The most effective schools ensured that enrichment activities, rather than acting as stand-alone 'treats', linked closely to the curriculum and acted as a springboard for future learning opportunities.

Increased focus on early targeting

5.27   In comparison to the first wave of case study visits, there appeared to be an increased focus on early targeting across both primary and secondary schools in the most recent visits. In addition to raising standards of primary pupils prior to

moving to secondary school, case studies were now targeting pupils at lower key stages, with the rationale that earlier intervention can have a greater cumulative impact.

Intervention outcomes 8: Increased focus on early targeting

At primary level, this **included providing one-to-one language support to early years' pupils**, with a focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. One school worked with disadvantaged learners(including eFSM and LAC) and those referred by speech and language therapists from Nursery, Reception and Year 1. This support was led by a TA and focused on teaching children how to construct sentences and communication and social skills. To monitor progress, children were assessed on grammar and the tenses using the Renfrew assessment[38] once a term. The intervention lead noted that "sometimes a child might not score highly on the assessment but their grammar may have improved – for example, they might go from saying 'man climbing on roof' to 'the man is climbing on the roof'".

At secondary level, **small-group literacy and numeracy interventions were expanding to also focus on key stage three** pupils. One school employed four trained Literacy and Numeracy officers to deliver basic skills catch up support. One of these is a reading teacher who worked with small identified groups who had reading levels just below the accepted norm for the pupils' age. Numeracy support was targeted based on pupils' numerical age scores. Pupils were monitored on a termly basis post-intervention. 85 key stage three pupils had received literacy support, with an average gain in reading age of 15 months, and 144 pupils had received numeracy support, with year seven and eight pupils making an average 15 months' progress in numerical age scores. Pupils reported positive experiences of this support:

> "It helped as it was taught at a slower pace."

> "I enjoyed that there were other people there who share similar difficulties."

> "It gives you the confidence to speak louder and use adjectives."

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[38] The Renfrew Language Scale Tests, designed by Catherine Renfrew, provide a norm-referenced means of assessing children's speech and language.

6.   Outputs

6.1   This chapter and the following chapter attempts to explore the potential impact of the introduction of the PDG on pupil performance. This is done in two ways: first, through analysing the perceived impact of PDG-funded interventions according to those participating in the survey and, second, through in-depth analysis of pupil outcomes using the National Pupil Database (as discussed in the next chapter). This chapter also looks at the sustainability of PDG-funded interventions to help improve attainment and close the gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in the long-term.

Measuring impact

6.2   The Welsh Government guidance asks schools to use the following measures of outcomes from PDG investment:

- Teacher assessment;
- Reading and numeracy tests data;
- Annual performance data for achievement of Level 2 Threshold including English/Welsh (L2) and the end of Key Stage 4;
- Attendance and exclusion data;
- Estyn reports.

6.3   Our survey and case studies found that schools were using a mix of formal and informal sources to measure impact. At the time of the survey in 2014 Data monitoring systems were used by primary schools to measure the impact of 88% of interventions and by secondary schools to measure 94% of interventions. Test results were used to monitor 86% of interventions in primary schools and 77% in secondary schools. In addition to this, 85% of primary schools and 79% of secondary schools report using informal feedback from teachers. There were some small, but significant, differences in the way impact was measured between interventions with different intended outcomes. This finding was supported by case study schools:

> "[measuring the impact of the PDG] depends what the reasons are, it depends on what intervention has been given and what the reason for it is. It could be an academic one... if we can get you up to your reading age, then great, but if you've been on this a year and the pupils have only increased by a month, there's got to be better ways to do it".

Figure 6.1 How schools measure the impact of PDG
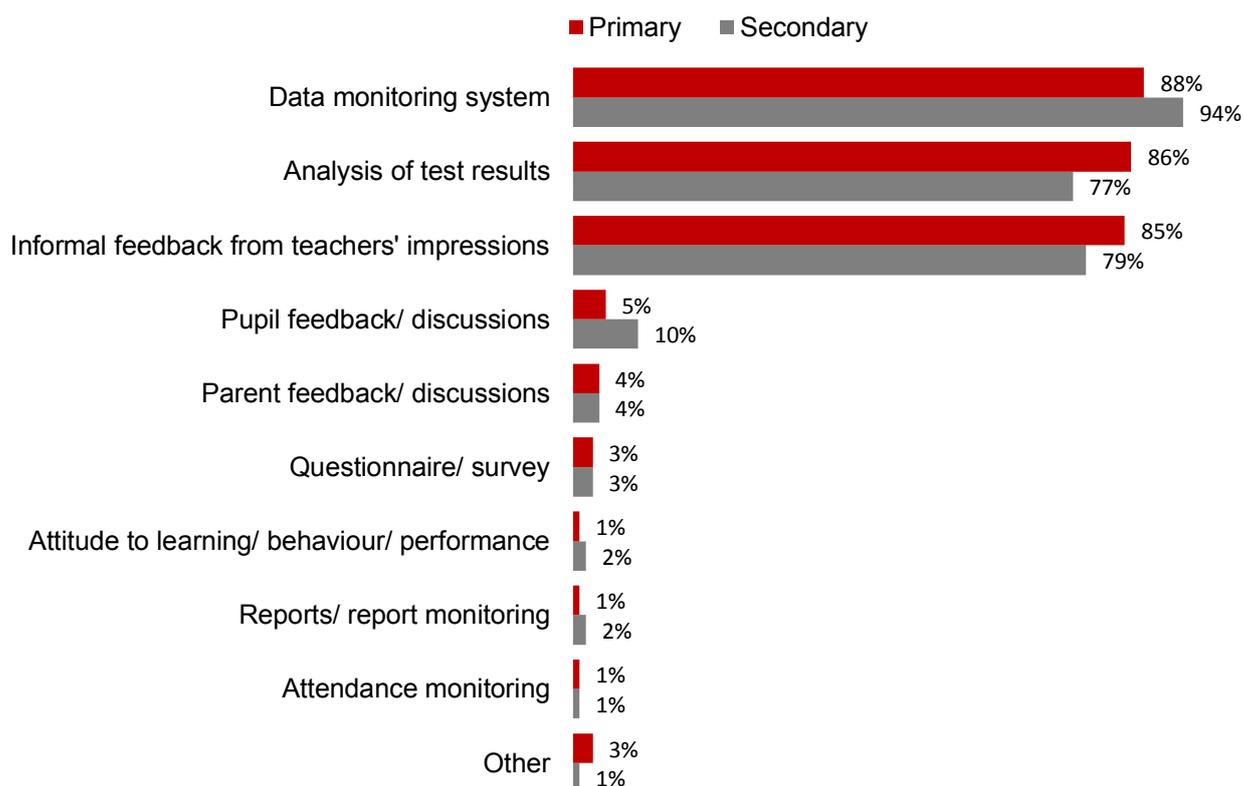
Base: 785 interventions across 201 schools surveyed (457 primary, 328 secondary interventions), Feb – Apr 2014. Figure shows responses given by at least 1% of respondents.
Question: In which, if any, of the following way(s) do you monitor the impact of [the intervention]?

Perceptions of impact

6.4 The intended impacts of the PDG include raising awareness among school staff of the significance of eFSM on pupils' academic progression, attendance, and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning for this group of pupils.

The impact on staffing and teaching

6.5 The case study evidence suggests that the biggest impact of the PDG in terms of staffing in schools has been on the number of TAs schools employed and in the level of specialisation and responsibility they hold. One head teacher stated that 'If I didn't have [the PDG funding] I wouldn't be able to have the level of TA support that I've currently got'. TAs are typically responsible for running interventions; in virtually all case study schools TAs are responsible for delivering literacy interventions, typically they do this by withdrawing small groups or individual pupils from ordinary lessons and working with these pupils on a specific literacy intervention. TAs were also responsible for delivering numeracy interventions, behavioural and pastoral initiatives, and a range of other interventions such as

cookery courses for parents. TAs were also usually responsible for monitoring the impact of the interventions they ran on pupil progress and helping in the evaluation of the success of interventions. In a telling example of how TA roles are becoming more skilled, one school explained that one of their PDG-funded interventions pre-dates the introduction of the grant, but that it is now delivered by a TA rather than a teacher. As in previous case study visits, a few head teachers highlighted the additional responsibilities that TAs now take on, and the increased pressures they work under. One teacher explained the TA role is 'much more intense, much harder' than in the past. TAs are completing training to deliver interventions and are becoming highly specialised members of the school staff. One TA explained that she researched interventions and pedagogical approaches online and brought her findings to staff meetings. It was clear from speaking with other teaching staff that TAs are very highly regarded.

6.6   There was more limited evidence from the case study research that the PDG affected classroom teachers' practice to the same degree, although in the most recent case studies a few schools referenced greater investments in staff training and a shift away from using TAs to their most specialist teachers to deliver interventions (see also 'Strategies for deploying staff effectively'). For example, one school used the PDG to release teachers to visit other schools to share good practice; another school used trios of teachers to observe each other's lessons and provide feedback; this school also tasked the literacy and numeracy coordinators with delivering training on the school's literacy and numeracy framework to all teachers and TAs. However, the PDG was more often used to employ TAs to deliver specific interventions rather than change class teachers' practice.

6.7   One of the greatest impacts on class teachers evident from the case studies was their involvement in monitoring the progress of pupils in their classes. We discuss elsewhere in this report the impact of the PDG on schools' monitoring practices. Class teachers are usually responsible for monitoring (along with a member of the senior leadership team with oversight for the PDG and progress of disadvantaged group) pupils' progress on a regular basis. Case study schools used systems which allowed for significant flexibility in tailoring interventions to the needs of specific pupils: for example, teachers (often in combination with members of the SLT and/or TAs) were able to draw on PDG funds to put in place interventions during the course of the school year in response to pupils' emerging needs. For example, in

one school the pastoral leader of each year group acts as a port of call for pupils with any emotional needs. Depending on the nature of the need, the head of year will work with teachers and TAs to put in place an intervention to meet the needs of the specific pupil and the issue(s) they face. In another case study school, a TA is in place in every class to provide support for literacy and numeracy, with a focus on PDG-eligible pupils. Class teachers work with the TAs to provide a weekly plan of activities, in response to pupils' developing performance.

The impact on pupils

6.8   Schools reported many examples of where they had observed improved outcomes among pupils, not exclusively in measurable indicators such as progress in literacy and numeracy, but also in 'softer' outcomes such as behaviour and other psycho-social indicators. It was evident that head teachers perceived the PDG to have had a positive impact overall, and that few, or in some cases none, of the interventions would have occurred without the PDG.

