

# Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our academy's use of Pupil Premium funding for the 2024 - 2025 academic year) to help improve the achievement of disadvantaged students.

This statement outlines our Pupil Premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the impact last year's spending of Pupil Premium in our academy.

## School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Unity Academy
Number of pupils in school	964
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	61% (51% primary and 67% secondary)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2024/2025 to 2025/2026
Date this statement was published	November 2024
Date on which it will be reviewed	August 2025
Statement authorised by	Stephen Cooke, Headteacher
Pupil premium lead	Simon Brennand, Deputy Headteacher
Governor / Trustee lead	Chair of Academy Council

## Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£706,130
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
<b>Total budget for this academic year</b> If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year	£706,130

# Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

## Statement of intent

Our intention is that all students, irrespective of their background or the challenges they face, make good progress and achieve high attainment across the curriculum.

The thrust of our pupil premium strategy is to support disadvantaged students to achieve that goal. We are aware of and will consider the considerable challenges faced by many disadvantaged children and those who are additionally vulnerable (including those with a Social Worker) often linked to trauma and adverse childhood experiences. The activity outlined in this statement is also intended to support the needs of these children, regardless of whether or not they are disadvantaged.

High-quality teaching remains at the heart of our approach, with a focus on areas in which disadvantaged students require the most support. This is proven to have the greatest impact on closing the disadvantage attainment gap and at the same time will benefit all students in our school. Implicit in the intended outcomes detailed below, is the intention that the attainment of non-disadvantaged students will be sustained and indeed built upon, alongside increased progress for their disadvantaged peers. A deliberate practice approach will be taken to professional development, designed to embed consistency in staff behaviour and approach, for example through culture, mindset and routines and to scaffold an increasingly trauma informed approach.

Our strategy is also integral to wider school improvement strategy and plans for education recovery following the Covid pandemic, linking to targeted support for students whose education has been worst affected. This includes disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. The very high proportion of disadvantaged students in school reinforces the importance of effective whole school improvement strategy.

Our approach will be responsive to common challenges and individual needs, rooted in robust diagnostic assessment, rather than vague assumptions about the impact of disadvantage. The approaches we have adopted are designed to underpin and complement each other.

To ensure the highest possible effectiveness, we will:

- Sustain high expectations for the achievement and progress of all students, with a particular focus on those who are disadvantaged
- Ensure that disadvantaged students are supported and challenged to learn
- Intervene when a need is identified
- Reinforce our whole school focus on inclusion, ensuring that all staff take responsibility for disadvantaged students' outcomes
- Provide structured support to reduce anxiety and promote wellbeing

## Challenges - key challenges to achievement that we have identified among our disadvantaged students.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Progress and attainment of disadvantaged students is generally lower than that of their non-disadvantaged peers in English and mathematics. Diagnostic assessments suggest that many students particularly struggle to read more complex texts, to write in detail and to develop wider thinking and problem-solving skills. Assessments on year 7 entry show that many disadvantaged students arrive below age-related expectations compared to their peers. Subsequent assessments show this gap is maintained and, in some cases, widened.
2	Assessments, observations and discussions with students indicate that disadvantaged students generally have lower levels of reading comprehension than peers. This impacts their progress in all subjects.
3	Our assessments, observations and discussions with children and families suggest that the education and wellbeing of many of our disadvantaged students has been disproportionately impacted to a greater extent by partial school closures and cost of living crises. These findings are reinforced by national studies. This has resulted in knowledge gaps, with students falling further behind age-related expectations, especially in core subjects.
4	Our observations suggest many lower attaining disadvantaged students lack metacognitive / self-regulation strategies when faced with challenging tasks, notably in their monitoring and evaluation of their answers. This is indicated across the curriculum.
5	Our assessments, observations and discussions with students and families have identified wide-ranging social and emotional issues for many students e.g. anxiety, diagnosed depression and low self-esteem. This is partly driven by concern about catching up lost learning, worries about examinations and future prospects, access to enrichment during the pandemic, complex home lives and the loss of the 'rhythm of school'. This is particularly evident for disadvantaged students and impacts strongly on attendance, engagement in learning and achievement. The emotional wellbeing of all students is regularly assessed and wide-ranging, supportive interventions are deployed where required. The majority of children receiving this support are disadvantaged.
6	Attendance data 3-year trends show that (following lockdowns) attendance for disadvantaged students has been lower than for non-disadvantaged students, albeit the gap in attendance to non-disadvantaged peers has fallen from 5.7% to 3.7% and then 0.9% year on year. This gap remains too high and overall attendance too low. A greater proportion of disadvantaged students have been 'persistently absent' during that period. Our assessments and observations indicate

