Evaluation of Poverty Proofing the School Day in Brighton & Hove

EXPLORING MEASUREMENTS OF ATTENDANCE, ATTAINMENT AND BULLYING

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The work was completed in close collaboration with Brighton & Hove City Council and Children North East Charity, represented by Mr Ashley Seymour-Williams and Ms Lorna Nicoll.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC/B&H) has been implementing the concept and work of "Poverty Proofing© the School Day" (PPSD) in most of its schools since 2017 in an attempt to develop inclusivity and alleviate some of the hardships that stem from poverty, such as stigma and shame. The work itself has been developed by the Children North East charity and it encompasses large-scale audits of all children in the school, focus groups, and other immersive actions taken by trained professionals within the school day. Each school receives a set of recommendations, based mainly on children's points of view, as well as those of other school figures and stakeholders.

VALU, the evaluation clinic of the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, evaluated the long-term work of the council and analysed available datasets such as attendance, attainment, and children's experience of bullying, as captured in the survey "Safe and Well at School". Lower grades, a higher likelihood of absences (especially persistent and severe), and a higher likelihood of suffering bullying are all known in academic literature to be strongly associated with negative experiences of poverty during the school years.

The evaluation work focused on asking how engagement with PPSD might be associated with changes in attainment, attendance, and children's reporting of bullying.

Provided with data from 62 schools, VALU members worked with different datasets to provide an overview of trends and potentially identify even stronger links between PPSD and the meaningful outcomes sought by the Education Department at B&H.

5 key findings:

- PPSD correlated with improved severe absence rates across B&H schools that engaged with it; however, this was not seen in other absence indicators.
- In schools with above-national-average proportions of free school meals (FSM), a poverty indicator, there was a reduced percentage of pupils suspended in those that engaged with PPSD.
- Schools that engaged with PPSD showed a better recovery in attainment after COVID than those that did not.
- Reported bullying in schools that have significantly higher rates of free school meals decreased in the short run following poverty proofing.
- The schools that engaged with the first round of PPSD showed a steady decline in reported rates of bullying until 2023, when there was a sudden rise.

Recommendations:

Attendance

- Further investigations into the differences between the first and second interventions to understand the lack of further improvement in schools that engaged with PPSD twice.
- Future interventions should target schools that have above-national-average FSM-eligible students.
- More research should be conducted into the reasons for absence amongst the severe absences compared to the persistent absences to better tailor PPSD to support students with all levels of absence.

Attainment

- While PPSD has not shown a uniform, reliably measured association with variation in attainment in Brighton and Hove, it should not be dismissed as ineffective. Further research that takes into consideration the multifactorial nature of attainment outcomes is needed to explore the potential benefits of PPSD beyond academic metrics and to understand how it can be integrated into a comprehensive and equitable approach.

Bullying

- It would be practical to look at the results of the Safe and Well at School Survey in 2025 to see whether there is a long-term effect from the 2023 poverty-proofing initiative and compare to the long-term effect of the 2018 initiative to identify the extent to which the measures were affected by the pandemic.
- It would be interesting to use the results from the Safe and Well at School Survey alongside qualitative research on the causes of bullying to pinpoint whether bullying is also changing to assess how poverty-proofing measures need to be adapted.

INTRODUCTION

UK child poverty is currently at 4.2 million (29.2%) in 2024, and since 1994 children have consistently been the largest population group in poverty(1), suffering lifelong impact through the social determinants of health(2). Children in poverty have less access to many healthy lifestyle options, resulting in compromised health and missed school days(3-5). Adverse childhood experiences are three times more common for children in poverty(6) and access to health services is lower(7), creating a poor-health poverty loop(8).

25%

Children in B&H are in poverty

Schools have a role in poverty prevention and management(9), utilising the Pupil Premium among other tools and resources to reduce the attainment and attendance gap(10). Poverty Proofing the School Day(11), created by the Children North East charity, aims to overcome poverty-related barriers to learning and reduce stigma and discrimination by listening to pupils and acting on their advice.

Brighton & Hove has 12,757 (25%) children in poverty in 2024(12) within a diverse socioeconomic population(13) and has delivered this project since 2017. Pupils' perceptions, needs and suggestions, as well as those of other relevant stakeholders, were recorded from 55 primary and secondary schools. Trained professionals, mainly with a background in education, conducted those large audits, and later provided a tailored set of recommendations for the school. 17 schools chose to engage with the programme twice, going through a smaller-scale online version of the programme.

B&H regularly records data about attainment and attendance for school-age students and surveys children for a variety of safety and wellness topics every two years via the Safe and Well at School Survey. Academic literature suggests that there are strong links between poverty and measures such as attendance, attainment and bullying.
The evaluation clinic VALU at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, alongside professionals from both BHCC and Children North East, was set to explore if engaging with the programme had any associations with those measures at the school level.

AIMS AND METHODS

Aim:

Exploring the potential associations between engagement with the PPSD programme and changes in poverty-related school level measurements such as attendance, attainment and bullying.

Methods:

Data was provided for 62 schools:
55 schools have engaged with the programme since 2017 and a further 7 were used as controls.
17 schools out of the 55 have engaged with the programme twice.
Data was provided for the years 2016 (one year before the start of the programme) to 2024, detailing recorded attendance and attainment data every year, and data for bullying every two years. Some data was missing around the COVID-19 pandemic.
Each measurement used a different set of schools to explore its topic in line with the specific evaluation question. Further methodological considerations are provided in the sections below, as well as exclusions and limitations at the end of the report.
When comparing schools by size, the following assumptions were made, based on the ones made by BHCC: small school (≤200), medium school (201-400), and large school (≥401).
When comparing to national averages, Free School Meals (FSM) was used as a proxy for poverty and compared to the national average of 23.8%.