6.9   For one head teacher the PDG funding has been transformational with regard to the improvements at the school: "I don't know where we'd be without it – it's critical …It's allowing us to put in place interventions, one to one initiatives, projects .. to try to enthuse these pupils … it's invaluable". At this school, the proportion of eFSM pupils meeting the level 2 threshold doubled during the first year of monitoring (from 14% to 28%). At the same time, the proportion of pupils excluded almost halved, which staff attributed to the whole-school behaviour and attendance interventions that were implemented. Other case study schools quoted impacts that were equally impressive: for example, the proportion of eFSM pupils achieving the level 2+ indicator in one instance had more than tripled, from 14% to 54% from 2012-15 (with some improvements attributed to long-term improvement that pre-dated the PDG, as well as progress made during the life of the grant itself).

6.10   This experience echoes the perceptions and findings of other case study schools, that also reported significant impacts on English and mathematics grades, and a narrowing of the gap between eFSM and non eFSM pupils. However, many case study schools stressed the length of time necessary to make a real impact on attainment, and highlighted that many of the most significant outcomes for pupils were improvements in confidence and self-esteem that are more difficult to quantify.

6.11   Examples of these non-academic improvements observed across a number of case study schools include:

- Improved attendance – overall and in specific lessons (such as mathematics),
- Pupils growing in confidence, and pleased about their achievements,
- Children actively participating in lessons who would not have done so before,
- Greater levels of concentration by pupils,
- Increased homework compliance,
- Improved relationships with families (and opportunity to focus on families more),
- More confident teaching staff,
- Increased teacher/pupil ratio benefitting outcomes. For example, one secondary school was using PDG to fund additional members of staff (in TA and teacher roles) to deliver numeracy interventions. They noted that this funding helped to reduce class size. This allowed for more bespoke interventions, increased attention to students' needs, and ultimately, improved progress for everyone in the class. Notably, they set these classes based on ability. The Head of Mathematics at this case study school said that the students speak very positively of the bespoke tutoring, particularly in relation to their confidence in the subject.

6.12   Several case study schools felt there was a benefit to non-targeted pupils as well as the direct beneficiaries of PDG-funded activities. When lower attaining (and in some cases disruptive) pupils were withdrawn from class for additional support, the rest of the class would be taught at the general level of ability and pace and where relevant without disruption. One head teacher stated that additional support for deprived children 'has a knock-on effect on the whole school'.

6.13   A few head teachers expressed concerns about the focus on closing the attainment gap, or the way targets have been introduced to monitor it. One, for example, stated that: 'I 100% back [the idea] that every child must reach their full potential, but not every child can reach the attainment of everyone else, and there is incredible pressure at the moment that with this money you can make a child achieve'. A few other head teachers were concerned about the potential for new Key Stage 4 targets to offer perverse incentives for schools to narrow their focus on eFSM pupils on the threshold of attainment rather than the whole cohort of eFSM pupils.

The impact on school practice and culture

6.14   It was clear that in many schools the PDG is vital to funding salaries, typically for TAs, and interventions. However, it is part of a set of funding streams and initiatives that are changing schools' practices. For example, many initiatives run by schools were funded in conjunction with other grants. In some circumstances head teachers were able to differentiate between outcomes due to PDG funding and outcomes due to EIG funding as the interventions funded by each were highly focused. This, however, was not the norm and in most cases the ability to differentiate and isolate outcomes based on what financial support stream was being used was not possible.

6.15   The case studies suggest the PDG has affected school culture to varying degrees. Many schools report they already had a strong emphasis on supporting disadvantaged pupils, and that the PDG provides them with the scope to reduce the teacher: pupil ratio to improve teaching effectiveness, and to invest in resources. However, some case study schools acknowledge that the impact has been significant: the PDG has raised the profile of disadvantage as an issue and of schools' responsibilities towards disadvantaged pupils.

> 'The principle has changed… if you went back five years ago, to other grants such as RAISE and PREVENT (sic)[39], the idea that we would monitor and track eFSM performance as a separate group, that wouldn't happen… We would touch on it but we wouldn't necessarily focus on it. I think we all underestimated the impact of eFSM on performance… It's the moral purpose as much as the money, understanding the impact of poverty and what we can do about it' – Head teacher.

6.16   In this case, it appeared to be the monitoring and use of data that had driven up the profile of eFSM, as much as (or more than) the existence of the PDG itself.

6.17   A few schools acknowledged that their focus when planning and spending PDG was much more narrowly on eFSM pupils than it had been earlier in the life of the grant. Schools put this down to clearer guidance from the Welsh Government and regional consortia. New guidance for schools has been made available: 'Pupil Deprivation

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[39] Prevent is part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Grant: short guidance for Practitioners' was made available in December 2013, and 'Pupil Deprivation Grant: Essential guidance' was issued in March 2015.[40]

6.18   Several schools highlighted that the PDG had instigated changes in the way they collected and used monitoring data, and in a few schools there were differences in the way data was used to plan interventions. For example, one school explained they had always monitored individual pupils, but had not previously monitored the impact of specific interventions. Another school explained their previous data monitoring systems did not flag eFSM pupils, so they had not monitored the progress of this group specifically until the introduction of the PDG. The closer analysis of data clearly has an impact: schools were able to pinpoint specific examples of successes, and a few explained that interventions had been adapted or dropped as a result of reviewing monitoring data.

6.19   Schools are using sophisticated data systems to track individual pupil progress against agreed targets. Systems typically pre-date the introduction of the PDG but are now being used to track disadvantaged learners progress more closely. These systems flagged potential indicators associated with the risk of pupils not achieving their full potential, such as eFSM, LAC, EAL, SEN and so on. Data was monitored for attainment against targets across a range of subjects, attendance, and in some cases behaviour. These data were reviewed regularly, usually termly or every half term. The monitoring often involved meetings of class teachers and a member of the SLT or a member of staff responsible for additional learning needs or special educational needs to review progress for each pupil and determine appropriate additional support for each. Most schools reported collecting measures of pupil well-being and self-esteem in addition to attendance and attainment measures. For example, many reported using Boxall Assessments, or the Pupil Attitudes to School and Self (PASS) survey.

6.20   Some schools acknowledge they make greater use of data and evidence in planning PDG spending than in the past. Schools involved in more recent case studies were usually aware of the Sutton Trust Toolkit[41], often through their regional consortia. While most of the case study schools still did not use the Toolkit a few found it useful 'as a guide', or to drive up the quality of teaching practice. One head

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[40] http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/19051/1/131216-pdg-short-guidance-for-practitioners-en.pdf
http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150323-pdg-essential-guidance-en.pdf
[41] The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit is a summary of educational research which provides guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Schools are encouraged to refer to and use the evidence in the Toolkit when planning how to spend their PDG funds.

teacher of a school we had previously visited continued to describe their school as 'an action research school' with a great emphasis on monitoring the impact of their activities, learning from other schools, learning from observations of each other's lessons, and using external data from published research. Another school employed an external consultant to better understand how the school could help to move children on, and then trained teachers in specific practices that should help.

> '[We] had consulted the Sutton Trust Toolkit for ideas, especially those which deliver more for smaller investment to fit within or around their main intervention. The toolkit does not focus on the small interventions, but rather on the bigger picture. It focuses on having good schemes in place to make an overall positive impact on deprived pupils. The school has not really used the Sutton Trust Toolkit in planning spending of the PDG grant, because the PDG is hard to use on Sutton Trust Toolkit interventions.' (Head teacher, Secondary School)

The sustainability of PDG-funded interventions

6.21   Schools were asked if they would be able to continue to deliver their intervention on the same scale, smaller scale, or not at all if the PDG funding was cut. At the time of the survey in 2014 It was reported that a third of the interventions (32% of both primary and secondary interventions) would not be able to be continued if the PDG funding was cut. This was significantly higher among schools with a large proportion of e-FSM pupils (38%). Some of the case study schools also shared this notion:

> "We couldn't do without [the PDG]. We wouldn't be able to do any of our intervention work. We wouldn't be able to staff it or resource it, which would ultimately mean that those children would not be able to get those life chances."

Figure 6.2 Sustainability of PDG-funded interventions

■ Continue to deliver intervention on same scale
■ Continue to deliver intervention on a smaller scale
■ Not be able to continue to deliver intervention at all
■ Not sure

Primary	16%	51%	32%	2%
Secondary	14%	53%	32%	1%
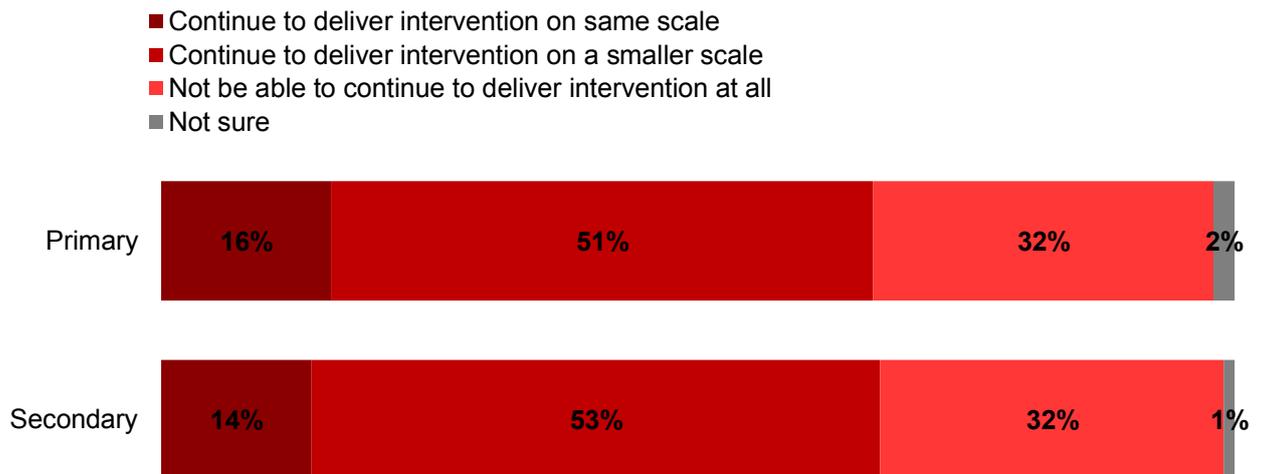
Base: 578 interventions across 201 schools surveyed (344 primary, 243 secondary interventions), Feb – Apr 2014. Question: If the PDG funding was to be cut, would you be able to ...?

6.22   When we ask about the sustainability of PDG funded interventions in the survey in 2014, 16% of primary interventions and 14% of secondary interventions were perceived as sustainable on the same scale they were being delivered, and over half of interventions (51% of primary interventions and 53% of secondary interventions) would require a scale-back. It should also be noted that the survey was conducted just as the level of PDG funding increased from £450 to £918, though before the subsequent further increase to £1,050 per pupil.

