

An introduction to Pupil Premium Plus

Pupil Premium for previously looked after children (often referred to as Pupil Premium Plus, or PP+) was introduced in England in 2014 in recognition that children who ceased to be looked after as a result of adoption, a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or a Child Arrangements Order (CAO) often require extra support and help in school in view of their early life experiences.

Who is eligible?

Pupil Premium Plus is available for children of compulsory school age (up to Year 11) in state schools in England, who are adopted or who moved to permanence under a SGO or CAO from England or Wales. Children in independent schools or educated other than at school (EOTAS) may be eligible if their education is funded by the local authority.

Extra funding is also available for children aged 3 and 4 in early years education, who meet the criteria. This is funded separately by the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), which is not covered in this guide.

How much is available?

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is currently £2,410 per child per year. For previously looked after children, this funding is paid directly to the child's school.

How is it accessed?

Parents and guardians of eligible children must self-declare their eligibility to their child's school, providing proof of their child's previously looked after status, e.g. a photocopy of their adoption order. Parents may conceal sensitive information on such documentation if they wish.

The school must record this information in the autumn census which takes place in October (this was previously done using the spring census in January, but arrangements were changed in 2020). It is important that parents and guardians inform the school of their child's status as early in the school year as possible. Funding is received during the following financial year (April-April).

Eligibility for PP+ is recorded on the census under 'post looked after arrangements'. The DfE produces an annual guide to support schools in completing the census.

You must declare your child's eligibility whenever they start a new school, including on transfer from primary to secondary. Even if you have declared your child's status, it is advisable to verify that this is recorded on the census as there is no way to rectify any mistake after the census return. The school's Designated Teacher for previously looked after children will be able to guide you through the process.

Truth or Myth?

"Children have to be eligible for free school meals to get PP+."

Myth: there is no relationship between PP+ and free school meals. While pupil premium funding for economically disadvantaged children uses free school meals to determine eligibility, PP+ does not.

"The Virtual School Head administers PP+."

Myth: although pupil premium funding for looked after children is administered by the Virtual School Head, the funding for children who are adopted or who moved to permanence via special guardianship or a child arrangements order is paid directly to schools and administered by them. The Designated Teacher should be your main point of contact for discussing how the funding is being used.

What is Pupil Premium Plus used for?

Unlike pupil premium funding for disadvantaged children, which aims to reduce the attainment gap caused by economic disadvantage, PP+ recognises that many adopted and care-experienced children need extra support in school because of the circumstances that led to them being placed into care and being adopted or permanently placed.

Therefore, according to the DfE Q&A document on PP+ (2014), it ought to be spent on *“helping these children emotionally, socially and educationally by providing specific support to raise their attainment and address their wider needs.”*

The same document states that, *“it is not intended that the additional funding should be used to back-fill the general school budget nor ... used to support other groups of pupils.”*

Is Pupil Premium Plus ring-fenced?

PP+ is not strictly ring-fenced either to individual children or to the eligible cohort. This allows schools to, for instance, pool funds to train all staff or employ a staff member to support a group of children which may include some who are not eligible.

As PP+ is paid to the school according to the financial year (April to April) and not the academic year, pooling allows schools to account for shortfalls when a new eligible child starts the school and leftover funds when a child leaves.

Who is accountable for the use of PP+?

Local authority maintained schools must publish a strategy for their use of pupil premium as a whole on their school website, including the amount they received, the barriers eligible pupils face, and how they spend pupil premium to overcome these. They do not need to report on PP+ separately, although it is good practice to do so, unless separate reporting would compromise confidentiality for individual pupils.

Academies and free schools must also publish information about their use of pupil premium. The specific content will depend on their individual funding agreement.

PP+ is not monitored separately by Ofsted, but inspections of schools will explore the use of pupil premium as a whole, and the effectiveness of the school's strategies and use of the funds.

The Designated Teacher in your child's school should be the main point of contact for queries about PP+ and should encourage your involvement in discussion around how it will be used to support your child. The DfE produces statutory guidance for designated teachers which gives more information about this important statutory role. This can be found online at www.gov.uk.

Suggestions for the effective use of PP+

Training: understanding the reasons for the challenges that many children face is vital for all staff. Effective training in areas such as the impact of early trauma, attachment and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder helps to ensure that any further intervention or support is evidence based.

Therapeutic interventions: for example, buying in creative arts therapy, sensory occupational therapy or play therapy for individuals or groups of children.

Additional staff: providing 1-1 support, providing meet and greets at the start of the day, running nurture groups, running additional activities during breaks and lunchtimes.

Equipment and facilities: provision of a nurture room, calm boxes, sensory equipment, equipment for playground activities, etc.

This list is not prescriptive or exhaustive. Effective use of PP+ should be rooted in the child's needs and provide the educational, social and emotional support that they need to enable them to thrive in education and raise their attainment. Many strategies, such as allowing children to bring in attachment objects from home, thorough transition planning and effective home-school communications, cost virtually nothing.

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