ATTENDANCE

Currently, 22% (3.2 million) of children in the UK are from households experiencing relative poverty (income below 60% of the median) (1), and relative poverty rates are highest amongst black and other minority ethnic groups (BAME), special educational need groups (SEN), and children eligible for free school meals (FSM) (1)

Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are twice as likely to be absent from school than their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (2), and when absent from school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience unsafe/unstable environments, a lack of nutritious food, hunger, a lack of resources to aid learning and reduced social interaction (3)

Attendance is the single most crucial variable when measuring a pupil's achievement levels at all stages of schooling. A 1% increase in absent days corresponds to a 3% decrease in attainment (4, 5). Persistent non-attenders leave education earlier and are more likely to become long-term unemployed, homeless, experience poverty, or enter/engage with the justice system (6).

Children experiencing poverty face additional barriers to accessing education, with factors such as transport and uniform costs affecting attendance rates (7).

This section aims to identify whether there is an association between schools' engagement with PPSD and their average attendance rates over time.

01. Aim

To assess if there is a difference in attendance parameters over time between schools that engaged with PPSD and those that did not, as well as between those that engaged once and twice.

02. Aim

To understand the relationship between school demographics and PPSD to understand if there are other factors that may affect attendance and exclusion rates.

METHODS

Nationally available data on school demographics and attendance comprises school absences and exclusions, each published as three parameters, and available for dates between 2016 and 2023 (Table 1). Demographics used school size and percentage of students relating to SEN, FSM, and BAME.

Attendance parameters	
Available for years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022. Note: no available data for 2019 due to COVID-19 pandemic.	
Absence (Absence%)	Percentage of sessions missed through absence.
Persistent absence (PA%)	Percentage of children missing 10% or more sessions at school.
Severe absence (SA%)	Percentage of children missing 50% or more sessions at school.
Exclusion parameters	
Available for years: 2016,2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	
Pupil percentage (Pupil%)	Percentage of children suspended (where a child must miss lessons due to a behavioural sanction).
Suspension instances	Percentage of sessions missed through suspension (where a child must miss lessons due to a behavioural sanction).
Permanent exclusions (PEX%)	Percentage of children permanently excluded. (No permanent exclusions across primary schools)

Table 1: Available attendance parameters, years available and definitions.

Analysis

- Initially, demographic factors were assessed to establish if any factors could affect the attendance data between groups.
- Each attendance parameter was assessed across the years of available data (2016-2023), searching for trends over time.

Statistical software was used to look for significant differences between key dates or points identified in the analysis over time. The t-test identifies if the difference between the average attendance of the intervention group and the no-intervention group is statistically significant. Where schools undergoing PPSD did not have different attendance rates, a t-test was used to determine statistical significance and with that, better understand the potential causes.

RESULTS

The initial analysis reviewed the demographics of different schools. Table 2 shows that schools that engaged with PPSD had different levels of FSM students and BAME students compared to schools that did not.

	No-intervention	Intervention	Comment
Primary	6	46	Many more schools engaged with PPSD.
Primary	Group mean (%)		
FSM	**26.04**	**41.75**	Percentage of students eligible for FSM is higher in the intervention group. *
SEN	16.68	20.93	Percentage of SEN students is higher in the intervention group.
BAME	**33.45**	**20.60**	Percentage of BAME students is higher in the no-intervention group. *
*Results in bold were found to be statistically significant to $p < 0.05$ using the t-test.			

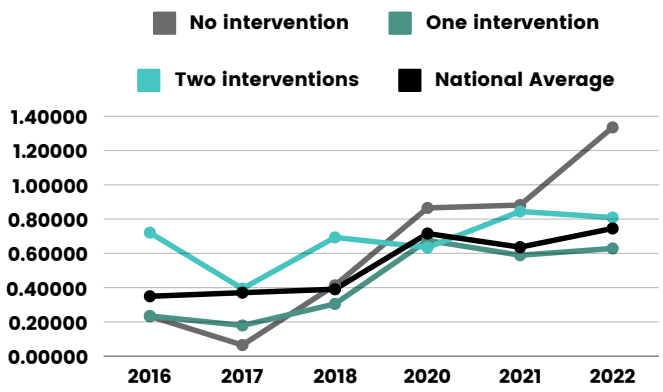
Table 2: Table showing number of primary and secondary schools in each group and their average percentage for different demographics.

Analysis of trends over time

This section will present key graphs and points from our analysis of absence and exclusion data between 2016 and 2023. For simplicity, although all parameters were initially analysed (see Table 1), one parameter will be presented for absence (severe absence, SA%) and one for exclusion (Pupil %). Both severe absence and pupil percentage represent children, rather than sessions missed, and given that the nature of the intervention is focused on children's experiences in school, these metrics were chosen to better represent the potential impact.

Absence

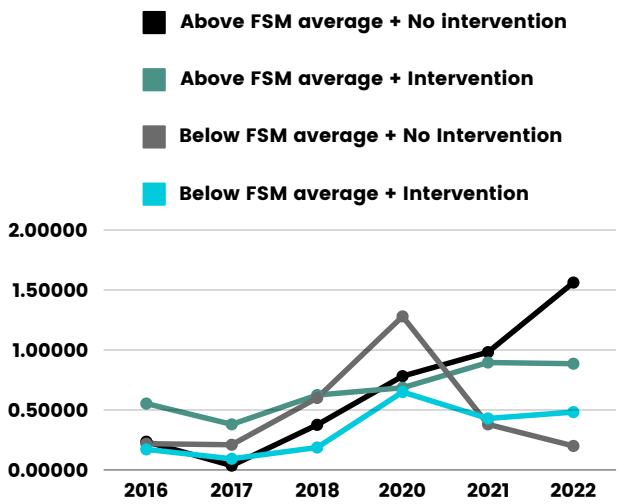
We present absence data via the SA% metric. Graph 1 shows that schools that did not engage with PPSD generally had a worse SA% compared to both those that did engage and to the national average. Additionally, there is no difference between the groups of schools that engaged with PPSD once and twice (t-test, statistically significant to $p<0.005$), and both remained on-trend with the national average.