6.23   The fact that around two-thirds of activity was regarded as being able to be sustained to some degree if PDG were cut should be considered in the light of the significant amount of supplementary funding schools currently provide. As such, it is difficult to interpret the degree to which schools have developed activities that are self-sustaining – for example, because staff are now trained in new ways of teaching or mentoring, resources are available, or systems are in place – versus the degree to which other funding would continue to be used.   However, the evidence from the survey and case studies tends to suggest that a significant amount of staff time is being funded using the PDG and ongoing funding would be required to maintain the same level of activity. According to 2014 survey data, 46% of primary interventions and 50% of secondary interventions are delivered by staff specifically recruited to deliver the intervention. Evidence from the most recent case study visits endorses these findings: in almost every case study school the great majority of the funding was used on staffing. For example, in one school all of their PDG

allocation (£90,000) was spent on staffing, primarily on a range of TA roles to deliver particular strands of activity. In other schools, the PDG allocation has been used to employ additional teachers, particularly in English and Maths, to provide additional catch-up support during timetabled hours, as well as evenings and weekend coaching. The case studies also highlight that schools are pooling funds from various grants with similar aims to subsidise interventions, and/or part-funding interventions from the general school's budget. For example, a number of schools talked about pooling the EIG and PDG to enhance each grant's impact, with the EIG used to fund literacy and numeracy interventions for non-FSM as well as eFSM pupils, so that the PDG could be used to fund other initiatives.

6.24   Set against this, however, is a significant investment in staff training. The sustainability of this is determined by how wide-spread the training is implemented. Where individuals are trained to specialise in a particular strategy, the investment is dependent on retaining these individuals. Examples of this from case study schools include providing specialist dyslexia training to one staff member, and a HLTA receiving training from the local Educational Psychology service to deliver in a particular well-being intervention. If these staff leave the schools, so does their specialist knowledge. On the other hand, training that is delivered as a whole-school strategy can lead to a sustainable improvement in the quality of teaching practices. For example, one case study school had implemented a whole-school and cluster approach to improving literacy and numeracy standards – as a long-term strategy, this intervention did not yield an immediate spike in results. It was reported however that the expected improvements were beginning to be evident after a full cohort had gone through the school under this system.

6.25   Furthermore, the survey data indicates that over half of the interventions funded by the PDG involved investing in resources and materials. Most commonly, material investments covered books; teaching resources and materials; and IT and online resources. One head teacher noted, however, that the rapid obsolescence of technology means investing in IT as a resource was not always sustainable.

7.   Impact analysis

Introduction

7.1   In this section of the report we examine the potential impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) on educational outcomes. Specifically, we are concerned with differences in the educational outcomes of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) versus pupils not eligible for free school meals (non-FSM) before the PDG was introduced and after the PDG was introduced. However, throughout the analysis we are also minded to report changes in overall educational outcomes, since it is necessary to see whether any narrowing in outcomes between eFSM and non-FSM pupils is the result of relatively greater improvements in outcomes for eFSM pupils or a relative decline in educational outcomes of non-FSM pupils.

7.2   In assessing the potential impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant, we use a wide range of different educational outcomes (Table 1). The analysis begins with the potential impact of the PDG on school attendance/absence. It then looks at measures of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11 years) and GCSE attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (age 15 years). Lastly it also considers the relative progress made in pupil assessment between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.

7.3   In order to identify the possible impact of the PDG we are primarily concerned with the educational outcomes of eFSM pupils before and after it was introduced. Since the PDG was introduced during 2012/13 this means we can compare educational outcomes in 2010/11 and 2011/12 with 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 (the latest year for which educational outcomes are currently available at the time of analysis). Since every school with a pupil eligible for free school meals receives the Grant, and the size of the grant is the same for every eFSM pupil, there is no 'control' group of schools (and hence pupils) who have eFSM pupils but did not receive the Grant. Instead the main analytical approach is to compare the relative achievement of eFSM pupils versus non-FSM pupils – many of which could be in the same schools as eFSM pupils. Therefore, what is presented here is a national comparison over time – i.e. the potential impact of the PDG across the whole maintained education sector in Wales. It does not provide an analysis of the impact of the PDG in each school.

Table 7.1 Measures of educational outcomes

Attendance			
	% of ½ day sessions with authorised absence	% of ½ day sessions with unauthorised absence	

Key Stage 2 Attainment			
Achieving Level 4	Maths	*Achieving Level 5*	Maths
	English/Cymraeg		English/Cymraeg
	Science		Science
	Core Subject Indicator*		Core Subject Indicator*

Key Stage 4 Attainment			
A grades	GCSE Maths	*C grades or above*	GCSE Maths
	GCSE English/Cymraeg		GCSE English/Cymraeg
	GCSE Science		GCSE Science
	GCSE Maths, Science *and* English/Cymraeg		C+ in GCSE Maths, Science *and* English/Cymraeg
	3 Grade As - any GCSE subject	*GCSE points*	Capped to best eight GCSE grades
		Level 2 (inclusive)	GCSE Grade C (or equivalent) in English/Cymraeg *and* Maths

Progress KS2-KS4		Language (i.e. English or Cymraeg)	
	Maths	Science	

* Core Subject Indicator includes Maths, English/Cymraeg and Science. Indicator measures the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in both Maths and Science and either English/Cymraeg.

7.4　This also assumes that the Pupil Deprivation Grant only has an impact on eFSM pupils in each school, which our analysis above shows is not always the case as there are some instances of non-FSM pupils receiving PDG funded support. Nevertheless, the main aim of the Pupil Deprivation Grant is to improve the outcomes of eFSM pupils and so reduce the 'gap' between the educational outcomes of eFSM pupils and non-FSM pupils – so that is what this analysis presents. However, isolating the 'effect' of the PDG is incredibly difficult and it is still possible that any reduction in the 'gap' in outcomes (we prefer to use the term

percentage (%) differential) over these two years could be due to the impact of other interventions or general improvements in the educational system.

7.5   The first and second reports of this evaluation (Pye *et al.* 2014 and 2015) reported changes in the % differential in educational outcomes between eFSM and non-FSM pupils before the Pupil Deprivation Grant was introduced, i.e. between 2010-11 and 2011-12. This showed the % differential in educational outcomes between eFSM and non-FSM pupils was already improving (i.e. the 'gap was declining) just prior to the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. This could suggest that any improvement in the educational outcomes of eFSM pupils compared to non-FSM pupils after 2011/12 may have occurred without the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (i.e. there was already a trajectory of improvement in schools). Therefore the subsequent analysis focuses on two things. First, the relative difference in educational outcomes before and after the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and second, the rate of improvement (or otherwise) after the introduction of the Pupil Deprivation Grant compared to the rate of improvement prior to its introduction.

7.6   The following analysis is, therefore, based on five years of education outcomes in 2011 (school year 2010/11), 2012 (2011/12), 2013 (2012/13), 2014 (2013/14) and 2015 (2014/15). Table 2 summarises the data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) for individual pupils who were assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in those four years. Typically, this includes the educational achievements of over 30,000 pupils at the end of each Key Stage and in each year. Table 7.2 also summarises the attendance data of individual pupils. In contrast to assessment data this is available for all pupils in all year groups (1,801,445 pupils over the five years) (see Table 3 for a detailed breakdown of these numbers by Year Group).

Table 7.2 Number of pupils available for analyses of educational attainment by year

Year	End of stage attainment data		Attendance data
	KS2	KS4	
2010/11	32,227	34,138	362,515
2011/12	31,675	33,510	360,547
2012/13	30,764	34,932	359,606
2013/14	31,543	33,490	359,449
2014/15	32,014	32,335	359,737
TOTAL	189,898	201,915	1,801,854

7.7   The analysis of educational outcomes is structured in the following way. First, the overall levels of educational outcomes and the % differential between eFSM and non-FSM pupils for absenteeism, Key Stage 2 attainment and Key Stage 4 attainment. Finally, the examination of the estimated influence of being eligible for free school meals on all these educational outcomes after controlling for other characteristics also associated with differences in educational outcomes. These 'controls' are:

- Gender (Female, Male)
- Ethnicity (White British, White Other, Mixed, Asian, Black, Other)
- Recorded special educational needs (Action, Action Plus, Statemented)
- Season of birth (Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer)
- The proportion of females in a school's intake
- The proportion of White pupils in a school's intake
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals
- The proportion of pupils with any recorded special educational needs

Table 7.3. Number of pupils used in the analysis of attendance by Year Group

Year of Study	Stage	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	TOTAL
Year 1	KS1/FP	32,783	33,202	34,014	35,492	34,628	170,119
Year 2	KS1/FP	32,099	32,863	33,228	34,025	35,591	167,806
Year 3	KS2	31,512	32,055	32,854	33,265	34,067	163,753
Year 4	KS2	30,813	31,527	32,013	32,925	33,286	160,564
Year 5	KS2	31,766	30,858	31,496	32,038	32,957	159,115
Year 6	KS2	32,318	31,773	30,782	31,590	32,045	158,508
Year 7	KS3	33,111	31,988	31,427	30,475	31,263	158,264
Year 8	KS3	34,123	33,096	31,981	31,413	30,452	161,065
Year 9	KS3	35,430	34,078	32,962	31,910	31,332	165,712
Year 10	KS4	34,290	35,451	34,024	32,913	31,841	168,519
Year 11	KS4	34,163	33,555	34,763	33,337	32,202	168,020
TOTAL		362,408	360,446	359,544	359,383	359,664	1,801,445

7.8   In examining a range of educational outcomes the analysis will develop an overall 'picture' of the possible impact of the PDG, rather than focus on individual measures of educational achievement.

Attendance

7.9   There continues to be an overall improvement in the proportion of half-day sessions with a reported absence over the five years (Table 7.4). The percentage of sessions with an absence has fallen from 7.6% in 2011 to 5.5% in 2015. This improvement has occurred for both eFSM and non-FSM pupils. Whilst the 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils appears to have narrowed over time (i.e. the % point difference between the two groups) the relative difference between the two groups has remained fairly constant over the four years (i.e. the % differential) and is actually greater in 2015 than it was in 2011.

Table 7.4. Absence by year (all ages)

Year	% of sessions with absence			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*7.6*	6.8	11.2	4.4	65.6%
2012	*7.0*	6.1	10.4	4.2	69.0%
2013	*6.8*	6.0	10.1	4.1	67.2%
2014	*5.7*	5.0	8.8	3.7	74.4%
2015	*5.5*	4.9	8.4	3.5	71.4%

7.10   This is affirmed in Table 7.5, which shows the progress in attendance of eFSM and non-FSM pupils over time. This shows that between 2011 and 2015 the rate of decline in the proportion of sessions with absence amongst non-FSM pupils was slightly greater than it was for eFSM pupils (27.6% decline in non-attendance for non-FSM pupils compared to a 25.0% decline for eFSM pupils). It is also worth noting that the rate of improvement in attendance has varied over the five-year time period. Although overall attendance continues to improve the rate of improvement between 2014 and 2015 was the lowest over the five-year period.

