

# A guide to implementing Letterbox Club into your Pupil Premium strategy



[booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club](https://booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club)

Find out  
more...

# What is the Pupil Premium grant?

**The Pupil Premium grant** (PPG) is allocated to local authorities in England to distribute to their maintained state-funded and academy schools for two separate objectives:

- raising the educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to help them reach their potential
- providing support for children and young people with parents in the regular armed forces, referred to as service Pupil Premium (SPP).

**Note:** This has been combined into Pupil Premium payments to make it easier for schools to manage their spending

Find out more on the [Department for Education website](#)



# Which students are eligible for the Pupil Premium grant?

The Pupil Premium grant is allocated to eligible state schools based on the number of:

- pupils who are recorded as eligible for free school meals, or have been recorded as eligible in the past six years (referred to as Ever 6 FSM)
- children previously looked after (PLAC) by a local authority or other state care, including children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales
- looked-after children (LAC) supported by the local authority. LAC are defined in the Children Act 1989 as those who are in the care of, or provided with accommodation by an English local authority. (Note, the portion of PP grant funding for LAC and PLAC pupils is often referred to as 'Pupil Premium Plus' [PP+])

## Did you know?

In 2023/24, the Pupil Premium is worth a total of £2.9 billion, and around 2.2 million pupils qualify.

**Reference:**  
**House of Commons Library**

Schools should use a wealth of evidence-informed activities in line with the 'menu of approaches' set by the **Department for Education (DfE)** and the **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)**.

# What is Letterbox Club?

Letterbox Club is one of BookTrust's flagship programmes and has, for over 20 years, been making a difference to the lives of many children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Every one of the Letterbox Club parcels is packed full of high-quality books, maths games and stationery for children to enjoy.



## How does it work?

Every year the books and resources in the Letterbox Club parcels are carefully selected by an independent panel of experts with vulnerable children in mind, to ensure that what children receive is age-appropriate and sensitive to their circumstances. Everything in Letterbox Club has a purpose and has been designed to spark an interest in reading and maths, improve wellbeing, and foster a positive home-school link.



# Diagnosing and identifying the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils

As the UK's largest children's reading charity, our mission at BookTrust is to get all children not only reading but *enjoying* reading - to establish new reading habits so that children can reap the life-changing benefits it brings.

We work with schools and local authorities across the UK to reach and support all children - especially children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage who may not have books to call their own - to encounter the pleasure that reading, sharing, exploring and discussing a book can bring.

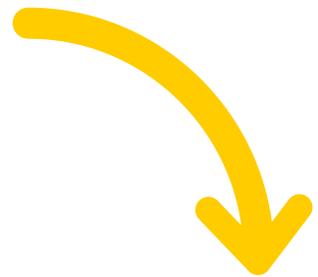
## Schools tell us their challenges are:

**Improving literacy and numeracy outcomes to close the disadvantage gap**

**Supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs**

**Attendance and levels of persistent absence**

**Communicating with, and supporting parents**



# Improving literacy and numeracy outcomes to close the disadvantage gap

- Speech, language and communication difficulties, particularly on starting school and during KS1, are a barrier for many disadvantaged pupils; impacting negatively on phonics, spelling, and social and emotional development.  
**Reference: [The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)**



Reading is so important for accessing the rest of the curriculum that ensuring pupils catch up on these skills is essential. Reading also offers important emotional benefits, enabling pupils - through listening to and discussing stories - to talk about their ideas and feelings and to lose themselves in books.

**Reference: [DfE](#)**

- On average, disadvantaged pupils have a lower reading age when compared to their peers in the same year group. This is based on results from tests or examinations, or through teacher observations and assessment tools.  
**Reference: [EEF](#)**



Children's attainment in mathematics can often be held back by lack of engagement and the difficulties in assessing their understanding and knowledge. Missing aspects of number sense and early calculation can be hard to remedy. Developing children's independence and motivation is needed, alongside effective assessment and teaching.

**Reference: [EEF](#)**

- Early numeracy approaches (such as maths games and activities) aim to develop number skills and improve young children's knowledge and understanding of early mathematical concepts. These approaches may help children from disadvantaged backgrounds to catch up with their peers by the beginning of formal schooling.  
**Reference: [EEF](#)**

**How can Letterbox help?**



Letterbox Club provides children with high-quality books and number games chosen by experts with an understanding of children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Through **BookTrust's research**, we know that Letterbox Club has a positive impact on reading habits. With a wide range of fiction, non-fiction, and novelty books as well as exciting stationery and letters from authors, there is something to spark the interest of all children. Playing the accessible maths games included develops social skills, provides well-focused practice, and shows children how much they can learn, even in quite a short time.

"As a school, [Letterbox Club] enables you to offer something additional for families. As well as engaging them with reading, you develop their awareness and inspire them to be excited about their future and where they want to go."

**Ruth Dunmore**  
*Deputy Head Teacher*



# Attendance and levels of persistent absence

School attendance data shows that attendance for pupils facing disadvantage is lower than for other pupils.