Graph 1: SA% over time grouped by no intervention, intervention completed once, intervention completed twice and the national average for SA% over time.

0%

Attendance difference between schools going through once or twice



Graph 2 shows that in schools with above-national-average numbers of FSM-eligible students, there was a larger difference in SA% for schools that engaged with PPSD compared to those that did not. This was not as pronounced in the schools that had below-national-average numbers of FSM-eligible students. Additionally, this was not seen in PA% or absence%, suggesting a greater effect on those with severe absence.

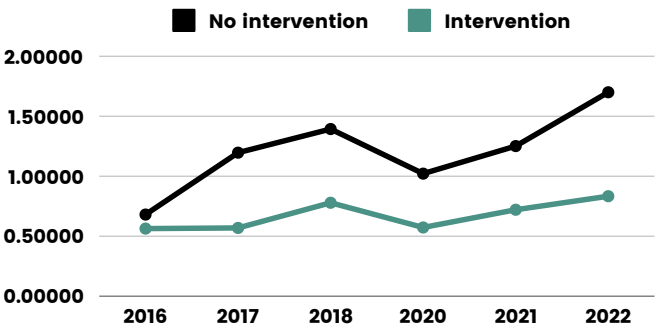
Graph 2: SA% over time grouped by no intervention or intervention and grouped by FSM above or below the national average.

0.8%

Difference between above and below average Free School Meal schools

Exclusion

To assess exclusions, we focused on the pupil percentage parameter: Graph 3 shows that schools that engaged with the intervention generally had a low percentage of pupils suspended from classes (less than 1%).
In contrast, the non-intervention group more than doubled (0.68% to 1.69%) between 2016 and 2021.



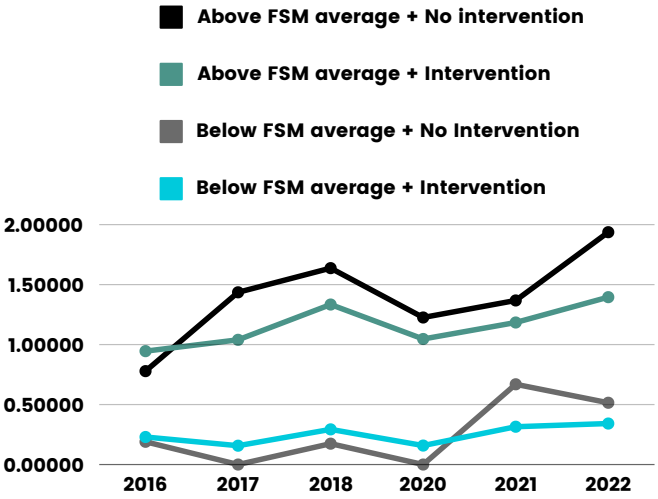
Graph 3: Pupil percentage over time, grouped by intervention and no intervention.

>1%

Above average FSM schools had exclusions above 1%

2X

as many exclusions in non intervention schools



Graph 4: Pupil percentage over time, grouped by no intervention or intervention and grouped by FSM above or below the national average.

Graph 4 shows that in schools with above-national-average percentages of FSM students, there was a difference in suspension instances for those that engaged with the intervention compared to not: by 2021, schools that had the intervention had exclusion rates of 1.4% compared to 1.9% for those that did not. In schools with below-national-average percentages of FSM-eligible students, not only was there no difference between intervention and no-intervention groups, but the rates were much lower (0.3% and 0.5% respectively).

KEY FINDINGS

PPSD improved severe absence (SA) rates across Brighton & Hove schools that engaged with it; however, this was not seen in other absence indicators.

Schools with above-national-average proportions of FSM students showed greater improvement in severe absence (SA) rates after engaging with PPSD.

In schools with above-national-average proportions of FSM students, there was a reduced percentage of pupils suspended in those that engaged with PPSD.

Amongst schools that engaged with PPSD, the number of interventions (one vs. two) did not show a statistically significant effect across any absence measures.

RECCOMMENDATIONS

Further investigations into the differences between the first and second intervention to understand the lack of further improvement in schools that engaged with PPSD twice.

Future interventions should target schools that have above-national-average FSM-eligible students.

More research should be conducted into the reasons for absence amongst the SA compared to the PA to better tailor PPSD to support students with all levels of absence.

DISCUSSION

The results of the evaluation reinforced the extensive literature describing the correlation between poverty and higher absence and exclusion rates in UK schools. A 2023 House of Commons report highlighted several factors that contribute to this trend, including access to affordable transport and lacking a sufficient number of uniforms to adhere to school policy (7). As PPSD aims to address these barriers directly, it is an appropriate intervention to reduce absence and exclusion rates amongst pupils facing higher levels of deprivation.

PPSD was associated with marked improvement in severe absence rates in schools, while other absence measures in this analysis remained consistent. Studies on "emotionally based school avoidance" (EBSA) have demonstrated the role that anxious feelings about school, bullying, and negative social situations play in pupils habitually missing classes. Effective EBSA interventions, much like PPSD, emphasise the importance of "whole-school approaches" that may involve the provision of safe spaces and increasing positive, non-judgmental communication amongst pupils and staff, which may partially explain the improvement amongst the highest absence levels in our sample (9).

The higher rates of suspensions in schools with above-national-average FSM students supported the findings published by the Department of Education's 2019 Timpson Review, which noted that FSM-eligible pupils were four times more likely to be excluded permanently or for a fixed period (10). A policy analysis examining how the city of Glasgow was able to reduce school exclusions markedly emphasised the importance of inclusion and early intervention in early childhood settings to avoid issues in adolescence (11). This preventative focus shifts the culture of schools away from cycles of enforcement and punishment and is an effective upstream method of reducing exclusion, much like the approach taken by PPSD. This may explain some of the improvements in suspension rates seen in schools that underwent the intervention.