7.11   This analysis would suggest that overall attendance has improved every year (prior to and after the introduction of the PDG) and has improved for non-FSM and eFSM pupils at the same rate. Although it is possible that the PDG is having some impact on overall attendance (e.g. in preventing the gap from widening further) it would seem that other policies and practices that have been adopted to improve attendance are having a greater impact. For example, the Welsh Government has introduced a number of changes for attendance policy since 2011, the All Wales Attendance Framework was published; and the attendance grant was given to consortia between 2013-2015.

Table 7.5. Change in the proportion of sessions with absence (all ages)

	2011-2015	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015
All	-27.9%	-8.8%	-15.7%	-4.3%
Non-FSM	-27.6%	-9.1%	-16.5%	-2.8%
FSM	-25.0%	-7.2%	-12.9%	-4.4%

7.12   In contrast, it does appear that the PDG could be having an important impact on unauthorised absence. This has improved significantly for eFSM pupils between 2011 and 2015. Over the same period, the rate of unauthorised absence amongst non-FSM pupils has remained fairly constant (Table 7.6 and Table 7.7). Although the rate of improvement for eFSM pupils has slowed down this would perhaps be expected when overall levels of absence (authorised and unauthorised) has fallen considerably over this time period.

7.13   The third measure of attendance considered here is persistent absence. This is slightly different to the other two measures since this is the number (and proportion) of pupils who were absent for at least 20% of half-day sessions during the academic year[42].

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[42] "For 2013-14 this means that persistent absentees in secondary schools missed at least 62 half-day sessions" (Welsh Government 2014:16).

Table 7.6 Unauthorised absence by year (all ages)

| Year | % of sessions with unauthorised absence | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*1.2*	0.8	2.8	2.0	249.3%
2012	*1.0*	0.7	2.5	1.8	250.2%
2013	*1.1*	0.7	2.5	1.7	239.5%
2014	*1.1*	0.8	2.4	1.5	187.2%
2015	*1.1*	0.8	2.3	1.5	187.5%

Table 7.7 Change in the proportion of sessions with unauthorised absence (all ages)

	2011-2015	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015
All	-6.3%	-10.6%	5.8%	-1.7%
Non-FSM	1.3%	-10.1%	14.3%	-3.2%
FSM	-16.6%	-9.8%	-3.3%	-3.1%

7.14   The difference in the proportion of eFSM and non-FSM pupils with persistent absence is very large – in 2015 eFSM pupils were four times more likely to be persistent absentees than non-FSM pupils. Table 8 shows that the proportion of eFSM persistent absent pupils has fallen each year between 2011 and 2015. However, the rate of improvement for non-FSM pupils has been greater than for eFSM pupils (see Table 7.9). Consequently, the percentage differential between the two groups has actually increased between 2011 and 2015 – i.e. the gap has widened proportionately (see Table 7.8). In the last year (i.e. between 2014 and 2015) the rate of improvement for non-FSM pupils was significantly greater than it was for eFSM pupils (-12.4% compared to -8.5% respectively).

Table 7.8 Persistent absence by year (all ages)

Year	% of pupils with persistent absence			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*6.8*	4.7	15.6	10.9	232.8%
2012	*5.9*	4.0	13.8	9.8	247.7%
2013	*5.2*	3.4	12.8	9.4	277.2%
2014	*4.1*	2.6	10.5	7.9	299.5%
2015	*3.7*	2.3	9.6	7.3	317.4%

Table 7.9 Change in the proportion of pupils with persistent absence

	2011-2015	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015
All	*-45.9%*	*-14.2%*	*-21.2%*	*-10.5%*
Non-FSM	-51.0%	-15.4%	-22.8%	-12.4%
FSM	-38.5%	-11.6%	-18.2%	-8.5%

7.15   There has been a significant improvement in the levels of persistent absence in Wales for all pupils, including eFSM pupils, in the past five years. However, and given the issues noted earlier in isolating the effect of the PDG, it might be that these results suggest that other policies to improve attendance are also having impact rather than solely the PDG.

Key Stage 2 Achievement

7.16   Tables 7.10 to 7.13 present the proportion of eFSM and non-FSM pupils achieving expected levels (Level 4 or above) at Key Stage 2 in Maths, English or Welsh, Science and all three core subjects respectively.

7.17   In all three subjects the attainment 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils has reduced considerably over the five-year period (see also Figure 7.1). Importantly this has coincided with an overall improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at the end of Key Stage 2. Which means that the rate of

improvement amongst eFSM pupils has been greater than it was for non-FSM pupils. This can be clearly seen in Table 7.14 by comparing eFSM and non-FSM pupils between 2011 and 2015.

7.18   As Figure 7.1 illustrates, and has previously reported, the attainment 'gap' at KS2 between eFSM and non-FSM pupils was closing prior to the introduction of the PDG in 2012-13. Of most significance to this new analysis is the rate of improvement in the last year (i.e. between 2014 and 2015). Table 7.14 shows that the rate of improvement for eFSM pupils markedly increased in this last year, and at a greater rate than between 2013 and 2014. This might suggest that improvements in KS2 attainment of eFSM pupils are beginning to speed up.

Table 7.10 Achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 Maths

Year	% of pupils achieving Level 4 or above			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*85.7*	89.1	71.9	-17.2	-19.3%
2012	*87.6*	90.7	74.7	-16.0	-17.7%
2013	*88.4*	91.3	76.6	-14.7	-16.1%
2014	*89.8*	92.5	78.4	-14.1	-15.3%
2015	*91.0*	93.4	80.9	-12.5	-13.4%

Table 7.11 Achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English or Welsh

| Year | % of pupils achieving Level 4 or above | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	84.5	88.2	69.6	-18.6	-21.1%
2012	86.4	89.9	72.0	-17.8	-19.9%
2013	88.3	91.4	75.8	-15.5	-17.0%
2014	89.6	92.5	77.0	-15.5	-16.7%
2015	90.7	93.3	79.6	-13.7	-14.7%

Table 7.12 Achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 Science

| Year | % of pupils achieving Level 4 or above | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	88.0	91.3	74.8	-16.4	-18.0%
2012	89.5	92.5	77.1	-15.3	-16.6%
2013	90.7	93.4	79.8	-13.6	-14.6%
2014	91.3	93.9	80.0	-13.9	-14.8%
2015	92.3	94.6	82.5	-12.1	-12.8%

Table 7.13 Achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 Maths, English/Welsh and Science

| Year | % of pupils achieving Level 4 or above | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*80.9*	85.0	64.5	-20.4	-24.0%
2012	*83.5*	87.4	67.7	-19.6	-22.5%
2013	*85.4*	88.8	71.2	-17.6	-19.8%
2014	*87.1*	90.4	73.2	-17.2	-19.1%
2015	*88.7*	91.5	76.4	-15.1	-16.5%

Figure 7.1 Relative achievement of eFSM pupils compared to non-FSM pupils by KS2 subject
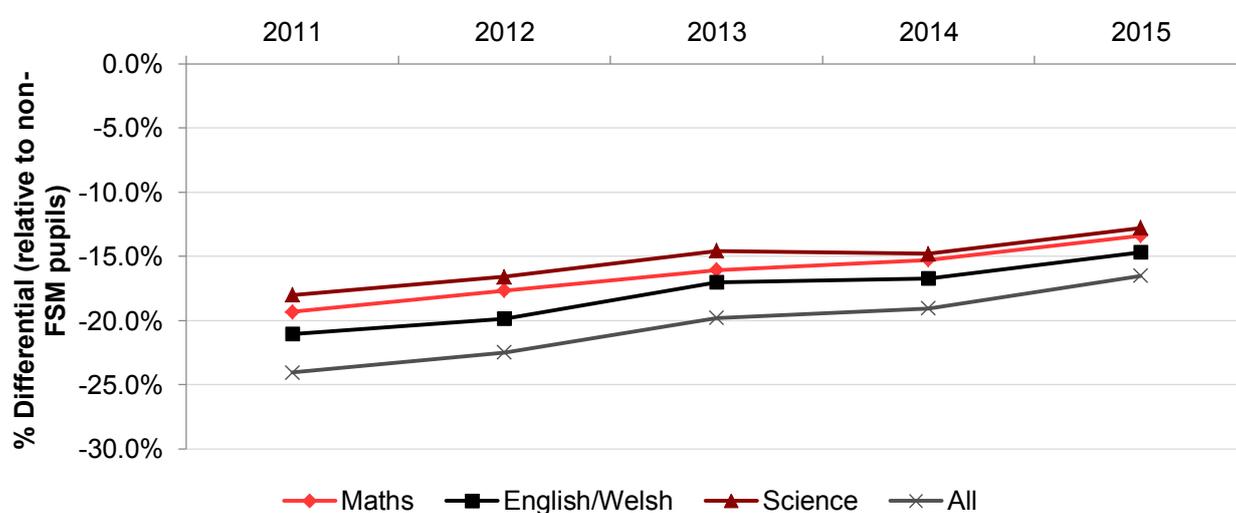
Table 7.14 Change in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at KS2

		2011-2015	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015
Maths					
	Non-FSM	4.8%	1.8%	1.3%	1.0%
	FSM	12.6%	4.0%	2.3%	3.2%
English/Welsh					
	Non-FSM	5.8%	1.9%	1.2%	0.8%
	FSM	14.3%	3.4%	1.6%	3.3%
Science					
	Non-FSM	3.6%	1.3%	0.6%	0.7%
	FSM	10.2%	3.0%	0.4%	3.1%
All three core subjects					
	Non-FSM	7.7%	2.8%	1.8%	1.2%
	FSM	18.4%	5.0%	2.7%	4.4%

Key Stage 4 Achievement

7.19   Tables 7.15 to 7.17 outline the percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades C or above in Maths, English (or Welsh) and Science. Table 7.18 provides the equivalent figures for pupils achieving grades C or above in all three core subjects.

7.20   As previous reports showed, the attainment 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in all three 'core' GCSE subjects has narrowed over time. Figures for 2015 show that this trend continues. They also show that the greater rate of improvement in the attainment of eFSM pupils has continued at a greater rate after the introduction of the PDG than it did prior to its introduction. This is best illustrated in Figure 7.2, which shows a visible step-change in the narrowing of the attainment 'gap' in all three subjects.

