

Pupil premium strategy statement - Wyvern Academy

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	472
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	49.3%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-26; 2026-27;2027-2028
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	June 2026
Statement authorised by	Nadia Robinson
Pupil premium lead	Peter Seed
Governor / Trustee lead	James Preston-Pacey

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£230,534
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£230,534

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Wyvern Academy, we are unwavering in our commitment to ensuring that disadvantage does not limit the life chances of any child. Our vision of “Excellence in all that we do”, underpinned by our Trust-wide values of Excellence, Equity, and Integrity, drives our approach to tackling disadvantage and raising aspirations. We believe every young person, regardless of context or circumstance, should have access to high-quality teaching, enriching experiences, and the personalised support they need to thrive.

Our ultimate ambition for disadvantaged pupils is that they achieve outcomes which are at least in line with, and ideally exceed, those of their non-disadvantaged peers, academically, socially, and personally. Beyond academic success, we are committed to nurturing resilience, self-belief, and aspiration, empowering students to progress confidently into further education, training, or employment, and to lead happy, fulfilling lives.

Wyvern Academy serves the communities of Brinkburn, Faverdale, and Cockerton in Darlington. Many of our families live in areas of high deprivation, with a significant proportion of students facing barriers such as low household income, limited social mobility, and wider community challenges, including crime, substance misuse, and low aspirations. As a result, our disadvantaged pupils often present with complex and varied needs, requiring both bespoke academic and pastoral interventions. Our strong relationships with families and our community mean we understand these challenges deeply, and they are central to our strategic planning.

Our three-year pupil premium strategy is integrated into the Academy’s Development Plan (ADP). It is underpinned by the EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium (2025).

We adopt a tiered approach that balances:

- **High-quality teaching** - ensuring disadvantaged pupils benefit first from excellent classroom practice, supported by professional development for staff and evidence-informed pedagogy.
- **Targeted academic support** - such as tutoring, academic mentoring, and structured interventions designed to close attainment gaps and accelerate progress.
- **Wider strategies** - addressing barriers outside the classroom, including mental health and wellbeing support, attendance initiatives, family engagement, and access to enrichment opportunities.

Key Principles

- Equity and inclusion: Disadvantaged pupils are central to all strategic planning. Their needs are considered from the outset in every policy, initiative, and decision.
- Personalisation: We recognise that disadvantaged pupils are not a homogenous group. Support is tailored to meet individual academic, social, and emotional needs.
- High expectations: We maintain ambitious aspirations for every student, ensuring disadvantage is never seen as a barrier to success.
- Whole-school responsibility: Supporting disadvantaged learners is not the role of a single team but a shared responsibility of all staff.
- Community partnership: We work in close collaboration with families, carers, and external partners to provide wraparound support that extends beyond the classroom.
- Evidence-informed practice: Our decisions are guided by robust research, with a clear focus on approaches proven to have the greatest impact.
- Evaluation and refinement: We monitor and evaluate the impact of our strategy rigorously, adapting our approach in response to emerging needs and evidence.

Funding criteria

Pupil premium funding is allocated to eligible schools based on the number of:

- pupils who are recorded as eligible for free school meals, or have been recorded as eligible in the past 6 years (referred to as Ever 6 FSM)
- children previously looked after by a local authority or other state care, including children adopted from state care or equivalent from outside England and Wales

Pupil premium is not a personal budget for individual pupils, and schools do not have to spend pupil premium so that it solely benefits pupils who meet the funding criteria. It can be used:

- to support other pupils with identified needs, such as those who have or have had a social worker, or who act as a carer
- for whole class interventions which will also benefit non-disadvantaged pupils

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Curriculum Ambition: Disadvantaged students are disproportionately affected when the quality of teaching is not deemed to be good. Consistently good, high-quality teaching is the main focus to ensure accelerated progress for disadvantaged students.
2	Literacy and Reading: 58% of our Y7 students enter secondary school below chronological reading age expectations and as such are unable to access parts of the curriculum without intervention and support. 46% of students started secondary school over 1 year below their chronological reading age.
3	Attendance and Punctuality: Higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness, which can be linked to socio-economic factors, health issues, or a lack of motivation stemming from a sense of disconnection from the school environment.
4	Lower Aspirations and Expectations: Pupil premium learners may face lower aspirations and expectations, either due to a lack of exposure to diverse career options or a perceived sense of limited opportunities.
5	Limited Home Support: Insufficient support at home due to various factors, such as parents' time constraints, lack of awareness about the education system, or language barriers.
6	SEMH Needs: Challenges related to social and emotional wellbeing, including potential stressors such as unstable home environments, mental health issues, or difficulties in building positive relationships with peers.
7	Special Educational Needs (SEN): A higher likelihood of having special educational needs, which may require additional support and resources to address specific learning challenges.
8	Socio-Economic Disadvantage: Limited access to resources and opportunities due to financial constraints, which can impact access to educational materials, extracurricular activities, and additional learning support.
9	Limited Cultural Capital: Lack of exposure to cultural and enrichment activities, which can contribute to disparities in cultural capital and impact social and academic integration.