ATTAINMENT

While the negative association between poverty and school attainment is well-documented(1), PPSD aims to affect schools' provision and environment and not necessarily the levels of poverty or deprivation of pupils. As such, focus is given to the more manageable negative expressions of poverty within the school day, from hunger through tiredness and illness to stigma and mental health.

For students with a background of poverty, being defined by what they lack has a detrimental effect on their attainment(2). This is partly due to lower expectations in the first place, which is within the scope of change for schools(3,4). To add to that, parents of those children report feeling stigmatised by the school when trying to engage with their children's education, which lowers those children's chances of succeeding(5).

As schools provide food, sometimes at various points throughout the school day, it is worth highlighting the strong link between poverty, hunger, and lower attainment(6). Hunger suppresses higher-order cognitive abilities(7) and, more generally, could be a barrier to participation in learning processes(8). Whilst there are limitations to schools' ability to solve problems revolving around hunger, managing the food environment and existing resources could lead to better uptake when children are eligible for free school meals or temporarily alleviate hunger in some cases.

Studies that explored these potential links have found that attainment at secondary level in England was significantly associated with increases in school lunch uptake, while the primary sector results were less consistent(9).

01. Aim

To explore the association between PPSD and changes in educational Key Stage 2 attainment data between 2017 and 2019, comparing attainment data of the schools that engaged with PPSD and those that did not.

02. Aim

To look at the relationship between PPSD and attainment outcomes for the schools with higher FSM rates by analysing attainment data before and after the PPSD roll-out.

METHODS

Data for the years 2015 and 2023 obtained from Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) for Year 6 students in Key Stage 2 (KS2), specifically for expected Reading Writing Maths standards (RWM), targeting primary schools that engaged with PPSD or not.

- 1 school (#35) underwent PPSD in 16/17 and was excluded due to small sample size.
- Only the first instance of engagement with PPSD was analysed.
- Average expected RWM were calculated for each group (2017/18, 2018/19, and no PPSD) using pivot tables and plotted with published national averages on graphs.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

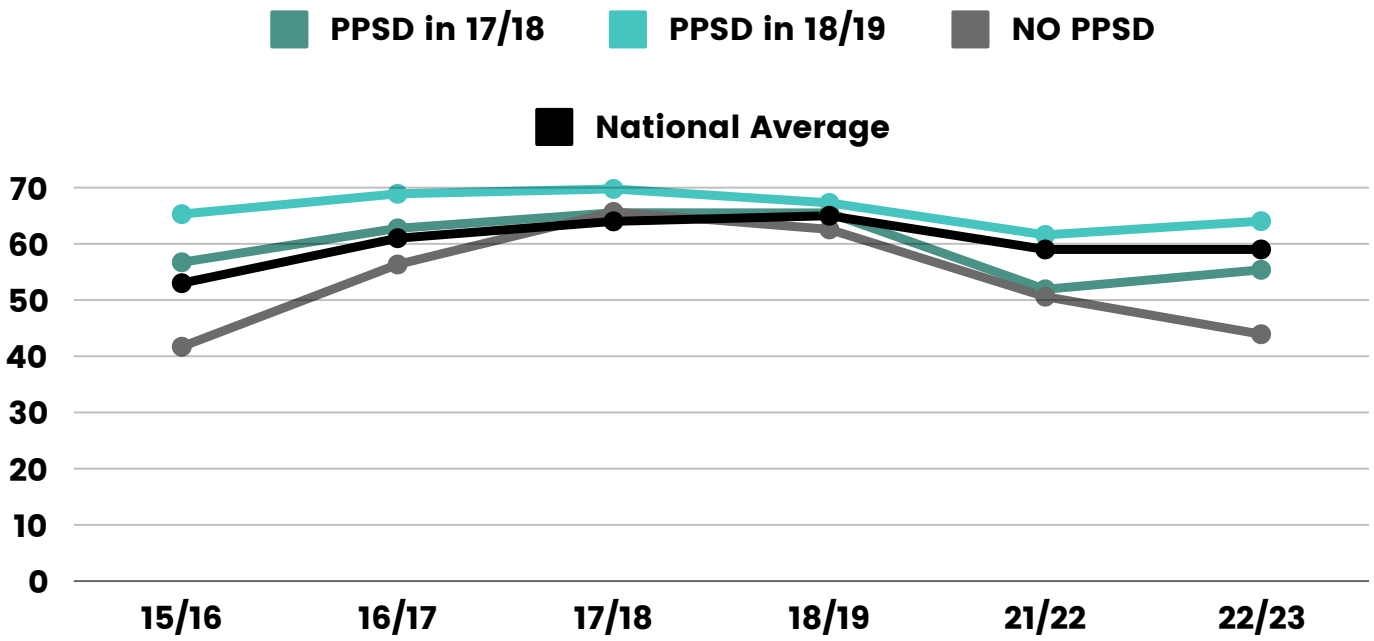
Of the 46 primary schools in Brighton & Hove, 25 were identified with one PPSD between 2015/16 and 2022/23 and 6 were identified with no PPSD (see Table 1). All PPSD included were in 2017/18 or 2018/19.

Characteristics	PPSD 2017-2018	PPSD 2018-2019	No PPSD	Average pupils taking KS2 (range)
All Schools	14	10	6	
Lover then national average FSM	5	7	1	
Higher than national Average FSM	9	3	5	
Large schools	2	3	2	79 (30-128)
Medium Schools	5	5	3	43 (18-91)
Small schools	7	2	1	29 (16-24)

Table 1: Number of primary schools in each category

RESULTS

On average, schools that engaged with PPSD outperformed the National Average, while those that did not, saw lower expected RWM (see Graph 1). However, increases were not seen in the year following PPSD in either group. Data showed a top average score of 65.53% during the intervention year, followed by a minor decrease of 0.03% the following year. All included RWM scores dropped between 2018/19 and 2021/22, with schools that did not engage with PPSD dropping to the lowest average, followed by schools that engaged in 2017/18.
In 2022/23, the expected RWM increased for both groups that engaged with PPSD. The National Average remained the same, and schools that did not engage with PPSD saw a decrease (see Figure 1).



