



GSOC.ED12 Compensatory Education Policies and Closing the Achievement Gap

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for the questions worth 4 marks or more. Allow about 60 minutes for the whole pack.

- 1** Which UK compensatory education policy provided extra funding directly to schools to help disadvantaged pupils catch up from 2011 onwards?

- ☐ A) Sure Start
- ☐ B) Education Action Zones
- ☐ C) Education Maintenance Allowance
- ☐ D) Pupil Premium

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'compensatory education policy' as used in UK education debates about class and attainment.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** Identify and explain one way the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was intended to reduce class differences in post 16 attainment in the UK.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

- 6** Explain two ways the Pupil Premium funding is meant to be used by schools to support disadvantaged pupils.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

- 7** 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 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** Identify one criticism of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) based on its likely effect on social inequality in post 16 participation.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** Identify and explain two reasons why Sure Start centres might not fully close the early attainment gap between children from different social class backgrounds.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** State one stated aim of Education Action Zones when they were introduced to support underperforming schools in deprived areas.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Explain one strength of the Pupil Premium as a targeted compensatory policy for reducing the class achievement gap.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Explain one limitation of Sure Start centres in improving long term educational attainment for children from poor families.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Explain two sociological reasons why compensatory education policies might fail to narrow the class achievement gap overall.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** 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 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Compare one similarity between the Pupil Premium and Education Action Zones in how they aim to reduce class differences in school attainment.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** 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 16 is 2 marks)

- 17** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that compensatory education policies have narrowed the class achievement gap in the UK since 1997. In your answer, refer to at least two policies such as Sure Start, Education Action Zones, EMA and the Pupil Premium.

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 17 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ED12 Compensatory Education Policies and Closing the Achievement Gap

Question 1

- **B1** D (Pupil Premium)
- **Answer: D**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that compensatory education policies aim to reduce educational disadvantage linked to social class or poverty
- **B1** development, e.g. they provide extra resources, support or services to help lower attainment pupils catch up with peers
- **Answer: Compensatory education policies aim to reduce educational disadvantage linked to social class or poverty by providing extra resources, support or services to help lower attainment pupils catch up with peers.**

Question 3

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies a correct mechanism, e.g. EMA provided regular payments to low income students staying in post 16 education
- **B1** explains how this reduces barriers, e.g. payments helped cover travel, books or lost earnings, making staying in education more affordable
- **B1** identifies a linked effect, e.g. increasing retention in further education among working class students
- **B1** development, e.g. higher retention should increase attainment and reduce long term class gaps in qualifications and opportunities
- **Answer: EMA provided regular payments to low income students staying in post 16 education to help cover travel, books or lost earnings, making it more affordable to remain in education, increasing retention among working class students and helping reduce class differences in qualifications.**

Question 5

- **B1** 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
- **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

- **B1** identifies one use, e.g. one to fund targeted tutoring or small group teaching for disadvantaged pupils
- **B1** explains how this can raise attainment, e.g. more individual support can improve literacy and numeracy and boost exam performance
- **B1** identifies a second use, e.g. to provide materials, school trips or subsidised extracurricular activities to remove participation barriers
- **B1** explains why this helps, e.g. removing financial barriers increases engagement and gives disadvantaged pupils wider learning experiences
- **Answer: Pupil Premium can fund targeted tutoring or small group teaching to improve literacy and numeracy and boost exam performance, and can pay for materials, trips or extracurriculars to remove financial barriers and increase engagement and learning opportunities for disadvantaged pupils.**

Question 7

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a valid criticism, e.g. EMA payments may not be large enough to remove all barriers for the poorest students
- **B1** brief development, e.g. students still face childcare, travel or living costs that limit true equality of participation
- **Answer: One criticism is EMA payments may not have been large enough to remove all barriers for the poorest students; they could still face childcare, travel or living costs that limit equal participation in post 16 education.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. limited reach so not all disadvantaged families access services
- **B1** explains how this limits impact, e.g. non participants remain unsupported so overall class gaps persist
- **B1** identifies second reason, e.g. wider structural factors such as poverty and housing continue to affect development
- **B1** explains link, e.g. services cannot fully compensate for material deprivation that harms schooling readiness
- **Answer: Sure Start may not close the gap because not all disadvantaged families access its services, leaving some children unsupported, and because wider structural factors like poverty and poor housing continue to affect early development in ways services cannot fully offset.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a correct aim, e.g. to raise pupil attainment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- **B1** brief development, e.g. by encouraging partnerships between schools, businesses and community organisations
- **Answer: An aim was to raise pupil attainment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, for example by encouraging partnerships between schools, businesses and community organisations to bring extra resources and expertise.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies a strength, e.g. it directs funding to individual disadvantaged pupils rather than just whole schools
- **B1** development, e.g. this allows schools to target support where it is most needed and be held accountable for its use
- **Answer: A strength is that Pupil Premium directs funding to disadvantaged pupils rather than general budgets, allowing schools to target support where needed and be held accountable for how the money is spent to improve outcomes.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies a limitation, e.g. short term or variable quality of services across areas
- **B1** development, e.g. inconsistent provision means some centres have little lasting effect on school attainment
- **Answer: One limitation is the short term or variable quality of Sure Start services across areas; inconsistent provision means some centres may have little lasting effect on children's later school attainment.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. structural factors such as poverty, housing and health cannot be fully solved by education policy alone
- **B1** explains how this limits impact, e.g. children from very poor homes face ongoing disadvantages that reduce schooling effectiveness
- **B1** identifies second reason, e.g. policies can be subject to stigma or low take up if they are poorly promoted or carry stigma
- **B1** explains link, e.g. low take up reduces coverage and leaves many disadvantaged pupils outside the support
- **Answer: They may fail because structural factors like poverty, poor housing and health are not solved by education policy alone, so children continue to face barriers; and because stigma, poor promotion or complexity can reduce take up of services, meaning many disadvantaged pupils do not benefit.**

Question 14

- **B1** 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
- **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 15

- **B1** identifies a similarity, e.g. both provide extra resources targeted at disadvantaged pupils or disadvantaged areas
- **B1** explains the similarity, e.g. extra funding is intended to allow additional teaching or support that raises attainment
- **B1** identifies a second linked point, e.g. both aim to reduce barriers to participation and engagement in learning
- **B1** development, e.g. both rely on local implementation choices which affect their success
- **Answer: Both Pupil Premium and Education Action Zones provide extra resources targeted at disadvantage so schools can offer additional teaching or support to raise attainment, and both aim to reduce barriers to participation and engagement, with success depending on local implementation choices.**

Question 16

- **B1** 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
- **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 17

- **Level 1** (1-3): Basic statements about compensatory policies with limited or no use of sociological ideas or examples. Little or no judgement on overall effectiveness.
- **Level 2** (4-6): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **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.