

What's the difference between Pupil Premium, Disadvantaged, Free School Meals & FSM6

It's a common question, because the terms are often used interchangeably within the world of education but when it comes to contextualising your school and running reports, it's important to make the right choices because these are not technically the same.

Free School Meal Eligibility

A pupil who is Free School Meal (FSM) eligible is a pupil who – on the day of the census – was Free School Meal eligible. This is derived from that school census submission to the DfE. Even if they were only eligible that day, that is all that counts. Running reports using this filter excludes any pupil who lost that eligibility before census day.

FSM6

FSM6 is the largest component of pupil premium eligibility in terms of numbers of pupils and is effectively a deprivation measure. It refers to any pupil who is either FSM eligible on the day of the census OR has been FSM eligible for any period (even a day) in the last 6 years. Running reports using this filter is a way of reporting on pupils who are pupil premium eligible by virtue of deprivation rather than any of the other reasons. This is a status that DfE determine based on previous census.

Pupil Premium Eligibility

Pupil premium is allocated for one or more of the following reasons:

- FSM6 status (see above)
- Being a care leaver or adopted from care
- Being part of a military family (service pupil premium)
- Being currently in care (funds paid to Local Authority)

As you can see pupil premium does not equate to free school meal eligibility (though FSM6 is the largest component). Pupil premium eligibility is determined by DfE.

Disadvantaged status

Disadvantaged is sometimes seen as interchangeable with Pupil Premium, but in fact Disadvantaged doesn't include members of military families attracting service pupil premium.

What if pupils become FSM Eligible after the census date?

Officially that pupil is not included in reported figures because they were not eligible on census day. Schools can contextualise and be able to explain their cohort where they know that some pupils ultimately became eligible but also have to accept that the official methodologies will not include those pupils when looking at assessments results. In 2023 the DfE amended their methodology so that pupils who were FSM eligible in either the autumn or spring census would be should count in terms of assessment results reporting.

Remember also – funding allocation and spending...

Pupil Premium funding is confirmed in the summer following the census day and therefore is paid in arrears. Some of the pupils counted towards that funding will have left the school by the time the funding is received. For this reason you cannot precisely align the spending and the numbers of *current* eligible pupils.