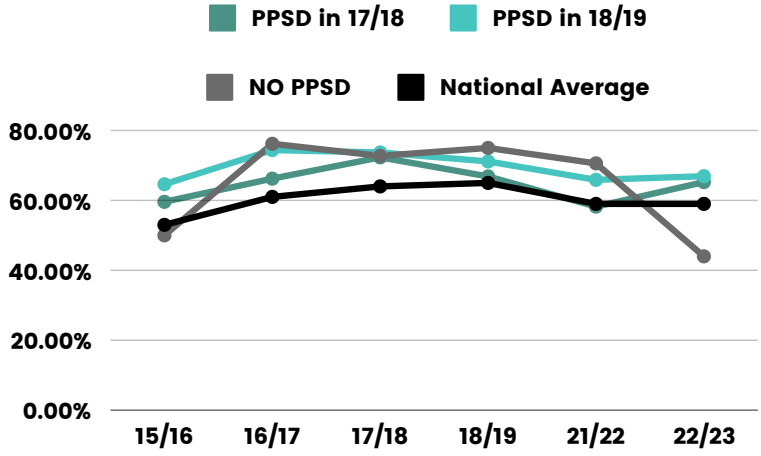
Graph 1: Key stage 2 average expected RWM score (%) of selected schools and national average between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023

Expected reading, writing & maths standards increased for schools that engaged with PPSD

Free school meals

Schools with lower than national average FSM generally outperformed the National Average (see Graph 2). Engagement with PPSD did not result in an increase in attainment in the following year. Only 1 school in this group did not engage with PPSD and was performing better than all other groups, but scores decreased from 2018/19 to 2022/23, while those that engaged with PPSD saw an increase from 2021/22 to 2022/23 when the National Average remained the same (see Graph 2).

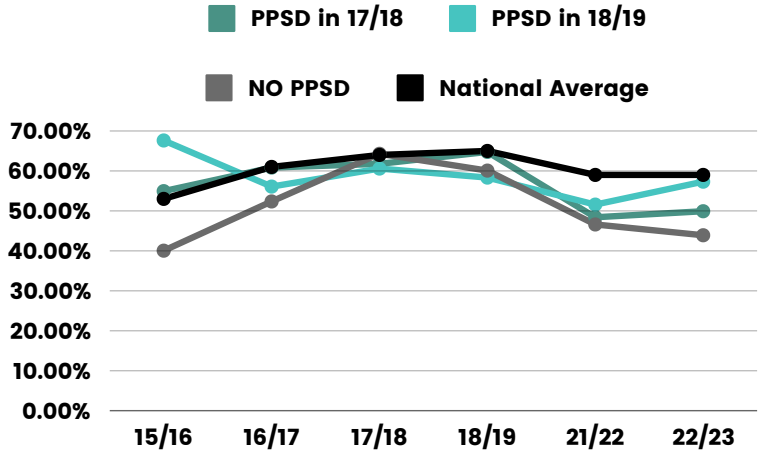
Graph 2: KS 2 Average expected RWM score (%) for selected primary schools with Lower than average FSM between 2015/16-2022/23



Schools with lower FSM % already outperform the national average

Schools with higher than average FSM % under perform compared to national average

For schools with higher than the national average FSM expected RWM was lower than the National Average. PPSD 2017/18 saw a 1.29% increase in scores during the intervention year, followed by a 2.98% increase the following year. PPSD 2018/19 saw a 2.26% decrease during the intervention year and decreased again in the following year along with all other groups. Schools that engaged with PPSD saw an increase in expected RWM scores in 2022/23, where the National Average remained the same. Schools that did not engage with PPSD saw expected RWM continue to decrease (Figure 3).

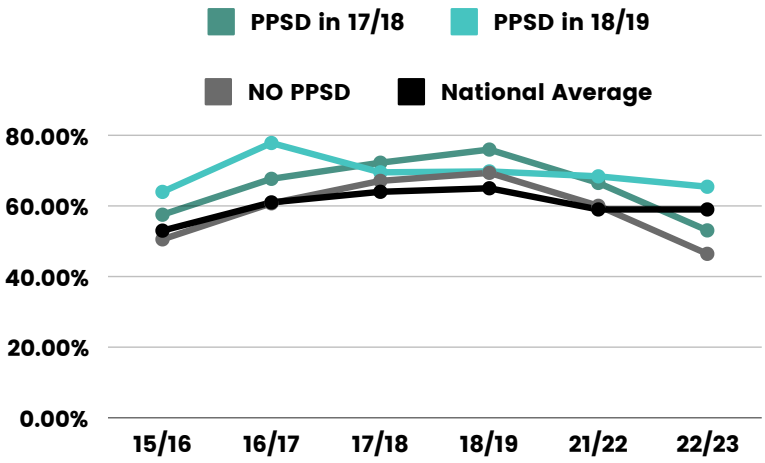


Graph 3: KS 2 Average expected RWM score (%) for selected primary schools with higher than average FSM between 2015/16-2022/23

School size

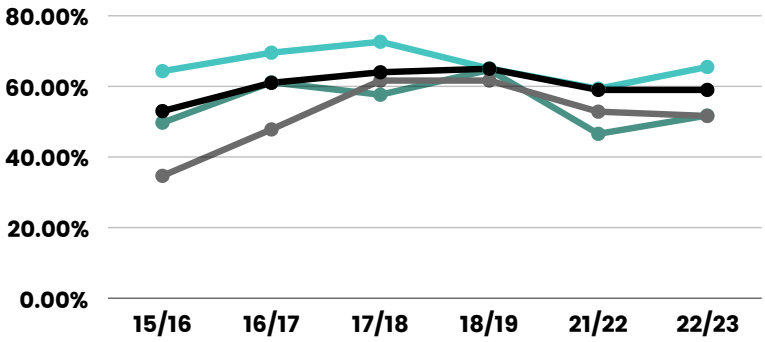
On average, large schools had higher expected RWM than the National Average. Schools that engaged with PPSD had higher scores than those that did not.