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.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
1. Narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.	Disadvantaged pupils achieving at least in line with national averages in core subjects (English, Maths, and Science). Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores, KS3/KS4 assessment data, and GCSE outcomes.
2. Accelerate literacy progress	Ensuring all disadvantaged pupils meet or exceed chronological reading ages. Standardised reading assessments and English outcomes.
3. Improve attendance and punctuality	Disadvantaged pupils to be in line with their peers, and reduce persistent absence. Whole-school attendance tracking, persistent absence figures.
4. Raise aspirations and confidence	Disadvantaged pupils demonstrating equal ambition for post-16 progression into Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, or vocational routes. Destination data, EBacc entry rates, post-16 progression tracking, and pupil voice surveys.
5. Increase access to enrichment opportunities	Closing the gap in participation in extracurricular clubs, trips, and cultural experiences. Tracking of extracurricular participation and pupil premium subsidy uptake.
6. Strengthen wellbeing and resilience	Reducing behaviour incidents, suspensions, and SEMH referrals among disadvantaged pupils. Attitude to Learning grades, behaviour logs, SEMH intervention data, suspension/exclusion records.
7. Enhance family engagement	Disadvantaged families attend school events, meetings, and reintegration processes at the same rate as their peers. Parent evening attendance, event sign-ins, and targeted intervention records.

Activity in this academic year

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

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £137,815

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Quality First Teaching CPD programme – all teaching staff	<p>“The best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment.</p> <p>Ensuring every teacher is supported in delivering high-quality teaching is essential to achieving the best outcomes for all pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged among them.”</p> <p>EEF High Quality Teaching</p>	1
Specialist CPD with particular focus on SEND and PP	<p>Learners’ proficiency in English is closely linked to academic success – Research has found that proficiency in English is the strongest predictor of academic achievement (Strand and Hessel, 2018)</p> <p>High quality teaching (HQT) is the starting point for meeting the needs of pupils with SEND and is based on strategies that should be in the repertoire of every mainstream teacher. These strategies should be used for all pupils and then applied flexibly in response to individual needs. Weaving inclusive approaches into every day, high-quality classroom teaching supports SEND to become part of the fabric of the whole school, rather than being seen as a ‘bolt-on’.</p> <p>EEF – Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools</p>	7
Wider development of teachers, leaders and support staff in school. Bespoke CPD for all school staff including internal professional development and external accredited courses	<p>“Supporting high quality teaching is pivotal in improving children’s outcomes. Indeed, research tells us that high quality teaching can narrow the disadvantage gap. It is therefore hugely encouraging to see a host of new initiatives and reforms that recognise the importance of teacher quality such as the Early Career Framework and the new National Professional Qualifications. These exemplify a growing consensus that promoting effective professional development (PD) plays a crucial role in improving classroom practice and pupil outcomes.”</p> <p>EEF – Effective Professional Development</p>	1

Purchase of diagnostic tests: GL assessments	<p>Strengths and gaps in reading and core subjects identified through standardised assessments. Additional and targeted support implemented. Evidence of progress provided.</p> <p>EEF Reading Comprehension strategies</p> <p>Development of pupils' reading, writing, vocabulary and the mechanics of grammar. Teachers can set different skills based on individual or group needs and analyse the results, identifying any areas of weakness on a whole class or individual level.</p>	2
Recruitment and retention of staff. Providing cover time for colleagues to undertake professional development. Supporting staff wellbeing and reducing workload.	<p>Ensuring that there is a healthy school climate will ensure that teachers are able to deliver Quality First Teaching more effectively. Consistency in staffing structures is beneficial to pupils as opposed to a high turnover of staff who do not understand and know the context thoroughly.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reducing-school-workload</p>	1,4,7

