4.12 Compensatory Education Policies and Closing the Achievement Gap: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for the questions worth 4 marks or more. Allow about 30 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Explain one method a sociologist could use to evaluate whether the Pupil Premium has narrowed the class achievement gap, and give one advantage of that method.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Give one example of a short term outcome and one example of a long term outcome that policymakers expect from compensatory education policies aimed at closing the class achievement gap.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that compensatory education policies have narrowed the class achievement gap in the UK since 1997. Refer to at least two named policies in your answer.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

4 Identify and explain one main aim of the Sure Start programme as a compensatory education policy in the UK.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Describe one feature of Education Action Zones as a compensatory policy in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

6 Item A: A study of 200 primary schools reports that after receiving Pupil Premium funding for two years, 60 schools showed a rise in the percentage of disadvantaged pupils reaching expected standards by an average of 8 percentage points, while 140 schools showed no change. Using Item A and your own knowledge, suggest one reason why the Pupil Premium might appear to help attainment in some schools but not others.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.12 Compensatory Education Policies and Closing the Achievement Gap: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a method, e.g. longitudinal analysis of attainment data for disadvantaged and non disadvantaged pupils before and after Pupil Premium introduction	**B1**
gives an advantage, e.g. allows measurement of change over time and attribution of trends to the policy if other factors are controlled	**B1**

Answer: One method is longitudinal analysis of attainment data for disadvantaged and non disadvantaged pupils before and after Pupil Premium introduction; an advantage is it allows measurement of change over time and helps attribute trends to the policy if other factors are controlled.

Question 2

identifies a short term outcome, e.g. improved test scores or better school attendance	**B1**
identifies a long term outcome, e.g. higher rates of qualifications or improved employment prospects for disadvantaged pupils	**B1**

Answer: A short term outcome is improved test scores or better school attendance; a long term outcome is higher rates of qualifications and improved employment prospects for disadvantaged pupils.

Question 3

Level 1 Basic statements about compensatory policies with limited or no use of sociological ideas or examples. Little or no judgement on overall effectiveness.	**1-3**
Level 2 Clear description of one or two compensatory policies and some sociological reasons for their impact. Limited evaluation with some balance, but conclusions are simple or unsupported.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good explanation of how compensatory policies like Sure Start, EMA and the Pupil Premium can reduce barriers to attainment, and recognition of evidence showing mixed results. Some balanced evaluation using sociological concepts such as structural inequality and policy implementation differences.	**7-9**
Level 4 Detailed, balanced discussion using multiple sociological perspectives and evidence. Shows how policies have produced local successes but limited national narrowing of the class gap, explains reasons such as structural poverty, variable implementation, and the dark figure of need, and reaches a supported conclusion on how far sociologists would agree.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Descriptions of named policies: Sure Start (early years support), Education Action Zones (area based funding), EMA (payments to encourage post 16 participation), Pupil Premium (per pupil funding).
- Evidence of positive impacts: targeted tutoring raising attainment in some schools, Sure Start improvements in early language in some evaluations, higher post 16 retention where EMA operated, some schools reporting improved disadvantaged pupil outcomes with Pupil Premium.
- Evidence of limited or mixed impact: national data showing persistent class gaps in GCSE and A level outcomes despite policy waves; evaluations noting many schools showed little change; variable take up and variable quality of provision.
- Sociological reasons for limited impact: structural causes such as poverty, housing and health that education policy alone cannot solve; cultural factors and parental resources; stigma and low take up limiting reach.
- Policy implementation issues: variation between schools and local areas, short term funding cycles, targets focusing on measurable outcomes leading to narrow interventions, and accountability pressures distorting use of funds.
- Different sociological perspectives: functionalist view might argue targeted support increases meritocratic opportunity; Marxist or conflict perspectives would argue policies are limited because they do not challenge broader class structures and reproduce inequality; feminist perspectives might note gendered effects and the need for family support; interactionist points on how teacher expectations and labelling affect disadvantaged pupils.
- Methodological points: difficulty attributing causation, need for longitudinal studies, issues of selection bias and the dark figure of unmet need, and differences between quantitative attainment data and qualitative improvements in wellbeing.
- Reasoned conclusion weighing evidence and perspectives, for example agreeing that compensatory policies have produced important local improvements but that many sociologists would argue they have not, on balance, eliminated the class achievement gap nationally.

Question 4

identifies a correct aim, e.g. to improve early childhood development and school readiness for children from disadvantaged families	**B1**
explains how this works, e.g. by offering childcare, parenting support and health services to boost language and social skills before school	**B1**
identifies a linked outcome, e.g. raising attainment at entry to school and reducing early gaps	**B1**
development, e.g. this early intervention is intended to reduce longer term class-based attainment differences	**B1**

Answer: Sure Start aimed to improve early childhood development and school readiness for disadvantaged children by offering childcare, parenting support and health services to boost language and social skills before school, so reducing early attainment gaps that feed class differences later.

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Question 5

identifies a correct feature, e.g. targeted extra funding for schools in a specific deprived area **B1**

development, e.g. the funding could be used for specialist staff, after school programmes or community links **B1**

further development, e.g. zones aimed to coordinate local services to tackle educational disadvantage holistically **B1**

Answer: Education Action Zones provided targeted extra funding for schools in specific deprived areas, used for specialist staff, after school programmes and stronger community links, aiming to coordinate local services to tackle disadvantage holistically.

Question 6

identifies a plausible reason drawn from Item A, e.g. variation in how schools use the funding **B1**

develops with reference to policy, e.g. some schools may use Pupil Premium for targeted tutoring while others spend it on general resources **B1**

links to outcome, e.g. targeted use is more likely to raise measurable attainment, explaining the difference between the 60 and 140 schools **B1**

further development or alternative reason, e.g. baseline differences or pupil intake make some schools harder to shift in short timescales **B1**

Answer: One reason is variation in how schools use the Pupil Premium: some schools use it for targeted tutoring and small group interventions that raise measurable attainment, while others spend it on broader resources with less immediate impact. Baseline differences in intake or greater levels of disadvantage may also make some schools harder to improve quickly, explaining the mixed results in Item A.

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