	that absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged students' progress.
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## Intended outcomes - Targeted outcomes and metrics.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
Improved attainment among disadvantaged students across the curriculum at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4.	<p>2025 Key Stage 2  Combined - 42%  Reading - 68%  Writing - 61%  Mathematics - 58%</p> <p>Phonics screening shows that disadvantaged children achieve the national expected standard.</p> <p>2025 Key Stage 4  Basics 4+ - 30%  Basics 5+ - 15%</p> <p>Average English, Science and mathematics 4+ and 5+ scores for similar schools</p>
Improved reading comprehension of disadvantaged students.	Reading comprehension tests demonstrate improved comprehension skills among disadvantaged students and a smaller disparity between the scores of disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. This improvement will also be recognised through engagement in learning and book scrutiny.
Improved metacognitive and self-regulatory skills.	Teacher reports and class observations suggest disadvantaged students are more able to monitor and regulate their own learning.
To improve wellbeing for all students, including those who are disadvantaged.	<p>Sustained high levels of wellbeing demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• qualitative data from student voice, student and parent surveys and teacher observations.</li> <li>• a significant increase in participation in enrichment activities including through the academy Entitlement Curriculum, particularly of disadvantaged students.</li> <li>• Consistent cultural awareness</li> </ul>
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, particularly	<p>To be higher/lower than the national median for similar schools for:</p> <p>Attendance for PP pupils</p>

<p>those who are disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Persistent absence for PP pupils Severe absence for PP pupils</p> <p>Attendance gap between disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers being reduced to less than 1%. Percentage of all students who are persistently absent being below 30% and the figure among disadvantaged students no more than 15% higher than their peers.</p>
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## 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: **£254,695**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Ensure all relevant staff have received training to deliver the phonics scheme effectively	Identified by the EEF as having high impact, an extensive evidence base and to be good value for money. <a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics&amp;utm_medium=search&amp;utm_campaign=site_search&amp;search_term=phonic">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics&amp;utm_medium=search&amp;utm_campaign=site_search&amp;search_term=phonic</a>	1, 2, 4
Developing metacognitive and self-regulation skills in all students through a trauma informed approach.  This will involve ongoing (all staff) through a deliberate practice model with dedicated weekly training sessions.  A senior leader will be appointed to lead this work and to embed links with the overall academy professional development and appraisal systems.	Teaching metacognitive strategies to pupils can be an inexpensive method to help children to become more independent learners. There is particularly strong evidence that it can have a positive impact on maths attainment:  <a href="#">Metacognition and self-regulation   Toolkit Strand   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Enhancement of maths teaching and curriculum planning in line with DfE KS3 and EEF guidance.  We will fund teacher release time to embed key elements of the guidance in school, and	The DfE non-statutory KS3 guidance has been produced in conjunction with the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, drawing on evidence-based approaches:  <a href="#">Teaching mathematics at key stage 3 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	1



<p>proportion of the students who receive tutoring will be disadvantaged.</p> <p>Integrated Student Support Team deployed to meet the presenting needs of all children, including those who are disadvantaged and to coordinate effective intervention to remove barriers to learning for individual children.</p>	<p>and in small groups:</p> <p><a href="#">Small group tuition   Toolkit Strand   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p>	<p>1,3,4,5,6</p>
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## Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: **£120,825**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Tailored, specific, emotional support, counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) intervention for specific pupils who require support with regulating their behaviour and emotions.</p> <p>Holistic support for children and parents from the academy Mental Health Team, including through The Bridge initiative.</p>	<p>There is evidence to suggest that CBT can have a high impact on risk behaviours and behavioural difficulties:</p> <p><a href="#">Cognitive Behavioural Therapy - Youth Endowment Fund</a></p> <p>EIF's report on adolescent mental health found good evidence that CBT interventions support young people's social and emotional skills and can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression:</p> <p><a href="#">Adolescent mental health: A systematic review on the effectiveness of school-based interventions   Early Intervention Foundation (eif.org.uk)</a></p>	<p>1, 3, 4, 5</p>
<p>Embedding principles of good practice set out in DfE's <a href="#">Improving School</a></p>	<p>The DfE guidance has been informed by engagement with schools that have</p>	<p>1, 3, 5, 6</p>