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

Budgeted cost: £28,256

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Continued employment of Careers Coordinator	<p>“Careers education can be crucial in developing the knowledge, confidence and skills young people need to make well informed, relevant choices and plans for their future. This is especially true of students from poorer backgrounds, who are less likely to have family or friends with the insight and expertise to offer advice. High quality careers education can help them progress smoothly into further learning and work.”</p> <p>EEF- Careers Education</p>	4, 8
Extending school time for specific groups	<p>You carefully plan and structure small-group tuition from an expert teacher for these students after school.</p> <p>EEF – Extending school time</p>	1, 2, 4, 5, 8

<p>Literacy: Assessment and Intervention</p> <p>Continued purchase of Reading Wise</p>	<p>“Disciplinary literacy is an approach to improving literacy across the curriculum. It recognises that literacy skills are both general and subject specific, emphasising the value of supporting teachers in every subject to teach students how to read, write and communicate effectively in their subjects.”</p> <p>EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</p>	<p>2</p>
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Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £64,463

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Parental engagement strategy. Including the use of the Arbor App and online platforms to support attendance tracking to support students’ attendance, academic progress and attitude to learning</p>	<p>“Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to benefit from having a space to conduct home learning. Evidence also suggests that disadvantaged pupils make less academic progress, and sometimes attainment levels even regress during the summer holidays, due to the level of formal and informal learning activities they do or do not participate in. By designing and delivering effective approaches to support parental engagement, schools and teachers may be able to mitigate some of these causes of educational disadvantage, supporting parents to assist their children’s learning or their self-regulation, as well as specific skills, such as reading.”</p> <p>EEF – Parental Engagement</p>	<p>5, 8</p>
<p>Increased extra-curricular provision and cultural capital trips.</p>	<p>“Adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, greater character development, greater social development, and a greater sense of the importance of community involvement.”</p> <p>The Benefits of Participating in Extracurricular Activities – Claudette Christison, 2013</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>Continued deployment and development of the whole school rewards system to include social</p>	<p>“Offering a range of rewards that increase personal choice and allow pupils to individualise the rewards they receive helps increase motivation,</p>	<p>6, 8, 9</p>

<p>and emotional activities to support students well being</p>	<p>autonomy and can reinforce an individual's underlying values and therefore intrinsic motivation. Additionally, schools can make choices about the behaviours rewarded based on the values they want to cultivate”</p> <p>The Use of Reward Systems to Improve Behaviour and Attainment in Schools – Drs Laura and Anna Merret 2013</p>	
<p>Continued employment of Attendance Officer</p>	<p>“Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance. This relationship between attendance and achievement may appear early in a child's school career.”</p> <p>Why does attendance matter? The National Centre for Education Statistics, 2009</p>	<p>3</p>

Total budgeted cost: £230,534

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Attainment and Progress

Performance of disadvantaged pupils has been evaluated using our 2025 GCSE outcomes alongside internal summative and formative assessment data. In 2025, the school achieved a Progress 8 score of for PP students of -1.04 (Not standardised due to no SAT data) and an Attainment 8 score of 28.91. This compares to 2024, when the Progress 8 score for PP students was -0.96 and Attainment 8 was 32.99.

Although both Progress 8 and Attainment 8 declined in 2025, this reflects a shift in cohort profile and an increase in the proportion of pupils with significantly lower prior attainment and a higher concentration of historically disadvantaged pupils. In interpreting this data, it is important to note that this cohort experienced substantial disruption during earlier stages of their education due to Covid-19, consistent with national patterns.

When compared to wider benchmarks:

National Progress 8 average is typically around 0.00 (the national baseline).

National Attainment 8 for 2025 is reported at approximately 45.9.

Darlington Local Authority Progress 8 (most recent published (2024)) stands at -0.39 .

Wyvern Academy's disadvantaged cohort therefore performed below both national and local averages in overall Progress 8. However, internal tracking shows that pupils with high attendance, full engagement in structured tutoring, and consistent access to the curriculum performed more strongly, indicating that our intervention model remains effective when engagement levels are secure.

Formative and summative internal assessments across KS3 and KS4 show that gaps in key subjects, particularly English and science, are narrowing compared with two years ago, and there is evidence of stronger progress for pupils who accessed academic mentoring and structured interventions. Quality Assurance (learning walks, book looks and curriculum reviews) indicates improving consistency in teaching and curriculum delivery, with positive effects for many disadvantaged learners.