7.21   The previous evaluation report (Pye *et al.* 2015) showed a significant improvement in the proportion of eFSM pupils achieving grade C or above in GCSE Science. In this report, with data for 2015, an equivalent improvement can now be seen in Maths (Table 7.15) and English/Welsh (Table 7.16). This can also be clearly seen in Table 19. This data also shows that while the attainment 'gap' in Science continues to narrow, the rate of improvement in GCSE Science observed between 2013 and 2014 and reported in the previous report, has slowed considerably. The attainment 'gap' is still narrowing however, since the rate of improvement for eFSM pupils continues to be greater than it is for non-FSM pupils.

7.22   Although the attainment gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils remains stubbornly large at the end of KS4, there is evidence that this is beginning to improve and that much of this improvement does seem to have occurred after the PDG was introduced.

Table 7.14 Achieving GCSE Maths Grade C or above

| Year | % of pupils achieving Grade C or above | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*60.2*	64.7	33.5	-31.2	-48.2%
2012	*61.5*	65.8	35.2	-30.7	-46.6%
2013	*62.8*	67.5	36.9	-30.6	-45.4%
2014	*64.3*	69.1	37.6	-31.4	-45.5%
2015	*67.0*	71.3	42.3	-29.0	-40.7%

Table 7.15 Achieving GCSE English or Welsh Grade C or above

Year	% of pupils achieving Grade C or above			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*68.1*	72.4	41.8	-30.6	-42.2%
2012	*67.3*	71.7	41.1	-30.6	-42.7%
2013	*67.4*	72.1	41.6	-30.5	-42.3%
2014	*70.4*	75.0	44.2	-30.8	-41.1%
2015	*73.0*	77.2	50.0	-27.2	-35.2%

Table 7.16 Achieving GCSE Science Grade C or above

Year	% of pupils achieving Grade C or above			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*68.5*	72.9	40.8	-32.1	-44.1%
2012	*69.9*	73.9	43.1	-30.8	-41.7%
2013	*67.1*	70.9	40.3	-30.6	-43.2%
2014	*71.1*	74.1	47.5	-26.6	-35.9%
2015	*72.8*	75.7	49.2	-26.5	-35.0%

Table 7.17 Achieving Grade C or above in GCSE Maths, English/Welsh *and* Science

Year	% of pupils achieving Grade C or above			FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	*56.2*	60.3	28.3	-32.1	-53.2%
2012	*57.5*	61.5	29.6	-31.9	-51.8%
2013	*59.9*	63.5	33.2	-30.3	-47.7%
2014	*65.1*	68.1	40.4	-27.7	-40.7%
2015	*67.6*	70.5	43.4	-29.8	-38.4%

Figure 7.2 Relative achievement of eFSM pupils compared to non-FSM pupils achieving grade C or above by GCSE subject
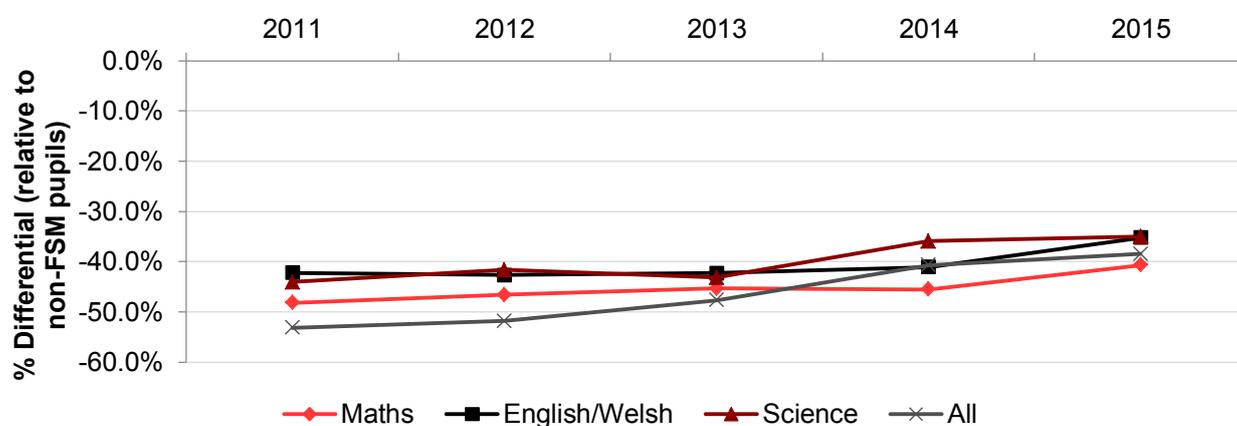
Table 7.18 Relative change in the proportion of pupils achieving Grades C or above in 'core' GCSE subjects

GCSE subject	2011-2015	2011-2012	2013-2014	2014-2015
Maths				
Non-FSM	10.3%	1.8%	2.3%	3.2%
FSM	26.3%	5.0%	1.9%	12.5%
English/Welsh				
Non-FSM	6.6%	-1.0%	4.0%	3.0%
FSM	19.5%	-1.8%	6.2%	13.2%
Science				
Non-FSM	3.8%	1.3%	4.5%	2.2%
FSM	20.7%	5.8%	17.8%	3.6%
All three 'core' subjects				
Non-FSM	16.9%	1.9%	7.2%	3.5%
FSM	53.6%	4.8%	21.5%	7.4%

7.23   The proportion of FSM pupils achieving the Level 2 (inclusive) threshold (i.e. achieving a grade C or above in a GCSE – or equivalent – in English/Welsh and Maths) has risen significantly from 22.0% in 2011 to 31.8% in 2015 (Table 20). However, a similar level of improvement has also occurred for non-FSM pupils, and hence the percentage point difference between the two groups has remained fairly constant. But in terms of the rate of improvement (as measured by the percentage differential) then we can see that the proportion of FSM pupils achieving the Level 2 (inclusive) measure has increased at a faster rate than non-FSM pupils leading to a relative narrowing of the achievement gap. It is also worth noting that the rate of progress here has been fairly constant over time – the achievement gap was narrowing at the same rate before the PDG was established as much as it has narrowed since.

Table 7.19 Achieving Level 2 (inclusive)

| Year | % of pupils achieving Level 2 (Inclusive) | | | FSM / Non-FSM Gap | |
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
2011	50.5%	55.8%	22.0%	-33.8	-60.5%
2012	51.6%	56.7%	23.4%	-33.3	-58.8%
2013	53.3%	58.6%	25.8%	-32.7	-55.9%
2014	56.3%	61.7%	27.9%	-33.8	-54.8%
2015	59.1%	64.2%	31.8%	-32.5	-50.6%

7.24   Up until now the analysis has been concerned with achieving at least a grade C (or equivalent) in the core subject areas. This is generally considered to be the necessary benchmark in order to progress to post-compulsory education etc. However, the PDG is designed to "overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their *full* [our emphasis] potential". (Welsh Government 2015:3). It could be said therefore that there is a potential unintended consequence that in focussing on the grade C threshold the evaluation (and the delivery of the PDG) ignores the possible impact on other (potentially higher) levels of achievement.

7.25   Figure 3 illustrates the attainment 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in achieving grades A or A* in 'core' GCSE subjects. This shows that the differential between eFSM and non-FSM pupils at this level is considerably wider than it is for achieving grades C or above (compared with Figure 2). For example, in 2015 20.7% of non-FSM pupils achieved a grade A/A* in GCSE English/Welsh compared to just 5.8% of eFSM pupils – non-FSM pupils are nearly four times more likely to achieve the highest grades than eFSM pupils. As Figure 7.3 illustrates this has barely changed since 2011. A similar picture exists for GCSE Maths. However, and more encouragingly, in GCSE Science proportionately more eFSM pupils achieved grades A/A* over time. Importantly, the rate of improvement in the highest grades for GCSE Science has been greater for eFSM pupils than for non-FSM pupils in each year between 2011 and 2015. This led to a modest narrowing of the

attainment gap in this subject at the top grades, as illustrated by Figure 7.3. It should be noted, however, that much of this improvement occurred between 2012 and 2013, in the first year after the PDG was introduced, and could also be affected by the number of pupils that were being entered for GCSE Science. As reported in the Year 2 report, the number of pupils being entered for BTEC Science had increased. This was particularly the case for eFSM pupils. However in 2016 the Welsh Government introduced a limit to the contribution value of non-GCSE qualifications to performance measures. This means that any single level 1 or level 2 qualification will have a maximum equivalence value, in performance terms, of two GCSEs, applying to all measures. This may affect the numbers of pupils entered for alternative qualifications in future.

Figure 7.3 Relative achievement of eFSM pupils compared to non-FSM pupils achieving grade A/A* by GCSE subject
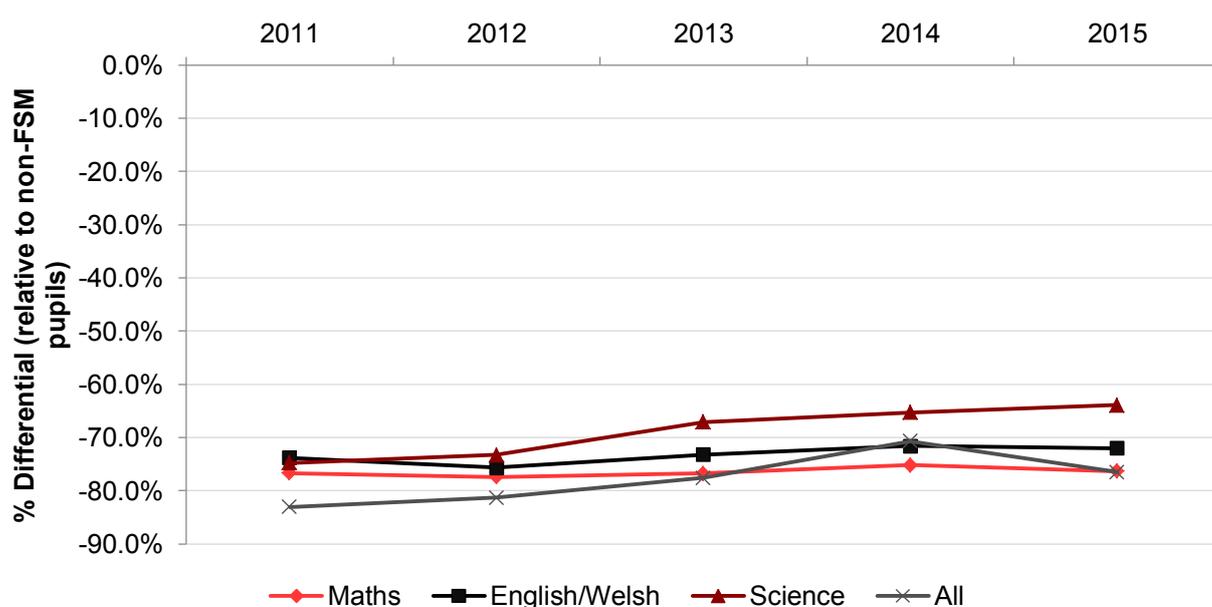
7.26   If we consider these results on the basis of *all* pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 4 (irrespective of whether they were entered for qualifications or not) as opposed to just being entered for GCSEs we see a very different pattern. Figure 7.4 shows the differential achievement in attaining grade C or above in GCSE English/Welsh, Maths and Science between eFSM and non-FSM pupils over time. One measure is based on all Year 11 KS4 pupils and the other measure is based on just those Year 11 pupils entered for these GCSE qualifications. As already illustrated in Figure 2, on the basis of those pupils entered, the achievement 'gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils clearly reduced over the four-year period, and particularly from

2012-13 (when the PDG was introduced). Whilst Figure 7.4 shows that there has been some modest improvement in the achievement 'gap' based on all Year 11 KS4 pupils this has not been as great as that based on just those entered for GCSEs (the basis of the analysis used above).