**Reference: EEF**

Pupil assessments and observations indicate that persistent absenteeism is negatively impacting pupils' progress and is causing the attainment gap to grow, as well as having a negative impact on their self-confidence, readiness to learn, and social skills.

**Reference: UK Parliament**

Three quarters of schools in England say poor attendance and low reading levels are the biggest challenges affecting their socio-economically disadvantaged pupils' academic achievement.

**EEF Sept 2023**



## How can Letterbox help?

It's vital that children engage in their education and are provided with targeted support if they need some extra help to do this. Letterbox Club parcels have been designed for children to own. Letterbox Club evaluations have found that ownership plays a motivational role in reading more. The parcels are for children to keep, and so they can make their own decisions on how to use the materials. This feeling of agency is another motivator that helps engage children in reading and builds their identities as readers – and is just as important for maths.



# Supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs

Post-pandemic many pupils need more support with their wellbeing and mental health.

**Reference: DfE**

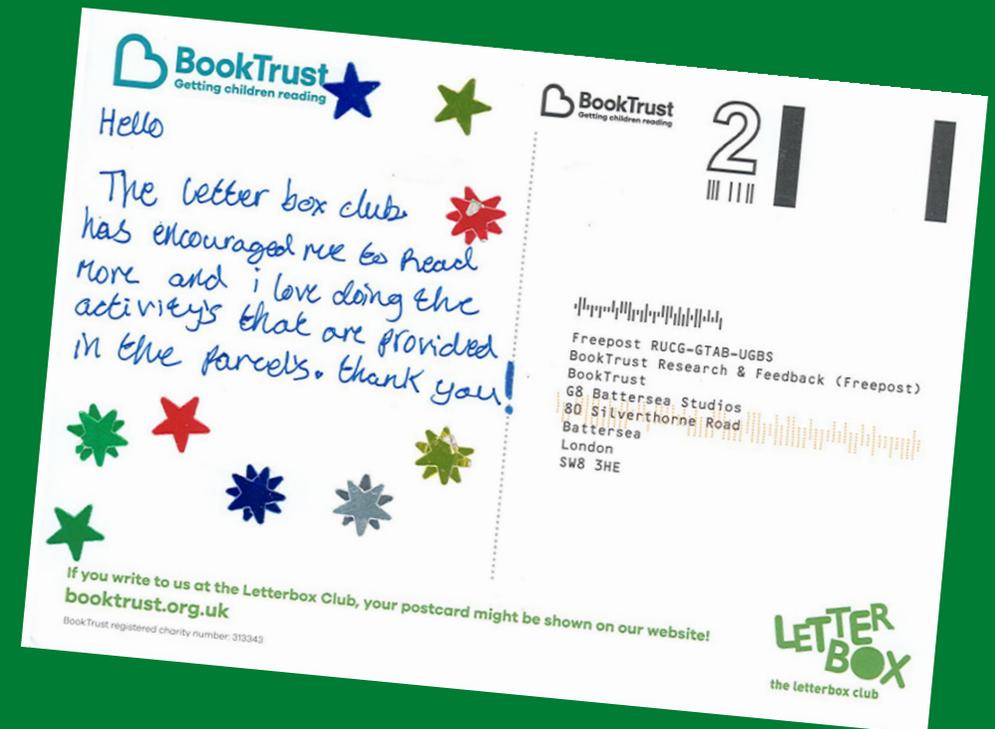
Pupils with high pastoral needs and those with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs may find it very difficult to self-regulate, and concentrate and be ready for learning in class which results in missed learning opportunities.

At some schools these children receive one to one support through an ELSA but many more are receiving small group intervention and nurture group support.

**Reference: NICE**

## How can Letterbox help?

With resources thoughtfully chosen for children experiencing vulnerabilities or disadvantage, Letterbox Club can bring a sense of belonging and excitement to children who may not have experienced books and games of their own before. We know from BookTrust and academic evaluations of Letterbox Club that the parcels make children feel happy, special and remembered.



# Communicating with, and supporting, parents

Parental engagement can be a key enabler for children's attainment. New **BookTrust research** including a survey of 8000 teachers outlines the struggle many parents face in sustaining children's reading at home. The need to overcome this challenge, so no child lacks parental support at home, has become the number one barrier teachers face when trying to encourage pupils to read for pleasure.

Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to benefit from having a space to conduct home learning. Evidence also suggests that disadvantaged pupils make less academic progress, and sometimes attainment levels even regress during the summer holidays, due to the level of formal and informal learning activities they do or do not participate in.

**Reference: EEF**

The average impact of Parental Engagement approaches is about an additional four months' progress over the course of a year. There are also higher impacts for pupils with low prior attainment.

**Reference: EEF**



# How can Letterbox help?

Letterbox Club parcels are designed to be taken home by children to encourage and support the home-school link, with books, stories and numeracy games to share and enjoy with their trusted adults, along with guidance on how to make the most of the resources.