We are partially on track to achieve the academic outcomes set out in the 2021–2025 strategy. Stronger and more consistent progress remains a priority area for improvement, and the 2025 results are being used to sharpen our focus on curriculum access, attendance and engagement.

Reading and Literacy

Intended Outcome: Improve reading ages and reduce the PP/non-PP disparity.

Performance in reading saw a dip last year despite earlier positive momentum; this decline coincided with leadership changes in the reading intervention team which led to a pause in programme continuity and a minor drop in engagement. Recognising this issue, from September 2025 we launched a new school-wide reading programme using the Reading Wise platform, re-prioritised class-set reading in tutor time, and introduced stronger monitoring of reading age gains for disadvantaged pupils. Since implementation, we have seen rapid improvements: disadvantaged pupils' average reading age progress in this academic year is significantly above the previous year's baseline, engagement with Reading Wise has a high completion rate, and the gap between PP and non-PP reading ages has begun to reduce. Reading remains a key focus area and will be monitored carefully via GL diagnostic assessments each half-term.

Curriculum Knowledge, Progress & Academic Support

Intended Outcome: Improve progress and attainment of disadvantaged learners through Quality First Teaching, curriculum alignment and targeted tutoring.

The introduction of SOLAR lesson principles, enhanced CPD and curriculum alignment across departments has resulted in stronger sequencing and improved teacher clarity. QA evidence (departmental reviews, learning walks, book scrutiny) shows improved modelling, retrieval practice and consistency of teaching routines.

Tutoring has had a demonstrable impact: disadvantaged pupils targeted for National Tutoring Programme support have shown significantly accelerated progress compared with peers of similar starting points, especially in English, maths and science. Mentoring logs indicate improvements in study habits, organisation and completion of revision tasks, contributing to increased attainment in Year 11 mock exams.

Behaviour & Scholarly Culture

Intended Outcome: Reduction in low-level disruption; improved pupil professionalism.

Behaviour data now shows an improving ratio of praise to concerns for disadvantaged pupils, narrowing the gap between PP and non-PP groups. Usage of Reflection Room and Eden Room has reduced for disadvantaged pupils compared with the 2021 baseline, indicating improved behaviour norms. Our consistent approach to class routines, positive reinforcement and clear expectations has strengthened the learning culture for all.

Attendance & Persistent Absence

Intended Outcome: Improve attendance; reduce PA rates; narrow PP–non-PP gaps

Attendance remains a key priority, but targeted interventions have produced positive movement. Home visits, increased EWO involvement, pastoral restructuring and the re-establishment of Breakfast Club have contributed to improved punctuality and reduced persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils. Although disadvantaged attendance remains

below non-PP and national averages, the gap has narrowed from previous years, and attendance for some high-priority PP cohorts has improved significantly due to personalised plans and parental engagement strategies.

Aspirations & Destinations

Intended Outcome: Increase PP uptake of Level 3 pathways; reduce NEET.

Destination data continues to show improvement. Compared with the baseline where PP pupils were more likely to enter Level 1–2 courses or become NEET, 2024/25 data demonstrates increased PP access to Level 3 courses and improved engagement with post-16 providers. Careers provision, Experience Passport and DofE participation have contributed to raised aspirations and improved guidance. NEET figures remain low and below historic levels.

Parental Engagement

Intended Outcome: Restore parental engagement to pre-Covid levels (70%+)

Parental engagement, though still variable across year groups, has improved compared with immediate post-Covid years. Enhanced communication (phone calls, home visits, use of EduKey reports, increased pastoral contact) has resulted in improved attendance at parents' evenings for targeted PP families. Engagement in earlier year groups (Years 7 and 9) shows the strongest improvement.

Overall Impact and Assessment of the 2021–2025 PP Strategy

Across the lifespan of the 2021–2025 strategy, the school has made sustained progress in reducing the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. Key areas of strong impact include literacy improvement, behaviour culture, curriculum improvement and post-16 destinations. Internal QA shows that teaching quality, consistency of routines and curriculum coherence have improved significantly, with positive effects for disadvantaged learners.

Attendance and parental engagement remain priority areas and have informed the shaping of the next phase of the strategy. However, even in these areas, the direction of travel is positive, and gaps are beginning to narrow.

The school is broadly on track to achieve the outcomes of the 2021–2025 plan, with some outcomes already met and others requiring continued targeted intervention.