7.27   A possible explanation for this disparity is the increasing proportion of pupils who were not being entered for GCSE Science at the time and, crucially, the relatively greater proportion of eFSM pupils who were not being entered for GCSE Science. Of the core subjects Science is the subject in which pupils can undertake an alternative qualification to a GCSE. The main alternatives for pupils are BTEC Science qualifications. Though as noted above, the changes in school performance measures may affect the numbers entered in alternative qualifications.

Figure 7.4 Differential achievement in GCSE grade C or above in English/Welsh, Maths and Science, 2011 to 2015
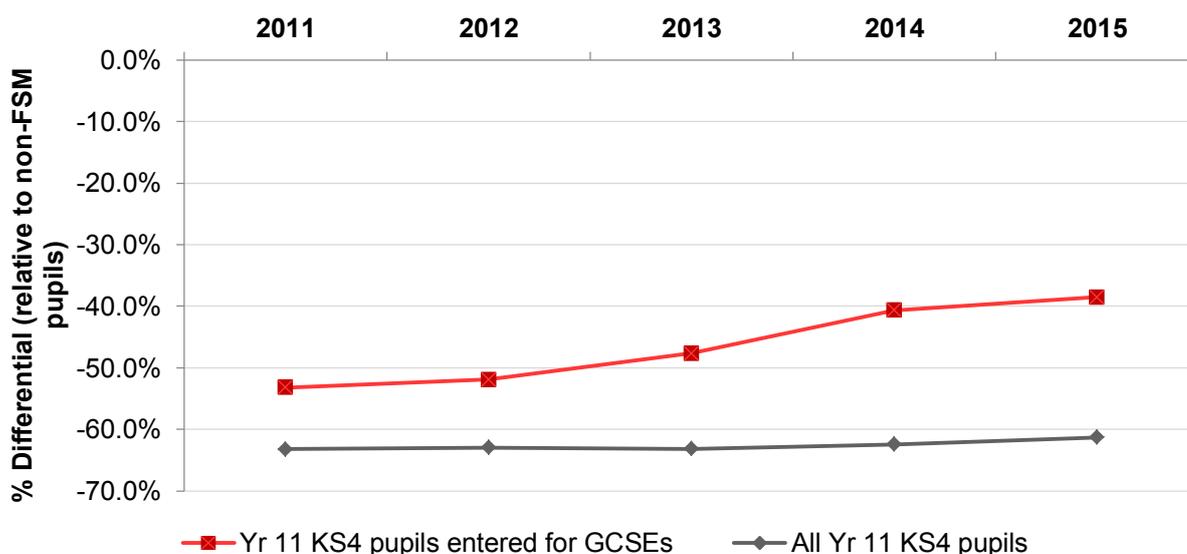
7.28   So, for 2015 we also consider BTEC Science results. Using Level 2 BTEC qualifications which contributed to Level 2 thresholds it is possible to combine levels of achievement for GCSE and BTEC Science. Table 7.20 presents three sets of results: GCSE Science only, BTEC Science only; and GCSE and BTEC Science combined. The proportion of pupils for each of these three outcomes is based on all pupils in Year 11 reaching the end of KS4. First this shows that the 'achievement gap' between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in GCSE Science is much greater than it is using just pupils entered for GCSE courses (see equivalent results for 2015 in

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Table 7.17); -58.5% compared to -35.0%. Table 7.20 then shows levels of achievement in BTEC Science for eFSM and non-FSM pupils. Based on pupils only entered for BTEC Science there is almost no difference in the achievement of eFSM and non-FSM pupils; 98.1% and 98.5% respectively. However, on the basis of all Year 11 KS4 pupils, eFSM pupils were much more likely to achieve Level 2 in BTEC Science than non-FSM pupils; 50.3% of eFSM pupils compared to just 33.1% of non-FSM pupils.

7.29   Table 7.21 presents levels of achievement and the associated achievement 'gap' for GCSE and BTEC Science *combined*. The benefit of including BTEC Science qualifications in the comparison between eFSM and non-FSM can clearly be seen. The % differential for the combined measure is just -16.9% compared to -58.5% for GCSE Science only. This would suggest there is a benefit of offering alternative qualifications, particularly to some learners. But given the near universal pass rate of those entered for BTEC Science (third row of Table 7.21) it might suggest that Level 2 attainment in BTEC Science and GCSE Science are not comparable , a finding echoed in additional analysis of the 2015 PISA results carried out for the Welsh Government.[43]

Table 7.20 Relative achievement of all Year 11 KS4 pupils (unless specified otherwise) in GCSE and BTEC Science, 2015

|	% of pupils achieving Grade C or equivalent		FSM / Non-FSM Gap	
	Non-FSM	FSM	% point difference	% Differential
GCSE Science	56.0%	23.3%	-32.7	-58.5%
BTEC Science[1]	33.1%	50.3%	17.2	52.1%
BTEC Science[1 & 2]	98.5%	98.1%	-0.4%	-0.4%
GCSE and BTEC[1] Science combined	87.0%	72.4%	-14.7	-16.9%

[1] Only Level 2 BTECs contributing to Level 2 threshold
[2] As a percentage of pupils entered only for BTEC Science qualifications

[43] http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170706-additional-analysis-of-pisa-2015-en.pdf

7.30   An alternative measure of outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 is to use pupils' best capped GCSE (or equivalent) points score. At the time that this analysis was carried out this was calculated on the basis of a pupil's best eight GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications, this was amended to be based on the best nine GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications in 2017. The average points score of eFSM and non-FSM pupils is summarised in Figure 7.5. This shows that, on average, eFSM and non-FSM pupil were achieving higher grades in their best eight GCSE or equivalent qualifications over time. Therefore, at the same time as improvements for all pupils, the 'gap' in the average points score of both groups narrowed over the five years. For example, in 2011 eFSM pupils achieved on average 24.8% fewer points than non-FSM pupils. By 2015 this 'gap' had fallen to 15.3%.

Figure 7.5 Average GCSE capped points score
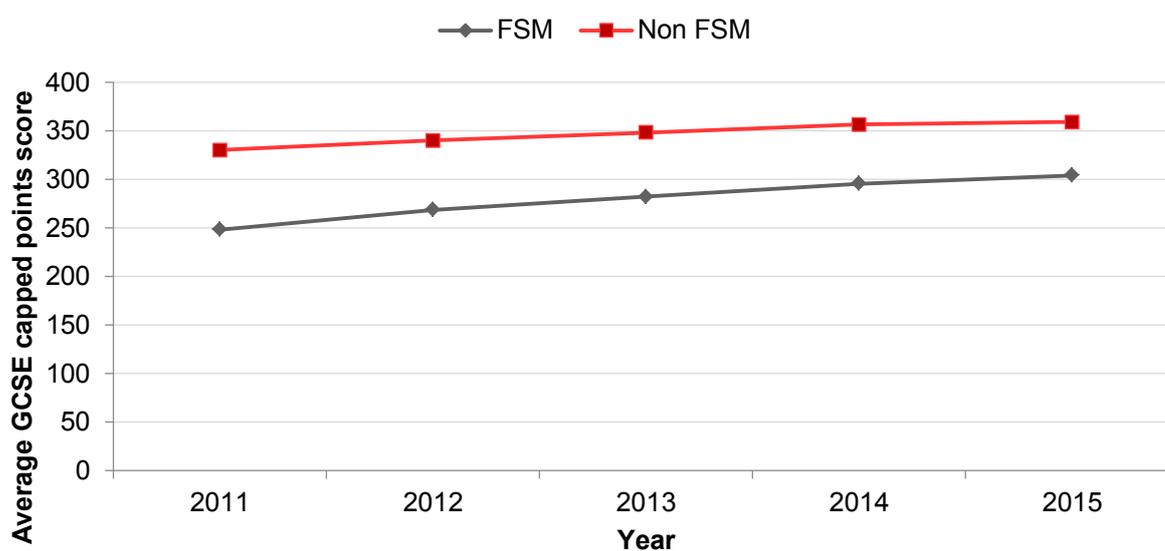
7.31   In line with the conclusions about levels of achievement in the core GCSE subjects, this improvement was occurring prior to the introduction of the PDG. The extent to which the PDG has directly contributed to this improvement is, therefore, less clear.

7.32   The last set of educational outcomes considered is the relative progress eFSM and non-FSM pupils make between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 in each of the three 'core' subject areas: Maths (Table 7.21), English/Welsh (Table 7.22) and Science (Table 7.23). In order to calculate a measure of a pupil's

progress, or value-added, we compare their Level of achievement at Key Stage 2[44] with their GCSE grade[45] in each subject.

Table 7.21 Relative progress in Maths between Key Stage 2 and GCSE

Year	Measure of progress			FSM / Non-FSM Gap
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% Differential
2011	*2.42*	2.57	1.47	-42.8%
2012	*2.49*	2.64	1.57	-40.6%
2013	*2.48*	2.65	1.53	-42.0%
2014	*2.51*	2.68	1.55	-42.2%
2015	*2.60*	2.80	1.70	-39.3%

Table 7.22 Relative progress in English/Welsh between Key Stage 2 and GCSE

Year	Measure of progress			FSM / Non-FSM Gap
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% Differential
2011	*2.94*	3.04	2.29	-24.7%
2012	*2.94*	3.05	2.27	-25.6%
2013	*2.93*	3.06	2.24	-26.8%
2014	*3.00*	3.12	2.31	-26.2%
2015	*3.00*	3.20	2.40	-25.0%

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[44] Levels of achievement in Key Stage 2 are scored 0 to 5, according to which Level a pupil achieved. Given the small number of pupils who achieved Level 6 at Key Stage 2 these are recoded to 5.

