

Pupil premium strategy statement – Mercia School

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium (and recovery premium for the 2023 to 2024 academic year) funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils. It was last updated in October 2025.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding this year, within a 3-year strategy. The report considers the effect of last year's spending on our Pupil Premium pupils and the wider school.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Mercia School
Number of pupils in school	920
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	206 – 22.4%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3 year plans are recommended)	2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26
Date this statement was published	December 2023
Date on which it will be reviewed	October 2026
Statement authorised by	Joshua G Fisher – Headteacher
Pupil premium lead	Joshua G. Fisher
Governor Lead	Jackie Arundale

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£221,450
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year	£221,450

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

We spend the pupil premium as a part of our whole-school teaching and learning strategy. The school draws on research evidence and exemplary spending plans of other high performing schools to allocate funding to activities that are most likely to maximise achievement. We never confuse eligibility for the Pupil Premium with low prior attainment, and focus on supporting our disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest levels. We consider effective use of Pupil Premium, as published by the EEF (found here:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Pupil_Premium_Guidance_iPDF.pdf)

Our Pupil Premium spend is divided into the following three priority areas, which is in line with advice and guidance from the DfE (found here:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Pupil_Premium_Guidance.pdf

1. Excellent teaching

At Mercia School, we believe knowledge is power. Our school motto 'Let us be united by knowledge' means that the school is committed to ensuring all pupils leave school with powerful knowledge and understanding that they can use to build meaningful, successful lives. We understand the importance of ensuring that all teaching meets the needs of each learner, rather than relying on interventions to compensate. We spend our funds on our exceptional 'core offer' which ensures 'bolt-ons' are not required.

We develop teacher talent by investing in practice and coaching. We practice key techniques every week to ensure consistency in quality of teaching. The best way to ensure pupils make progress is to harness the power of feedback. Each day has feedback time built into it where the class teacher works with pupils either one-to-one or as a whole group with the aim that no pupil goes home with a misconception. There are assessment points every eleven weeks, followed by two weeks of re-teaching and curriculum innovation. After school intervention and self-study provides further opportunity for pupils to make excellent progress. Vocabulary and language-modelling is central to every single lesson. In short, improving the quality of teaching will raise outcomes for all, but it will be disproportionately beneficial to disadvantaged pupils.

2. Highly tailored interventions and more lesson time

We find out where the basic knowledge and skills gaps exist among eligible pupils as soon as they arrive in Year 7 and deploy our best teachers to help close these gaps. SATs data and internal assessment help us to identify the pupils most in need of support. To help accelerate pupil progress, pupils receive five 30-minute reading sessions mid-morning, two one-hour self-study periods and five 30-minute Mastery Time sessions focused on reading, Religious Education, British Values and meaningful reflection. A small number of pupils will also be expected to attend further intervention as suggested by the SENCO and English/Mathematics Curriculum Leaders. This is known as Accelerated Learning.

Accelerated Learning is focused on pupils in Year 7-9, with high-quality tutoring for pupils in Y10-13. These sessions prove invaluable and have led to exceptional

performance previously – our goal is to maintain exceptional performance over the course of the next 3-year cycle, ending in August 2026.

In addition to our academic intervention, we also support families eligible for funding through a range of other ‘soft intervention’ strategies. For example, we work hard to make sure a large stock of uniform is available to families who may require support. We employ a sizeable administration team who prioritise attendance of all pupils, including PP. Each pupil receives a free breakfast and discounted revision guides in the upper school.

We make sure that all pupils receive an exceptional core offer. We only add additional intervention if it is clearly identified, time-limited and if impact is quantifiable. These fundamental principles have served the school very well thus far and we will seek to continue to deliver for all pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. Minimizing barriers to achievement through enrichment/activities

We have thought carefully about what barriers to learning our pupils are likely to be experiencing, and how to remove or, at least, minimise them. For example, we have employed an English specialist intervention lead and a pupil support administration team to provide well-targeted support to improve attendance, behaviour, academics, and links with families where these are barriers to a pupil’s learning. We ensure all pupils take part in a wide-range of opportunities, regardless of socio-economic background.

