

How effective is the support we offer pupil premium children in year 1?



Introduction

The purpose of this project is to assess how the funding for Pupil Premium children in year one is being used in a mainstream Hampshire primary school. It aims to evaluate how effective the Pupil Premium strategy (see appendix 1) for the setting is in promoting progress and how it could be enhanced in the future to support vulnerable children further. The objectives for this project are listed below, and are based on the settings current Pupil Premium strategy document.

1. To compare the amount of written feedback in the books of Pupil Premium children and non-Pupil Premium children.
2. To observe the length of 1: 1 teaching time Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium children receive
3. To produce a questionnaire for staff members to complete regarding how well they know the Pupil Premium children in their class and how they feel these children are supported.
4. To assess the academic and social progress made by these children over the autumn term and compare this to progress made by non-Pupil Premium children.

This document will outline the proposed methodology and ethical considerations (see appendix 2) that have been taken into account, and key research into this topic will also be considered. An action plan covering the

time scale of completing this research has been produced (see appendix 3) alongside a reflective journal based on Kolb's reflective cycle (1984, as cited by McLeod, 2017) (See appendix 4) and a presentation (See appendix 5).

Literature Review

A child's background and their social class can have a direct impact on their education and learning. Maslow (1943) states that there is a hierarchy of needs that must be met in order for an individual to be able to access higher levels of cognition. The most basic of these needs are physiological: having access to food, water, shelter and safety. For children who come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, it is possible that these most basic needs are not being met. Melchior et al (2007) state that adults from disadvantaged families are more likely to encounter domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health issues. This subsequently leads to an increased likelihood of physical or emotional abuse or neglect towards children in these families (Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board, no date). Furthermore, the psychological needs of the child outlined by Maslow may not have been met. Many children from disadvantaged families experience disrupted emotional development, and therefore experience low self-esteem, poor sense of belonging and may find it difficult to form relationships with their peers. Without having these needs met, it is very unlikely for these children to achieve their full academic potential.

The Pupil Premium strategy was introduced under the Conservative and Liberal democratic coalition government and was designed to raise achievement in children who come from disadvantaged families and to

equalise attainment between them and their peers (Department for Education, 2010) However, according to OFSTED's Pupil Premium report published in 2012 (OFSTED, 2012), many schools have not been using the additional funding effectively. OFSTED states that schools did not consistently separate Pupil Premium money from their overall annual budget, reducing the specific impact that it could have had on disadvantaged children. Furthermore, it was observed by OFSTED that most schools were using the funding to enhance existing provisions rather than to initiate new provisions, and inspectors claimed that funding was not focussed on the needs of disadvantaged pupils, despite this being the reason it was introduced.

Following this report, the Department of Education commissioned its own research into the effectiveness of The Pupil Premium strategy consisting of a survey for schools (Carpenter et al, 2013). This report had a much more positive outlook than OFSTED's observations, showing that the majority of schools surveyed had implemented new strategies alongside enhancing existing strategies to target raising attainment in disadvantaged children. Additionally, schools involved in this study claimed they were planning to add further new strategies to support their Pupil Premium eligible children over the coming academic year. However, it is important to acknowledge the flaws within this research; The Pupil Premium was an initiative introduced by the Department For Education, therefore it is possible that the research in this paper is biased. Moreover, the schools that participated in this study may have been influenced by social desirability bias; the department of education provides schools with Pupil Premium funding so these schools may

have felt pressured for their responses to concur with the researcher's hypothesis.

The most recent piece of government guidance on how the pupil premium funding should be spent directs establishments to the Education Endowment Foundation's teaching toolkit, which outlines the effects that different interventions can have for disadvantaged children. (Education Endowment Foundation) It compares the impact of the intervention to the cost of providing it, producing a definitive list of the advantages and disadvantages and whether it is a worthwhile investment. It could be argued that if this toolkit were used throughout all schools, not only would the funding be spent more constructively, but ultimately more children would benefit from its influence.

Methodology and ethical considerations

This research will be carried out across two mainstream year one classes, with a population size of eight children who qualify for Pupil Premium funding and eight who do not but are of a similar academic and social ability. Due to the geographical location of the school and the number of low-income families, children who qualify for Pupil Premium make up eighteen percent of the school population (See appendix 1). Subsequently, it is important for the school to have an effective Pupil Premium strategy in place as so many of the children do qualify for this funding. Not only will a successful policy positively impact eighteen percent of the schools population, but will ultimately reflect on the success of the school as an education establishment. The research used for this project will be collected between

October 29th 2018 and December 19th 2018, with a research population of eight year one children who qualify for Pupil Premium funding, eight year one children who do not qualify for Pupil Premium funding and thirty two members of staff. Throughout the project, the BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018) and the Data Protection Act (2018) will be adhered to at all times (See Appendix 2). During this research project, three types of data collection will be carried out.

Questionnaires will be given to all staff members to investigate the depth of knowledge staff have in regards to Pupil Premium children in their class. Staff will be informed that these questionnaires will remain anonymous throughout the research project and will not be pressured into completing them. Whilst this method of data collection is very quick and can provide the researcher with rich qualitative data (Cotrell, 2010), the results are likely to be influenced by social desirability bias (Grimm, 2010) which could reduce the validity of the data.

Despite the efficiency of this data collection system, Baruch and Holton (2008) claim that the average return rate for questionnaires is only 52%. Consequently, the sample size would decrease significantly which could reduce the reliability of the data collected; the sample would not be fully representative of the intended research population. Another disadvantage of using this research method is that the questions used may not be explicitly comprehensible to participants, and to ensure anonymity, the researcher will be unable to respond to queries participants may have. To ensure the questionnaire is clear and concise, a pilot questionnaire will be produced.

This will highlight any potential uncertainties and provide an opportunity for alterations (Bell, 2014 p. 75-91).

Furthermore, the duration of time the Class Teacher or Learning Support Assistant (LSA) spends with each Pupil Premium child will be observed. To prevent the participants in this study being influenced by the Hawthorne Effect (Payne and Payne, 2004), children will not know they are being observed, ensuring maximum validity of the data collected. This type of observation will collect quantitative and qualitative data, recording both the time spent with each child on a 1: 1 basis, and any other notable findings. Since participants are being observed in a natural environment and are unaware that they are being monitored, the data accumulated is likely to be high in external validity, contributing to the overall accuracy of the observations collected (Angrosino, 2007).

The final method of data collection that will be used throughout this project is a comparison of the quantity of written feedback in Pupil Premium childrens' books compared to that in non-Pupil Premium childrens' books. An independent measures design (McLeod, 2017) will be used to assure the only variable changing is the children in each group, and that no other external factors influence the quantitative data collected.

When referring to participants throughout this project, no identifiable features of any individual or their work will be used. Informed consent will be obtained for all participants through the use of parental consent forms. All participants will have the right to withdraw from the study until December 19th 2018.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research will explore research into key theorists and government strategies put in place to support disadvantaged pupils, and evaluate the Pupil Premium strategy of the research setting. The research will assess the success of the policy in place through the use of questionnaires, observations and direct comparisons between the books of Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium children. It is anticipated the research will show that Pupil Premium children have more written feedback in their books, but may not be receiving more 1: 1 teaching. It is also expected that staff may not be aware of all the strategies put in place by the school to support Pupil Premium children emotionally and academically.

Recommendations will be made based on the findings of how the settings Pupil Premium strategy is implemented by staff, and how it could be improved to further aid disadvantaged children.

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