The National Average increased from 2021/22 to 2022/23 but all larger schools saw a decrease. Schools that engaged with PPSD did not decrease as much as schools that did not engage with PPSD.



Graph 3: KS 2 Average expected RWM score (%) for selected large primary schools between 2015/16-2022/23

Of the medium schools, only PPSD 2018/19 was generally higher than the National Average but decreased following PPSD in 2021/22 along with all other groups. PPSD 2017/18 did increase following intervention (see Figure 5).

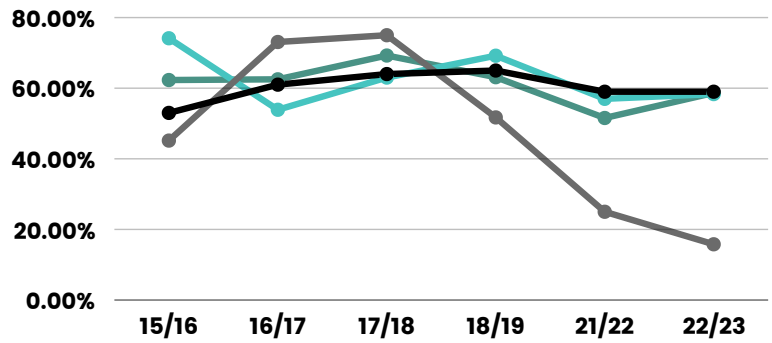


Graph 3: KS 2 Average expected RWM score (%) for selected medium primary schools between 2015/16-2022/23

Both PPSD intervention groups increased in 2022/23, where schools with no engagement with PPSD (which were consistently lower than the National Average) saw an additional decrease (see Figure 5).

Small schools that engaged with PPSD in 2017/18 and 2018/19 decreased following PPSD, but on average performed better than the National Average (see Figure 6).

Only 1 small school did not engage with PPSD, and that school saw a large and continued decrease in expected RWM from 2017/18 to 2022/23. Both PPSD intervention groups increased in 2022/23 (Figure 6).



Graph 3: KS 2 Average expected RWM score (%) for selected small primary schools between 2015/16-2022/23

KEY FINDINGS

This evaluation paints a complex picture of uncertain associations between PPSD and attainment.

The data analysis reveals some discernible but not consistent trends in attainment outcomes across various metrics, which suggests that while the program may offer benefits, these do not uniformly translate to changes in pupils' attainment.

It is possible that the effects of poverty-proofing are more nuanced and may manifest in areas not directly measured by traditional attainment metrics.

Wide variations in data in school groups and conflicting findings might be indicative of external variables not accounted for in this study, which might be influencing the outcomes.

RECCOMMENDATIONS

While PPSD has not shown a uniform, reliably measured association with variation in attainment in Brighton and Hove, it should not be dismissed as ineffective.

Further research that takes into consideration the multifactorial nature of attainment outcomes is needed to explore the potential benefits of PPSD beyond academic metrics and to understand how it can be integrated into a comprehensive and equitable approach.

DISCUSSION

Our findings are in line with the literature reviewed. They highlight the complex and multidimensional aspects of attainment. The literature reviewed also emphasises a negative association between deprivation and educational attainment. This is consistent with findings from research that analysed the attainment gap as a difference in average educational outcomes between children living in relative poverty and their peers. Disadvantaged pupils are 18.1 months of learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs, with a wide variation across regions, subjects and ethnic groups (idem).

This aligns with our findings, suggesting that while initiatives like PPSD can play a part in supporting student attainment, education is a complex process and a single intervention would often be hard to link to measurable effects.

BULLYING

The links between bullying and poverty are well-evidenced:

- A high-level review found a positive association between being a victim of bullying and low socioeconomic status (SES), indicating that low SES students had 40% higher odds of experiencing bullying (1).
- Another review of 16 studies found that socioeconomic status, as well as wider determinants linked to poverty such as education and occupation of parents, were associated with a higher likelihood of bullying victimisation (2).
- A study of 57 primary schools in the UK found that both bully-perpetrator and bully-victim behaviours were higher in more disadvantaged schools (3).

Evidence suggests that the way that interventions support students in financial hardship can impact their effect. A review of 16 studies found that interventions can increase stigma and exclusion: for instance, some systems make it easy for students to identify peers who receive free school meals (4).

The current political and social landscape has had wide-reaching impacts on both levels of child poverty in the UK and on the prevalence of bullying. Changes in the economy resulted in a temporary increase in FSM pupils. As the length of poverty (persistent poverty) is correlated with the segregation of students in financial hardship, an increase in FSM-eligible students can appear to result in a decline in the segregation of students in financial hardship (6).

In the context of the cost-of-living crisis, we should be mindful of how an increase in pupils eligible for FSM can affect the data. In 2023/24, nearly a quarter of pupils were known to be eligible for FSM. This is a significant increase since 2016/17 (14%) (5), which is the baseline of our study.

Another factor which may affect levels of bullying is the pandemic and lockdowns. A systematic review found that the pooled prevalence of cyberbully victimisation and perpetration was lower than pre-pandemic (7).

In this evaluation, we have compared data from the biannual Safe and Well School Survey (SAWSS) between 2016 and 2023 across schools in three groups: (a) not engaged with PPSD, (b) engaged once, and (c) engaged twice.

01. Aim

To understand the association between engagement with PPSD and the prevalence of reported bullying in primary schools.