Challenges

This details the key challenges to achievement that we have identified among our disadvantaged pupils.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Cohorts with lower prior attainment is a challenge. The academic profile of the lower school is lower than the preceding year groups. The academic profile of our Year 10 cohort (2027 leavers) and the Year 11 cohort (2026 leavers), notably amongst the disadvantaged cohort, is lower than previous years. Additional support will be required to help both cohorts recover. To support identification of need, the school conducts Progress Tests supplied by GL assessment. For our Year 11 cohort (2026 Leavers), for example, the SAS in English for PP 97, whereas the non-PP score was 104. For 2027 Leavers SATs standard score is 104, lower than all previous year groups. The 2028 leavers have a SATs standard score of 103. Both are lower ability cohorts.
2	Confidence and proficiency in reading is a challenge. Assessments, observations and discussion with pupils (via PASS surveys) show that disadvantaged pupils generally have lower levels of reading comprehension than peers. This impacts their progress in all subjects. When considering NGRT results and current progress being made, there is a notable PP/non-PP gap:

	<p>Year 9 (2028 Leavers): 70.3% have achieved a SAS of >100. 85.7% of the PP cohort are making at least expected progress.</p> <p>Year 10 (2027 Leavers): 86% of the cohort are making at least expected progress. 78.6% of the PP cohort are making at least expected progress. There is a sizeable gap here that we must continue to work on.</p> <p>Our Year 9 and Year 10 cohort are more vulnerable to academic challenges if their reading ages don't improve quickly. This is a top priority for all teachers, in all subjects.</p>
3	<p>Maintaining pupils' strong emotional and mental wellbeing is a priority. Our SEND team, alongside teachers and after discussions with pupils and families, have identified social and emotional issues for many pupils, such as anxiety and low self-esteem. These challenges can particularly affect disadvantaged pupils, including their attainment. We must continue to provide opportunity to inspire strong levels of self-worth and build confidence. We must continue to staff the support team effectively to ensure effective teaching, intervention, and wider opportunity.</p>
4	<p>Ensuring pupils attend school regularly is a challenge. As with other schools, it is essential we see all attendance data at Mercia that is well above the national data stated here. This will be an ongoing challenge. Attendance at Mercia (2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25) was well above national trends, but our PP attendance has been lower than non-PP (see below). It is essential to keep pushing in this area and not be complacent.</p> <p>National attendance data for 2024-25 states that state secondary attendance was 92.9% For pupils eligible for FSM, the figure was 89.4%, with non-FSM pupils at 94.6%. SEND E were attending 86.3% of the time, with SEND K attending 89.4%% of the time. Those with no SEND needs attended 94% of the time.</p>

Intended outcomes

This explains the outcomes we are aiming for **by the end of our current strategy plan**, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved. Our current strategy will end in 2026, with our fourth set of GCSE results and our first set of A Level results in 2025.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
Achieve exceptional attainment and progress scores among disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum at the end of KS4.	<p>By the end of our current plan in 2025-26, 100% of disadvantaged pupils will continue to be entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This was achieved in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25, and is the school's intended vision year-on-year.</p> <p>In August 2024/5/6, KS4 outcomes will demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils achieve very well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PP cohort Progress 8 score of at least +1 which is well above other pupils nationally (not applicable in 2024-25 and 2025-26). • A PP cohort average Attainment 8 score of at least 47, which would be well-ahead of 2019 national figures.