[45] For the purpose of calculating the progress from Key Stage 2 to GCSE we recode GCSE grades from 0 to 10; 0=X, 1=U through to 10=A*. Although the scores for achievement at Key Stage 2 and in GCSEs are not commensurate with one another the arithmetic difference in the two scores does provide a measure for a pupil's relative progress.

Table 7.23 Relative progress in Science between Key Stage 2 and GCSE

Year	Measure of progress			FSM / Non-FSM Gap
	All	Non-FSM	FSM	% Differential
2011	*2.71*	2.85	1.79	-37.5%
2012	*2.80*	2.94	1.87	-36.4%
2013	*2.61*	2.75	1.64	-40.4%
2014	*2.75*	2.86	1.85	-35.2%
2015	*2.80*	2.90	1.90	-34.5%

7.33   As we have reported previously (Pye *et al.* 2014 and 2015) it is important to note that this progress is the result of five years of education (between the ages of 11 and 15), and not just the impact of the years in which the Pupil Deprivation Grant has been available. Nevertheless, with three years of PDG funding there should be some cumulative benefit on the progress of eFSM pupils. Another advantage of studying relative progress between KS2 and KS4 is to rule out (or otherwise) the possibility that any improvement in KS4 achievement could simply be due to improvements in the education of these pupils prior to the introduction of the PDG.

7.34   The main limitation to this analysis is that we do not control for the number of years a pupil was eligible for free school meals, and therefore, how long they have been an intended recipient of the additional support (since a pupil's eligibility status can change over time and even within an academic year). Instead comparisons are made between eFSM and non-FSM pupils based on their eligibility at the end of Key Stage 4.

7.35   As is widely known and evidence continues to show, pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds generally make less progress between KS2 and KS4 than more advantaged pupils. This is true in Wales as it is elsewhere in the UK. This tends to reflect the cumulative disadvantage of living in low-income households.

7.36   Tables 22 to 24 show that in all three core subjects non-FSM pupils make more progress between KS2 and KS4 than eFSM pupils. This is true for all five years

considered here. However, between 2011 and 2015 the 'gap' (or % differential) in these progress scores between eFSM and non-FSM pupils has narrowed in Maths and Science. This would suggest that eFSM pupils are gradually 'catching up' with their non-FSM peers in these two subject areas, although in both subjects non-FSM still make approximately one level of progress more, on average, than their eFSM counterparts. In English/Welsh the 'gap' in progress between 2011 and 2015 has slightly widened. But in all three subjects there has been a notable improvement in the 'gap' in progress between eFSM and non-FSM pupils in the last three years (2013 to 2015).

Modelling the effect of being eligible for free school meals on educational attainment

7.37   The final discussion in the previous section helps highlight a key limitation to the use of descriptive statistics in determining the impact of the PDG. There are a number of factors that are known to help determine pupils' levels of attainment, particularly special educational needs, gender and ethnicity regardless of FSM status. Some of these factors are closely correlated with being eligible for free school meals so that some of these factors make pupils more likely to be eFSM. Consequently, to test the robustness of the descriptive observations shown above it is necessary to undertake multiple regression on the dependent educational outcomes. This allows us to control for these other independent factors that are known to also help determine pupils' outcomes.

7.38   As with previous reports (Pye *et al.* 2014 and 2015) we present a number of regression models on a number of different educational outcomes for each year. Each model contains the same control variables. These are:

- Pupil-level variables: gender, ethnicity[46], special educational needs and season of birth.
- School-level variables: proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the proportion of white British pupils, the gender composition of the school's cohort and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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[46] English as an additional language is also considered to be associated with educational outcomes. However, because EAL and ethnicity are often highly correlated we only use ethnicity in these models.

7.39   The regression models also include an indicator of whether pupils were eligible for free school meals, and it is the estimated 'effect' of this variable that is of primary interest, given the presence of other characteristics, in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

7.40   Consequently, each regression model attempts to predict to what extent pupils eligible for free school meals are associated with 'good' or improved educational outcomes. The same predictor variables are used in 20 different models, each one testing the association with a different measure of educational outcome, including attendance, Key Stage 2 achievement, Key Stage 4 achievement and measures of educational progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. In some cases, logistic regression estimates the likelihood of achieving a particular level in outcomes if a pupil is eligible for free school meals compared with non-FSM pupils (e.g. achieving Level 4 in Maths). In other cases, linear regression is used to estimate how different the outcomes are for pupils eligible for free school meals compared to non-FSM pupils (e.g. capped GCSE (or equivalents) points). We also use Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression for the analyses of absenteeism. We then repeat these models for educational outcomes in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 (100 regression models in total). We then use the findings from these models to compare the relative influence of being eligible for free school meals across the three years. In particular, we want to see whether the association found between eligibility for free school meals goes up, down or remains the same over time.

7.41   The results of these 100 statistical models are summarised in Table 7.24. This presents the odds ratio (for logistic regressions) or estimated coefficient (for linear and OLS regressions) for pupils being eligible for free school meals compared to non-FSM pupils.

7.42   The previous reports provided some general conclusions about the relationship between pupil-level and school-level factors and these outcomes (Pye *et al.* 2014 and 2015). The primary focus in this report is to examine whether the association between being eligible for free school meals and the educational outcomes is strengthened or weakened over time. If the PDG is having a positive and discriminant impact on the attainment of eFSM pupils, then we might expect to see the estimated 'effect' of being eligible for eFSM to reduce over time.

7.43 To help interpret the findings from Table 25 the odds ratios or estimated coefficients are colour coded. They are **Bold** if they demonstrate an improvement from the previous year in the probability of eFSM pupils achieving certain educational outcomes compared to non-FSM pupils, and *italicized* if they demonstrate a decline from the previous year in the relative probability that eFSM pupils achieve these educational outcomes.

Table 7.24 Summary of individual free school meal 'effects' on educational outcomes, 2011 to 2015

	Individual eFSM Effect				
Year	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Absenteeism (OLS)					
Sessions Absent	0.038	**0.036**	**0.034**	**0.031**	**0.030**
Sessions Unauthorised Absence	0.015	**0.014**	0.014	**0.012**	0.012
Persistent Absence	1.123	*1.147*	*1.209*	**1.193**	*1.209*
Key Stage 2 Attainment					
Achieving Level 4 or above (logistic)					
KS2 Maths Level 4+	0.526	**0.557**	**0.574**	*0.538*	**0.623**
KS2 English/Cymraeg Level 4+	0.513	**0.536**	**0.551**	*0.498*	**0.586**
KS2 Science Level 4+	0.489	**0.520**	**0.539**	*0.488*	**0.577**
KS2 CSI^2 Level 4+	0.516	**0.530**	**0.553**	*0.506*	**0.595**
Key Stage 4 Attainment					
Achieving grade A/A* (logistic)					
GCSE Maths A/A*	0.307	*0.296*	**0.304**	**0.335**	*0.304*
GCSE English/Cymraeg A/A*	0.312	0.293	**0.316**	**0.348**	*0.330*
GCSE Science A/A*	0.316	**0.322**	**0.389**	**0.412**	**0.414**
A/A* in GCSE Maths, Science *and* English/Cymraeg	0.237	**0.263**	**0.283**	**0.385**	*0.285*
3 x Grade A/A*s in KS4 (any subject)	0.370	**0.393**	*0.371*	**0.375**	**0.476**

Achieving grade C or above (logistic)

GCSE Maths C+	0.382	**0.387**	*0.382*	*0.379*	**0.415**
GCSE English/Cymraeg C+	0.356	**0.359**	0.359	*0.346*	**0.385**
GCSE Science C+	0.362	**0.371**	*0.362*	**0.436**	*0.420*
C+ in GCSE Maths, Science *and* English/Cymraeg	0.352	*0.350*	**0.363**	**0.414**	*0.412*
KS4 capped points (linear)	-49.87	**-43.89**	**-40.58**	**-36.14**	**-30.40**
Progress KS2-KS4 (linear)					
Maths	-0.733	**-0.703**	*-0.745*	**-0.734**	**-0.664**
English/Cymraeg	-0.513	*-0.514*	*-0.553*	**-0.536**	**-0.483**
Science	-0.708	**-0.694**	*-0.787*	**-0.671**	**-0.644**

1 – Literacy, Language and Communication (LLC).
2 – Core Subject Indicator (CSI) achieving required levels in English/Welsh, Maths *and* Science.

7.44   Of the twenty results summarised for 2015, thirteen demonstrate an improvement from the previous year, showing that there was less of a detrimental impact of living in socio-economically disadvantaged households. For only six outcome measures does the apparent detrimental 'impact' of living in a socio-economically disadvantaged household was worse in 2015 than it was in 2014.

7.45   Given the PDG was introduced in 2012-13 we are also interested in whether there is an emerging trend of improvement over time and not just in one particular year. For example, the relationship between being eligible for free school meals and school attendance has consistently improved from 2012 onwards. So too has the relationship between being eligible for eFSM and the capped GCSE points score at KS4 and the odds of achieving A/A* in GCSE Science at age 15. On other measures of attainment at KS4 the picture is more mixed – the odds of achieving a grade C or above in GCSE English or Maths has increased for eFSM pupils in 2015 after two years of little change, but the odds of achieving a grade C or above in GCSE Science for eFSM pupils (and subsequently achieving a grade C or above in all three core subjects) has decreased in the last year.

7.46   Despite the results being mixed across different measures there is now an emerging pattern of success in reducing the 'effect' of being eligible for free school meals on measures of educational progress between KS2 and KS4 in English, Maths and Science.

7.47   In none of the outcomes has the apparent influence of being eligible for eFSM consistently got worse since the introduction of the PDG.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Analysis of pupil outcome data from the National Pupil Database paints an encouraging picture with regards to the impact of the PDG on educational outcomes. The performance of eFSM pupils has improved on a number of measures; some of the most recent analysis shows that there has been a narrowing of the attainment 'gap', and in some cases there are signs of speeding up of the narrowing gap. On the other hand, the evidence suggests that some of the greatest improvements pre-dated the introduction of the PDG, and in some cases similar or greater improvements have been observed among non-FSM pupils as eFSM pupils. Since the PDG was introduced across Wales at the same point in time, there has been no comparison group of schools available to estimate how pupils' outcomes would have developed in the absence of the PDG. As we have noted throughout the report, the PDG is one of a suite of policies which aim to improve educational outcomes that were introduced in schools at a similar point in time, which makes isolating the impact of the PDG particularly difficult. Furthermore, schools often pool resources from several grants with complementary aims and may not themselves be able to disentangle the effects of the PDG from other funding streams, even anecdotally.