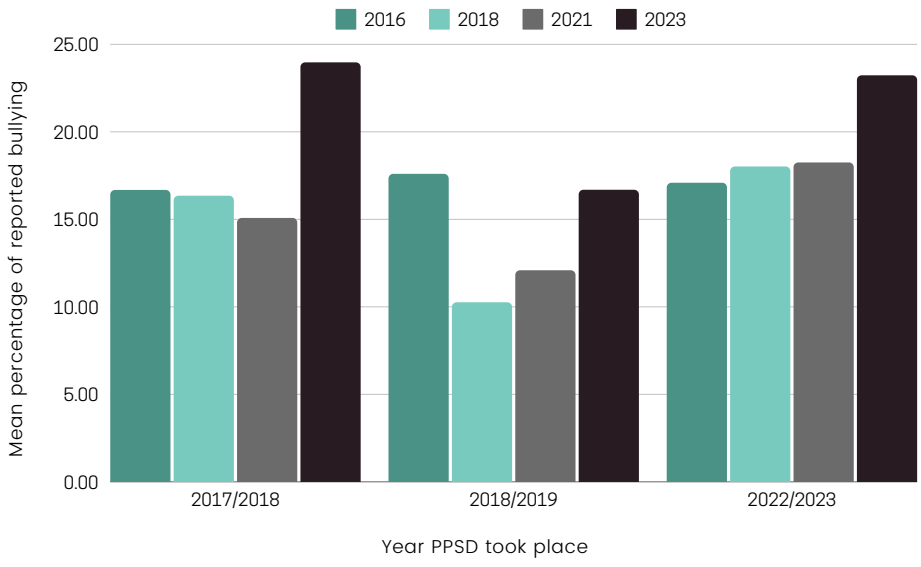
METHODS

The following data is from the Safe and Well School Survey, particularly the bullying section (based on the question "Have you been bullied this term?").
We have included primary schools that went through the process twice, with 2016 serving as the pre-intervention year, and 2018 as the post-intervention year for schools that engaged with PPSD during 2017. For the second round of engagement in 2022, 2021 served as the pre-intervention year and 2023 as the post-intervention year.

RESULTS

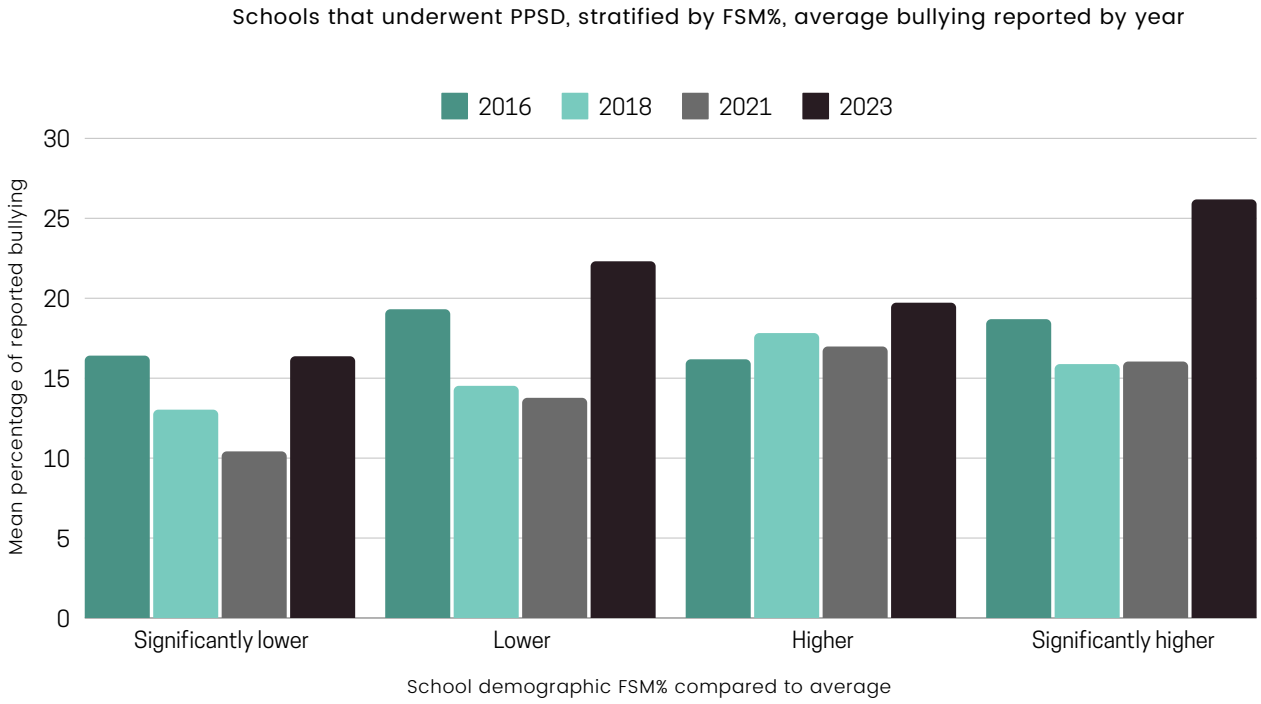
- The schools that engaged with the first round of PPSD showed a steady decline in reported rates of bullying until 2023, then there was a sudden rise.
- The second round of PPSD in 2022/23 could not be associated with any positive improvements in reported bullying as there was a significant spike in reported bullying in 2023.

Reported bullying for those who went through PPSD by years the intervention took place



Reported bullying in schools that have significantly higher rates of free school meals, indicating more poverty, decreased in the short run following engagement with PPSD. However, the rate then rose quickly in 2021 and 2023 data – this could be because the number of students accessing FSM has increased due to the cost-of-living crisis.