The parcels give families structure to make the most of the resources at home and get children reading wherever they are. The findings from the **Letterbox Club schools pilot** in three Welsh counties found that the home-school link the Letterbox Club packs afforded benefitted the schools, who used the parcels as a 'hook' to bring disengaged parents into school or to start conversations about reading.

"[Letterbox Club] makes you spend time together. It gives you that quiet space where you can just sit and be with a book and not have anything else going on."

**Foster Carer**



# Use evidence to identify appropriate and effective responses

BookTrust's **Benefits of Reading research** outlines how reading supports children to:



## Why reading matters – what does the research show?

From the early years onwards, reading brings profound and wide-ranging benefits that can have a lifelong positive impact on children's lives.



### Meet speech and language milestones and do better at school

- Children have better brain development, attention, and cognitive ability
- Children have better speech and language development and literacy skills
- Children have better school readiness and knowledge about the world
- Children make more progress across the curriculum



### Overcome disadvantage caused by inequalities

- Children will experience better educational mobility and social mobility
- Children growing up in poverty are less likely to remain in poverty as adults
- Throughout school, children are more likely to overcome the barriers caused by disadvantage



### Develop better mental wellbeing, social skills and secure relationships

- Children feel more secure and develop deep bonds with parents and carers
- Children have better socio-emotional skills
- Children have better mental wellbeing and self esteem



### Develop imagination, empathy and creativity

- Children have more empathy
- Children are more creative and imaginative

We've drawn on hundreds of peer-reviewed studies, a selection of which are included in the reference list in the **Benefits of Reading research**. It's worth noting that the type of evidence underpinning each benefit may differ so we advise taking a detailed look at the research report.

# Use evidence to identify appropriate and effective responses

what are children telling us?

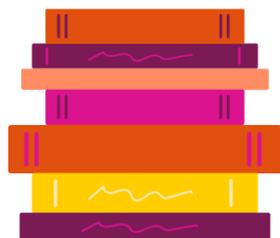
**72%**

of Letterbox Club children say they have been reading more on their own since receiving their parcels



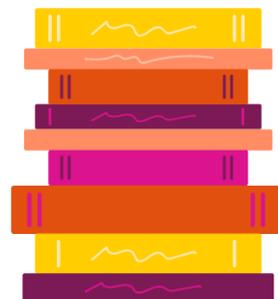
**89%**

of children say they like or love the books in their parcels



**96%**

of Letterbox Club children like or love it



"Letterbox Club has helped me feel like I can conquer anything."

**Child aged 12**

"Children have benefitted from it so much, they loved all the resources."

**Deputy Head**

Letterbox Club parcels encourage one-on-one time between children and trusted adults supporting their wellbeing.

# Develop a plan for using your Pupil Premium to maximum effect

The Pupil Premium strategy statement template reflects the previous outlined steps and should help you to develop your strategy effectively and efficiently, based on the challenges you have identified, the menu of approaches and the evidence of effective approaches.

## Your strategy should:

- focus on the challenges that are having the most significant impact, and are within your control
- set ambitious, but realistic, target outcomes
- allocate funding to activities most likely to deliver those outcomes, based on evidence of what works

## How can Letterbox Club be incorporated into your PPG strategy?

[Using Pupil Premium: guidance for school leaders \(DfE\)](#)



We asked Maggie Faulkner, Deputy Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead at Hounslow Town Primary School, to share how Letterbox Club has made a difference to her Pupil Premium children.



"All of our children who receive the Pupil Premium grant get the Letterbox Club packs... For some of these children it's about their own self-esteem and self-confidence that they have something that's special for them."

**Maggie Faulkner**  
Hounslow Town Primary school

# Implementing your strategy

As with any new resource, effective implementation will be key to its success and it's extremely important for making the best use of your Pupil Premium.

In order to make the most effective use of Letterbox Club, we've put together support, guidance and resources for you to use as a school and for sending home to families and carers to use at home.

## Support and resources



# Evaluating and sustaining your strategy

Monitoring and evaluating the impact should be based on the outcomes for your pupils facing disadvantage and should be an ongoing process.

At BookTrust, our work is driven by evidence and all our programmes, including Letterbox Club, are regularly reviewed for effectiveness through our research and impact reports, as well as the many children's postcards that they choose to return to us.

Our research gives us unique insights into the lives of the families we work with and what works to build the reading habits that bring immediate and lifelong benefits to the children who need it most.





**Schools must show how they are using their Pupil Premium effectively:**

- by publishing a statement on their website each academic year using the DfE template
- through inspections by Ofsted - inspectors may discuss plans schools have to spend their Pupil Premium
- through scrutiny of Pupil Premium plans by governors and trustees

[DfE, Using Pupil Premium: guidance for school leaders](#)

# Your next steps

Visit [www.booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club) to explore how Letterbox Club could work for your Pupil Premium children.

- Download exclusive samples
- Explore case studies and customer reviews
- Watch past webinars and latest blog posts
- AND register your children for Letterbox Club today!

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