<p><a href="#">Attendance</a>, and Working together to Improve School Attendance (updated August 2024) advice.</p> <p>2 senior leaders will participate in the DfE Attendance Hub, FCAT and peer Trust attendance improvement initiatives. Training for all staff will be designed to ensure consistency. Staff will develop resources and implement new systems and procedures.</p> <p>Attendance/support staff will be appointed to improve attendance.</p>	significantly reduced persistent absence levels.	
<p>Pastoral and wider support for children and families to meet basic needs arising from cost of living issues e.g. hygiene, breakfast food items</p>		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**Total budgeted cost: £706,130**

## 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 the outcomes of students in the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

Our assessments during 2023/24 suggested that some of the previous improvements in the performance of disadvantaged students and gains in attendance continue to be reversed following successive lockdowns. This is especially evident at Key Stage 4 and in aspects of the Early Years.

Our assessment of the reasons for these outcomes points primarily to Covid-19 impact, which disrupted learning progress in all of our subject areas to varying degrees. As evidenced in schools across the country, the continuing impact of partial closure was most detrimental to our disadvantaged students, and they were not able to benefit from our pupil premium funded improvements to teaching and targeted interventions to the degree that we intended. This impact was mitigated by our focus on sustaining a high quality curriculum and a sharp focus on the essential knowledge needed by children at each learning stage.

Overall attendance in 2023/4 was much lower than in the years preceding lockdown at 87.1%, albeit broadly in line with national levels. Absence among disadvantaged pupils was 1.7% lower than peers. This gap is wider than in the previous year (up to 4.9% from 3.7%) and attendance remains a key focus of our current plan.

Our assessments demonstrated that pupil behaviour, wellbeing and mental health were significantly impacted last year, primarily due to COVID-19-related issues. The impact was particularly acute for disadvantaged students. We used pupil premium funding to provide wellbeing support for all students alongside targeted interventions. We are building on and deepening that approach in our new plan.

### Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Kindness Academy	J. Magee
Mental health support and wider counselling	Inspire and New Start
Resilience Training	PIE
Inspirational activities	BFCCT

## Further information

### Additional activity

Our pupil premium strategy will be supplemented by additional activity that is not being funded by pupil premium. That will include:

- embedding more effective practice around feedback and adaptive teaching. [EEF evidence](#) demonstrates this has significant benefits for all students, particularly disadvantaged students.
- ensuring students understand their curriculum, how it will be delivered, and what is expected of them. This will help to address concerns around learning loss - one of the main drivers of anxiety.
- utilising support from our local [Mental Health Support Team](#) and local behaviour hub, plus funding for CPD from the local authority's Wellbeing for Education Recovery budget, to support students with mild to moderate mental health and wellbeing issues, many of whom are disadvantaged.
- offering a wide range of high-quality cultural and 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 students will be encouraged and supported to participate.

### Planning, implementation, and evaluation

In planning our new pupil premium strategy, we have evaluated why activity undertaken in previous years had not had the degree of impact that we had expected. This includes a Trust-wide, quality improvement focus.

We have triangulated evidence from multiple sources of data including assessments, observations from quality assurance activities such as class book scrutiny and learning walks, conversations with parents, students and teachers in order to identify the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils. We also used the EEF's families of schools database to benchmark the performance of disadvantaged students in school similar to ours.

We looked at a number of reports and studies about effective use of pupil premium, the impact of disadvantage on education outcomes and how to address challenges to learning presented by socio-economic disadvantage. We have also considered a number of studies about the impact of the pandemic on disadvantaged students.

We have used the [EEF's implementation guidance](#) to help us develop our strategy and will continue to use it through the implementation of our activities.

We have put a robust evaluation framework in place for the duration of our three-year approach and will adjust our plan over time to secure better outcomes for children.