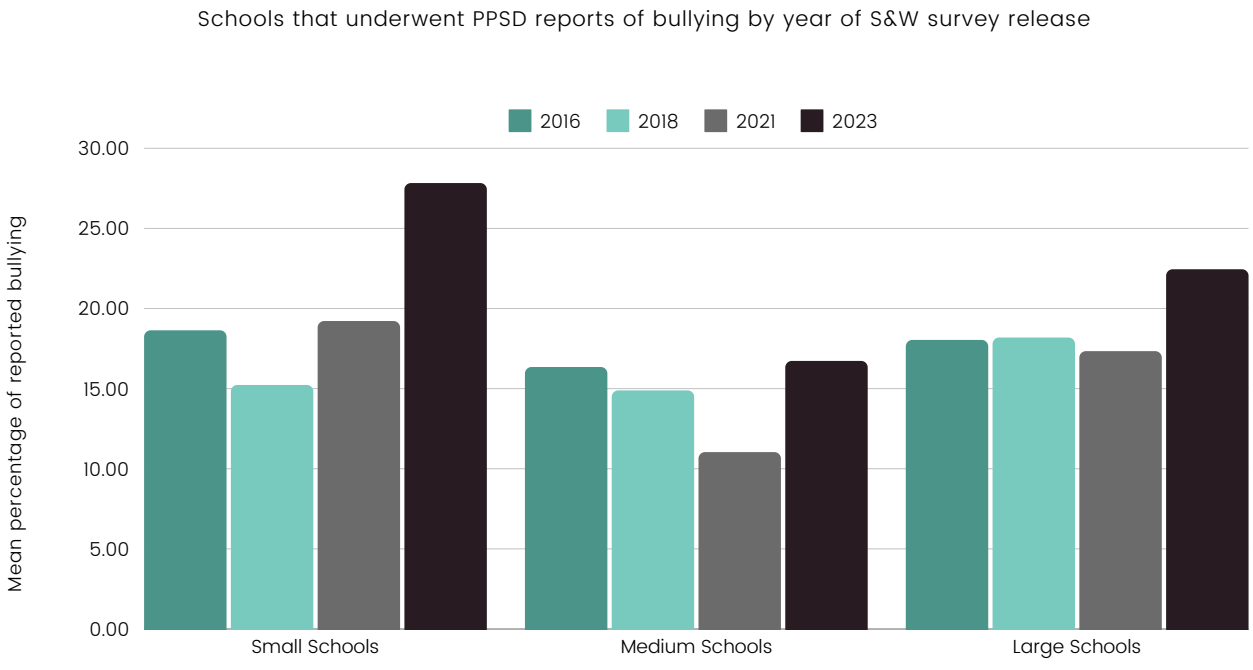
In all schools in 2023, the number of students reporting bullying increased. It is difficult, without using qualitative research, to know what might have caused the rise.
It is interesting to note that the small number of schools that did not engage with PPSD were all schools with higher-than-average FSMs. Also, in these schools, the rates of bullying went down. This poses an interesting question of whether the contributing factor is indeed the time since PPSD rather than other measures taken.



The reports of bullying are higher in 2023 across socioeconomic groups

Higher rates of bullying in 2023 are also consistent across school size

- Medium-sized schools showed the most improvement following PPSD engagement in both the long and short term.
- In large schools, rates of reported bullying rose following initial engagement with PPSD but declined a few years later before ultimately rising again. It is hard to know whether this was impacted by factors such as online teaching and cost of living.
- In small schools, PPSD had very little impact on rates of reported bullying, with reported bullying declining slightly initially before rising again.
- When compared to schools that did not engage with PPSD, medium-size schools had lower rates of reported bullying; however, in large schools, following the engagement with PPSD there was an increase in the rate of reported bullying compared to schools that did not engage with it.



KEY FINDINGS

The data shows that PPSD could be associated with some positive changes in reported bullying, but only under specific circumstances and not for all schools.

RECCOMMENDATIONS

It would be practical to look at the results of the Safe and Well at School Survey in 2025 to see whether there is a long-term effect from the 2023 poverty-proofing initiative and compare to the long-term effect of the 2018 initiative to identify the extent to which the measures were affected by the pandemic.

It would be interesting to use the results from the Safe and Well at School Survey alongside qualitative research on the causes of bullying to pinpoint whether bullying is also changing to assess how poverty-proofing measures need to be adapted.

EXCLUSIONS & LIMITATIONS

Attendance

Exclusions
All schools with nationally available data on attendance parameters were initially included in analysis (all of Brighton and Hove City Council's schools).
Two primary schools were excluded because one had no absence or attendance data available (#29), and one was formed of two schools that merged midway through the assessment period (#41).
After initial descriptive analysis, it was identified that only one secondary school was present in the "no intervention" group, and it had a below-average percentage of students entitled to FSM and a below-average percentage of BAME students registered. Therefore, a decision was made to focus only on primary schools.

Limitations
The "intervention" and "no-intervention" schools were not matched for baseline characteristics such as proportion of BAME and FSM-eligible pupils, and so the results of the evaluation may still be impacted by the effect of these.
The COVID-19 pandemic was likely to have a significant impact on absence rates across all schools nationally. For example, rates of persistent absences in FSM-eligible pupils increased from 23.8% to 33.6% (7).

Attainment

Limitations
Local Context: our evaluation is confined to Brighton and Hove, limiting generalisability. The region's unique characteristics may have influenced outcomes.
Fluctuating Metrics: changes in FSM eligibility and school size between 2017 and 2023 introduce potential confounders. These fluctuations may impact attainment independently of the intervention.
Non-Participation and Deprivation: schools not participating in PPSD have a higher FSM eligibility; apart from the programme not reaching all those that could benefit from it, their inclusion might have better informed effects on attainment from the group of school that was studied.
Year-Specific Effects and COVID-19: greater RWM improvements in the 2017/2018 PPSD group suggest efficacy during that year. However, the 2018/2019 measurement was impacted by COVID-19, complicating comparisons.

Bullying

Exclusions
Primary schools that engaged with PPSD twice and have a full dataset were included –
Any school with missing data and any school without school-level data was excluded.
Secondary schools were not part of our analysis - there were not enough schools and the layout of the findings might have been quite different.
Schools that were combined with other schools (#41)
Schools that did not have safe and well school survey (#57, #123)
School number 24, as it only has 2016 data.

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