	<p>In 2025, A Level results for disadvantaged pupils will be equally strong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% A*-B in all subjects • Exceed the Sheffield average attainment grade for non-disadvantaged pupils in 2024 (B-). England's non-disadvantaged average attainment in 2024 was a C-.
Continue to improve reading comprehension among disadvantaged pupils across KS3 and KS4.	Reading comprehension tests demonstrate improved comprehension skills among disadvantaged pupils and a smaller disparity between the scores of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers. NGRT tests will be used to demonstrate. By the end of Year 9, 100% of pupils will be making at least expected progress in NGRT tests. This will help exam performance each year.
To sustain high-quality wellbeing for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.	<p>Sustained high levels of wellbeing will continue up to 2025-26 demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualitative data from student voice, student and parent surveys and teacher observations • 100% of pupils will continue to access enrichment opportunities at school. This is an annual target for all year groups and was met in 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25.
To sustain excellent attendance for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	<p>Sustained high attendance annually demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97%+ for all pupils • PP attendance will be at least higher than the national figure for non-PP in 2018-19 (95.7%) – this will remain the target until a higher cumulative national figure emerges.

Activity in this academic year

This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium (and recovery premium funding) **this academic year** to address the challenges listed above.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £170,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Purchase of standardised diagnostic assessments. The school has purchased GL assessment. This will be led by the Deputy Headteacher in charge of data.	We are a school without an external dataset. Standardised tests, such as PASS and GL progress assessments, can provide reliable insights into the specific strengths and weaknesses of each pupil to help ensure they receive	1, 2, 3

	the correct additional support through interventions or teacher instruction: EEF - Assessing and monitoring pupil progress	
Teaching and learning – ensuring regular observations of teaching by all staff, ensuring the needs of pupils are always met.	Ensuring an outstanding teacher offer, as noted by the definition of ‘exceptional’ quality of education in Ofsted EIF .	1, 2, 3
Enhancement of our staffing structure to ensure English and Mathematics departments have additional capacity to provide high-quality support for curriculum delivery and impact. The additional teachers will provide small group and individual support within English and Mathematics. Curriculum Leaders will ensure high-quality, subject-specific training in department time. This includes 2 new Maths and English teachers in 2024-25.	The EEF Teaching and learning toolkit makes clear that one to one tuition, and small group intervention has a high impact on pupil progress. Overstaffing also makes staff retention far more likely, which provides pupils with certainty. Indeed, more teachers results in more feedback for pupils. For example, a lower-ability class in mathematics will have potentially three teachers providing feedback and tailored support. EEF - Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF - One to one tuition	1, 2, 3
Weekly CPD relating to teaching and learning led by the Assistant Headteacher in charge of teaching/CPD. All staff receive direct instruction and time to rehearse fundamental routines/structures/mantras.	The EEF are very clear that high-quality teaching is of paramount importance for any pupil premium strategy. We use CPD strategically and react to issues as they emerge. This helps consistency of teaching, with excellent stability in curriculum implementation across departments. EEF - Guide to Pupil Premium	1, 2

Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £40,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>The Accelerated Learning Programme. Across Y7-9, pupils most in need of support are targeted for academic intervention which will be delivered by teaching staff. Self-study sessions and afternoon mastery sessions will be used as times in the day to deliver intervention.</p>	<p>Structured intervention relating to mathematics and reading are essential. We recognise that our pupils require additional support with reading proficiency, most notably reading comprehension. The EEF supports this.</p> <p>EEF - Reading comprehension</p> <p>Part of this strategy will also include oral language intervention, with advice taken from the SALT team. This will be both in and out of lessons. The EEF supports this:</p> <p>EEF – Oral language intervention</p> <p>Extensive mathematics intervention (TTRS, Numbots, Hegarty Maths and 1:1/Small group intervention) and improving maths teaching are crucial areas to work on. We will also extensively use (and purchase) Engelmann’s Direct Instruction. This is a priority area for the school and supported by the EEF:</p> <p>EEF - Mathematics</p>	1, 2, 3
<p>Tuition for GCSE and A Level pupils</p>	<p>Support and 1:1 tuition/small group as required. Additional staffing also ensures very small groups at KS5. For instance, small maths and science groups despite large cohorts. Good practice is exemplified by EEF Guide ‘Making a difference with effective tutoring’ 2022</p> <p>The EEF has published a document specific to science, but all Ofsted Subject Reviews support the notion of additional time for retrieval practice. Y11 sessions will focus on retrieval.</p> <p>EEF - Science</p>	

Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £11,450

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
A wellbeing fund is in place to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have support in accessing additional support.	Based on our experiences and those of similar schools to ours, we have identified a need to set a small amount of funding aside to respond quickly to needs that have not yet been identified or to issues of poverty/disadvantage	All

Total budgeted cost: £221,450

Part B: Review of outcomes in the previous academic year

Pupil premium strategy outcomes

This details the impact that our pupil premium activity had on pupils in the 2022-23 academic year.

Achievement and Progress:

Our last PP strategy (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23) stated the following academic goals for our PP pupils. These goals remain for the school's current strategy (2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26):

- A PP cohort Progress 8 score of **at least +1** which is well above other pupils nationally.
- A PP cohort average Attainment 8 score of **at least 47**, which would be well-ahead of 2019 national figures.
- 100% EBACC

We delivered on our ambition to enter 100% of pupils in to the EBACC suite of subjects, something we are very proud of. Our academic achievement was extremely pleasing in 2023-24, remarkably similar to those achieved in 2022-23. The above goals were met with strong results for disadvantaged pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was ranked 1st in England in 2022-23, the overall progress score for the school ranked 3rd nationally. There are some in school gaps, but our performance outstrips national benchmarks. Our 2023, 2024 and 2025 results were as follows:

GCSE Progress 8:

Progress 8	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Disadvantaged	+2.18	+2.12	N/A
Non-Disadvantaged	+2.23	+2.09	N/A
Non-Disadvantaged National	+0.17	TBC	N/A

GCSE Attainment 8:

Attainment 8	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Disadvantaged	63.5	63	59.72
Non-Disadvantaged	71	71.2	71.15
Non-Disadvantaged National	50.2	50.4	50.3

GCSE % Grade 5 English & Maths

Basics 5+	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Disadvantaged	68%	80.6%	63%
Non-Disadvantaged	95%	87.4%	89.7%
Non-Disadvantaged National	52%	53.7%	52.8%

GCSE % Grade 4 English & Maths

Basics 4+	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Disadvantaged	88%	93.5%	89%
Non-Disadvantaged	98.9%	95.4%	95.2%
Non-Disadvantaged National	65%	73.5%	72.7%

Behaviour:

The school had a consistently calm and focused environment throughout the last strategy period (2022-23 and 2023-24). Low level disruption was rare. There were an exceptionally small number of suspensions and no discernable pattern for PP/non-PP. PP pupils continue to thrive within our behaviour system – suspension rates and Permanent Exclusion rates are significantly lower than local and national trends. Our exceptionally low rates of suspension/exclusion were commended by Ofsted in 2023, we aim to continue this pattern in the years to come. During 2023-24 & 2024-25, the suspension and permanent exclusion rate remained extremely low.

Attendance:

In our last PP strategy, we set the following targets:

- All pupils will achieve 97% attendance
- PP attendance will at least be higher than non-PP attendance in 2019 (95.7%).

Overall, the school achieved reasonably strong attendance rates throughout 2022-23 & 2023-24. We note concern for PP attendance in 2024-25. Attendance remains a top priority for the school – we are committed to making sure that we do not become complacent and continue to drive attendance. Our attendance improved for PP pupils by 0.9% in 2023-24, which brought our PP attendance above the non-PP attendance of 2019 (95.7%), which was a pleasing increase from 2022-23. We are disappointed that our PP pupils have dipped to 94.5% in 2024-25. This has triggered an internal strategy with our new Director of Attendance, a new role for 2025-26.

