

SERVICE PUPIL PREMIUM

SERVICE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSION

IN THIS BRIEFING:

This briefing outlines the main features of the Service Pupil Premium and proposes some measures for understanding and maximising its impact

Service Pupil Premium (SPP) has the potential to enable valuable support that mitigates some impact of Service life. However, in order to strengthen its impact:

- The impact of SPP spend should be systematically monitored and rigorously evaluated;
- Details of how SPP is spent should be communicated to parents and other stakeholders;
- School leaders should ensure that they understand how SPP is spent in their schools and the impact that it has.

The SPP represents an important mechanism for understanding the population of Service children in England. It is one of the few opportunities for large-scale systematic engagement with the needs of Service children in the UK.

SPP - THE NUMBERS

For 2018/19 the SPP grant was £300 per eligible pupil; 76,244 pupils were recorded by the Department for Education as eligible and the total SPP allocation stood at £22,869,950. This masks a significant variation between schools in the size grant. For example, in 2017/18 the largest single school allocation was £115,200 for a school with 384 eligible pupils. By contrast, 51% of schools in receipt of SPP reported only one or two eligible pupils. Thus, while the average SPP allocation per school is in the region of £2,000, the median would be close to £600.

There are a number of key limitations to SPP, as detailed overleaf:

The Service Pupil Premium

In April 2011, targeted extra funding called Service Pupil Premium (SPP) was introduced for schools in England to claim under the Armed Forces Covenant.

SPP is different from the Pupil Premium (PP) and should be used to 'mitigate the negative impact on Service children of family mobility or parental deployment'.

Service Children's Progression



SPP - THE LIMITATIONS

There are a number of key limitations to SPP:

- It is not available for pupils in early years provision (i.e. nursery) or post-16 provision;
- It does not transfer from one school to the next. Parents must inform a new school that they are a Service family;
- It is only available in England. Service families in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, and those serving overseas, are not entitled to it, though the other nations have their own mechanisms for supporting Service children in education; and
- It is unavailable for children attending provision not funded by the state (e.g. independent schools or independently funded boarding provision).

As noted, SPP is not available post-16. Any additional post-16 funding in England is only for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds or 'looked after' via the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Consequently, post-16 providers may not be aware that a student is from a Service family.

	Service Pupil Premium	Pupil Premium
Age ranges	Available from reception until the end of year 11	Available from reception until the end of year 11
Eligibility criteria	Available for pupils where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One parent is serving in the regular armed forces; • One parent died in service and the pupil is in receipt of a pension or compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme; • Parent is on full commitment as a full time reservist 	Available for pupils who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years; • Identified as having left local authority care; • In local authority care for 1 day or more; • Both eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years and are looked after or a care leaver
Length of funding	Pupils attract funding for up to six years after the serving parent has left the forces	Pupils attract funding for up to six years after they cease to be eligible for free school meals
Which schools are eligible?	Maintained schools, academies and free schools in England	Maintained schools, academies and free schools in England
Purpose	Intended to provide mainly pastoral support for Service children	Intended to support attainment of disadvantaged pupils including closing the gap with non-disadvantaged peers

MONITORING OF SPP

In 2013 the House of Commons Select Committee for Defence observed that:

'We are not convinced that this expenditure is adequately monitored for value for money for the taxpayer, and to ensure that it is used to the best possible advantage to the Service children themselves.'

The Committee recommended guidelines and monitoring processes. Pupil Premium spending is closely monitored and analysed, whereas SPP is not. Maintained schools must publish Pupil Premium strategies on their websites, whereas no such requirement exists for SPP. While the Ofsted school inspection handbook notes that inspectors will evaluate schools' use of Pupil Premium, no specific mention is made of SPP. Furthermore, the outcomes for pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium in comparison to non-disadvantaged children are reported via performance tables; again, this does not apply to SPP recipients.

SPENDING SPP

Schools have the flexibility to spend SPP to meet each child's pastoral needs or to support a child to catch up on missing curriculum. This is different from Pupil Premium, which should address attainment gaps associated with socio-economic background to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make progress at least in line with other children. SPP should not be combined with mainstream Pupil Premium funding and should be accounted for separately.

Examples of the use of SPP have been collected by the Ministry of Defence, Army Families Federation and the Royal British Legion. Nevertheless, there is still a need to undertake

systematic and rigorous evaluation of the use of SPP to enable the production of robust guidance and case studies to promote its effective use.

VARIATION IN USAGE

To offer an insight into SPP spending and identify strategies to support Service children, four schools with Service children on roll have been investigated (hereafter A, B, C and D) using only information from their websites. School D, having only one SPP child, was used for comparison.

- Schools A, B and C had a range of different SPP information on their websites. The focus for schools was on attainment and supporting a child through transitions arising from the Service lifestyle (e.g. bi-weekly meetings, support to catch up, family link worker).
- All three schools also gave examples of how the money had been spent (e.g. monitoring attendance, breakfast and games clubs, funding trips, supporting friendships).
- Schools A and C monitored progress, with A stating the attainment of SPP recipients. None of the schools were clear as to how much of their SPP had been spent on which strategy.
- School D, with one recipient, did not note SPP on its website and hence, at least externally, there is no evidence of acknowledgement of or provision for the Service child.

These four examples suggest an inconsistency in practice by schools reporting on SPP spend. Compared with the established reporting principles associated with mainstream Pupil Premium, this presents challenges in accurately understanding the diversity of school practice with regards to SPP. Differences in schools' uses of SPP were also visible, though this is to be expected in the context of responding to the particular situations of their pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should:

- Be proactive in identifying children who are eligible for Service Pupil Premium;
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of their SPP spend as rigorously as with mainstream Pupil Premium, and;
- Engage with organisations that can offer evidence to inform the effective use of SPP. These include, amongst others, the forces families' charities, the SCiP Alliance, and Service Children in State Schools.

School governing boards should:

- Ensure that they understand how SPP is spent in their school and its impact on children, for example by designating a governor to take specific responsibility; and
- Ensure that SPP spend is reported on via school websites.

School improvement practitioners should:

- Support and encourage schools to share effective practice in the use of SPP with others.

The Department for Education, National College for Teaching and Leadership, the Teaching Schools Council and others should:

- Ensure that SPP features explicitly in its guidance on Pupil Premium reviews.

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THE SCIP ALLIANCE

The Service Children's Progression Alliance leads UK and international work to improve the educational progression of the children of armed forces personnel and veterans. We undertake research, champion better policy and support effective practice to enable thriving lives for Service children.

THE SCIP ALLIANCE IS LED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER, SUPPORTED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.



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