8.2 There are a number of caveats to bear in mind when considering this analysis, however. First, the PDG is a relatively recent grant aiming to effect improvements on a long-standing and large attainment gap. Evidence from case study schools highlights that a longer-term view of pupils' progress is essential in evaluating the effectiveness of the grant: indeed, some of the most effective school practices were those that had developed from practices introduced under RAISE (the predecessor programme to PDG) and whose effects were being felt by eFSM pupils who had gone through a significant part of the education system while RAISE/PDG was in place. In schools whose focus on eFSM pupils was more recent (i.e. did not pre-date the PDG), systems to tackle disadvantage were still maturing or being established and will continue to evolve if PDG is extended.

8.3 PDG is considered hugely valuable by schools, and 'invaluable' for many case study schools. Its significance is primarily as a source of funding that is used to increase staffing which allows schools to provide tailored support for disadvantaged pupils to cater for a wide range of academic, emotional, and social needs.

8.4 Schools have actively embraced the WG directive to focus on pupils' wider needs, and not just academic attainment: interventions cover pastoral activity, family support, as well as literacy and numeracy skills for example. Over time, case study schools have engaged in greater efforts to engage parents: while this involved some trial and error, these schools had developed a range of effective approaches to involve parents in the life of the school and their children's learning.

8.5 Beyond the immediate use of the PDG to fund a wide range of interventions, the grant has been significant in changing schools' culture in some instances. Case study schools noted an increased awareness of disadvantage as an issue that needed to be addressed, and a change in practice in their settings in the way that pupils were identified and monitored. Case study schools exhibited a good use of data to monitor pupil progress and evaluate the impact of specific interventions. The requirement to monitor eFSM pupils as a separate group appears to have been especially helpful in raising awareness of the effects of disadvantage on pupil attainment, and how schools can address it. The need to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of PDG-funded interventions on an annual basis to inform spending decisions also adds an incentive to schools to focus on what works best, and to discontinue or adapt initiatives that do not appear to be effective.

8.6 The PDG is associated with an increased focus on whole-school strategies to improve areas such as behaviour, attendance, family engagement and restorative approaches. Case study schools report great successes in these types of initiative, and often report that the greatest impact of the grant on pupils have been on areas that may be more difficult to quantify (such as pupil confidence, self-esteem, engagement with school and so on). Many whole-school initiatives are benefitting non-FSM pupils as well as e-FSM pupils, which may explain why outcomes for non-FSM pupils on some of the indicators used by the evaluation team for this report (e.g. attendance, unauthorised absence) have improved for non-FSM as well as e-FSM pupils during the lifetime of the grant.

8.7 Among case study schools where established behaviour/engagement systems were already in place, there was greater evidence of schools using PDG to invest in improved teaching and learning approaches. For example, this included schools teaching visible learning and restorative approaches, so that teachers were better able to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners in the classroom. In another case, it involved a whole-cluster literacy and numeracy strategy that helped to

decompose key aspects of reading, writing, oracy and numeracy for both class teachers and pupils.

8.8 There was evidence in more recent case studies of a shift away from using the PDG exclusively to fund Teaching Assistants towards the use of a mixed teacher/Teaching Assistant model. The rationale given by respondents for this approach was that teachers are considered better able to support improved educational outcomes – for example, because they know syllabuses and exam specifications in great detail, have a greater range of teaching approaches to draw on. On the other hand Teaching Assistants are viewed as better able to support in other areas, such as pastoral support, because they often live in the same neighbourhoods as pupils and are seen as less threatening than teachers.

8.9 However, funding teachers rather than Teaching Assistants using the PDG was usually the case only in schools where other basics were already established an funding of Teaching Assistants still remains more common. In general, any additional staffing funded by PDG was exclusively or mainly spent on Teaching Assistants , this is despite the Sutton Trust Toolkit highlighting that this may not always be the most cost effective use of resources depending on how teaching assistants are deployed. This view was however frequently contested by case study schools. Indeed, negative attitudes towards the Sutton Trust Toolkit generally hinged on the vital importance of Teaching Assistants and the roles they undertook, with many head teachers stating that Teaching Assistants were an invaluable resource.

8.10 There are a number of areas where schools' use of the PDG deviates from the Welsh Government's guidance which could limit its effectiveness. Most notably, this includes a reluctance among some schools – particularly schools with poorer track records in closing the gap – to use external or academic sources of evidence to inform their spending, rather than relying on their own experience and instinct. Many case study schools continue to be sceptical about the value of the Sutton Trust Toolkit, for example, although others have found it useful. This means that the spending of the PDG may be less effective than it could be, as there are some low-cost high-impact initiatives that schools are not employing, and some high-cost lower-impact initiatives still being widely used. While it is difficult to assess whether schools are targeting pupils outside the intended beneficiaries of the PDG (schools use a broader definition of disadvantage, but at the same time top up PDG funds

quite substantially), it was clear that case study schools with lower attainment levels often targeted PDG interventions at lower attaining pupils rather than disadvantaged pupils, with the justification that there is often a significant overlap between the two groups. Again, this use of the PDG will limit the impact that is observed on the eFSM cohort.

8.11   The Welsh Government has stressed that schools should implement sustainable practices using PDG funding as far as possible. In practice, much of the activity funded by PDG requires ongoing investment to operate at a similar level of intensity or effectiveness. In many case study schools, the funding is exclusively or largely used to fund the salaries of staff who deliver tailored interventions to targeted pupils. Much of this activity could not be sustained without ongoing funding. Even initiatives that are relatively self-sustaining – for example, systems or strategies that run across schools – require leadership, ongoing monitoring, reporting, and collaboration across teaching staff, and are unlikely to work as effectively in the absence of the grant.

Recommendations

8.12   The short-term nature of the PDG funding (which is typically confirmed year by year, rather than guaranteed for a period of time in the future) may encourage a short-term view of funding rather than the planning of longer-term strategies. Closing the attainment gap is a long-term goal and to be successful, schools will need to develop strategies to improve teaching and learning, whole-school systems to improve behaviour, engagement and the well-being of pupils, as well as deliver targeted support to specific pupils. The short-term nature of the funding may however encourage schools to focus on the latter (using Teaching Assistants to deliver interventions) rather than plan for the former.

8.13   As noted above, schools where the attainment gap is largest tend to be least receptive to drawing ideas from external sources of evidence about 'what works' in closing the gap. Instead, these schools rely on their previous experience or instincts. There were a wide variety of reasons given for this – in some cases it was clear that schools were unaware of the evidence, felt overwhelmed at the amount of evidence available, were sceptical about evidence that didn't fit with their own experience, or felt that resources such as the Sutton Trust Toolkit were 'gimmicks' that attempted to bypass the need for improved teaching and learning. There may be a role for the Welsh Government and/or consortia to help these schools use

external evidence, and to see how ideas can be applied to their own settings and contexts. Schools appear to be more receptive to approaches that have worked in other local schools that have similar contexts to their own, and continuing consortia work to spread examples of good practice across local areas could be particularly effective.

8.14 The consortia appear to have great potential to raise awareness of good practice, and encourage the development of cluster-wide initiatives that could help to improve standards across schools. Case study schools that were using the Sutton Trust Toolkit usually noted that they had been introduced to the resource through their consortia, and in some cases supported in developing initiatives by their consortium. However, as noted above, awareness of resources such as the Toolkit may not be sufficient, and consortia staff will also need to be able to promote the Toolkit, and perhaps explain how some of the approaches could translate to specific school settings. While consortia appear to be active in supporting schools, there was little evidence in the case studies that the schools felt challenged to change their practices.

Reference section

Pye, J., Hardy, C. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant: first year*

Pye, J., Mollidor, C., and Taylor, C. (2015) *Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant: interim report*

Annex A: Summary of case study methodology

The first-year evaluation report published in October 2014 included reference to the 12 case studies completed in the 2013/14 academic year[47]. The interim report published in December 2015[48] covered all 22 case study visits undertaken between May 2013 and June 2015 – focusing in particular on the 10 case studies completed in 2015 and not previously reported. The current report largely focusses on the longitudinal repeat visits to 14 of these case study schools in 2016. Thus, this report has a greater focus on the (perceived) impact of the interventions funded through the PDG as reported by teachers, school staff, pupils and parents.

Case study sample

Prior to conducting the research, the evaluation team and Welsh Government officials agreed a set of attributes that the case study sample should cover. The rationale is given in the table below. The sample was selected by the evaluation team who reviewed Estyn inspection reports and school profiling data in order to select schools carrying the desired attributes. Some general characteristics for the 14 case study schools included in the longitudinal repeat visits are presented in the table below.

Annex table A.1. Composition of case study sample

Attribute	Rationale	Sample profile	
Proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals	Investigate value and use of PDG among schools receiving relatively high and low amounts of funding	Below 26%	8
		Above 26%	6
Phase	Investigate use of PDG in different phases	Primary schools	6
		Secondary schools	8
Welsh educational consortia region	Understand role of support/challenge provided by regional consortia in schools' approach to using PDG	South West and Mid Wales	6
		North Wales	3
		South East Wales	2
		Central South Wales	3
Community First (CF) area	Explore awareness and use of PDG Matched Funds. Investigate role of schools in local communities, and how Communities First and PDG has contributed to developing links with the local community.	Yes	8
		No	6

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[47] http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant/?lang=en
[48] http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151203-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-2-en.pdf

Case study visits

Case study visits were carried out by members of the PDG evaluation team from Ipsos MORI and WISERD at Cardiff University. Interviews for each of the visits were carried out face-to-face. Within each visit, we aimed to speak to a range of staff, pupils and parents, as appropriate (and depending on the types of interventions run by the school: for example, parents will only be covered if schools are running parenting interventions). The members of staff selected for interview in each school are agreed with each school, based on their approach to managing PDG. This ensures that interviews are carried out with key staff involved in delivering, planning and receiving interventions in their school.

The table below summarises the type of staff covered in the case studies and the rationale for interviewing each.

Annex table A.2. Groups consulted as part of the case study visits

Role	Rationale
Head teacher	Based on the insights gathered in the scoping exercise, we know that head teachers have a good overview of the planning and spending of PDG, and it will be essential to speak with them during the visit.
Member(s) of the Senior Leadership Team	To understand the schools PDG spending patterns, evaluation and monitoring activities.
Data /finance officer (if relevant)	To gain insight into how PDG spending is recorded and monitored, as well as its perceived impacts.
Parents (if relevant)	To ask parents about the perceived impacts on their and their child's well-being and confidence.
Pupils (if relevant)	To understand the perceived impacts of the interventions on the target group.
Teachers/TAs	To understand the implementation and perceived impact of the initiatives 'on the ground' by those who are (typically) most closely involved in the delivery of interventions.