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
Whole School	No of pupils	% attend	No. of pupils	% attend	No. of pupils	% attend
PP	197	95.1%	206	96%	245	94.5%
Non PP	610	97.2%	712	97.4%	672	96.8%

Pupil voice:

In December 2023, 2024 and 2025, we conducted a pupil voice exercise using GL's PASS surveys. The data for pupil premium and disadvantaged pupils showed strong engagement with the school and its curriculum. Pupils felt happy, had strong relationships with teachers and felt positive about learning. Pupils' voice and subsequent intervention (as required) remains a focus for the school.

Parent voice:

Even though we cannot survey PP parents/carers alone, parent survey data generally is relevant to assessing the impact of our PP spend. This data is from the 214 responses within our Ofsted Parent View survey in February 2023:

- 91% said their child is happy at school
- 100% said that their child felt safe at school
- 98% felt the school had high expectations for their child
- 93% of parents said they would recommend the school to another parent

Further in-house data collected in March 2024 suggests a positive picture remains. The data below summarises 253 responses from parents/carers:

- 91% said their child is happy at school
- 98% said the school keeps their child safe
- 97% said they felt their child is making at least good progress
- 96% said they were happy with their child's experience at school

Further information (optional)

Additional activity

Our pupil premium strategy will be supplemented by additional activity that is not being funded by pupil premium or recovery premium. As a school, we have a wide range on offer 'as default' that disproportionately benefits our most disadvantaged pupils. This includes:

- A longer school day (08:25am-17:00pm) that focusses on high quality teaching
- Enrichment for all 16:00pm – 16:50pm offers compulsory electives/self-study/academic intervention
- Exceptional behaviour so teachers can teach. Disadvantaged pupils benefit disproportionately positively from teachers' ability to deliver content unimpeded by low-level disruption
- An academic offer with reading at its heart. All pupils, including our disadvantaged, read a novel for 30 minutes every single day. We aim for pupils to read 12,000 words a day.
- A culture of candour with both pupils and parents/carers. We do not wait if an issue appears. We tackle it with bravery and honesty. We hold parents/carers and pupils to account so they achieve their potential.
- No homework – this ensures gaps don't widen as disadvantaged pupils do not receive the same level of support as more advantaged peers. Furthermore, no homework promotes pupil wellbeing and rest.
- No alternative provision – we encourage full attendance at Mercia and entrust pupils to our exceptional teaching staff
- A feedback model that is consistent across school, in every subject. [EEF evidence](#) demonstrates this has significant benefits for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- A mastery programme (our version of form time) that ensures pupils understand our 'catch-up' plan by providing information about the support they will receive (including targeted interventions listed above), how the curriculum will be delivered, and what is expected of them. We are exceptionally careful with the language we use to ensure a narrative of 'lost learning' or 'falling behind' does not catch on. We want to limit the level of pupil anxiety in school.
- We offer a wide range of high-quality extracurricular activities to boost wellbeing, behaviour, attendance, and aspiration. Activities (e.g., The Duke of Edinburgh's Award), will focus on building life skills such as confidence, resilience, and socialising. Disadvantaged pupils will be encouraged and supported to participate fully. 90/120 pupils achieved the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award in 2020-21. A similar number achieved this in 2022-23 & 2023-24. 120/120 pupils achieved the Certificate of Achievement in every academic year since 2020-21.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation

As a new school, we prioritised the disadvantaged pupils in the way we designed elements of the school. We are confident that the activity outlined above is showing results and high impact on the progress and achievement of our disadvantaged pupils.

As we move towards our third set of results in 2025, this strategy is key in making sure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well and at least in line with non-disadvantaged peers. We have a strong focus on ensuring strong results in our first A Level cohort's results in 2025. We will continue to monitor the performance of disadvantaged pupils by looking at multiple sources of data, such as:

- External progress assessments
- Internal subject assessments
- Book scrutiny and quality
- Parent/pupil/teacher voice will be used to identify the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils.

As our intent statement above makes clear, we use the EEF guidance on Pupil Premium strategy planning and spending to inform our approach. Notably, we use the [EEF's implementation guidance](#) to help us develop our strategy and will continue to use it through the implementation of our activities.