

Pupil Premium Strategy Statement – Merstone School 2025/26

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium (and recovery 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	171 (137 – Previous years figure) Last reporting period to July 2025.
Number of pupils on roll in Primary year groups	99 (87)
Number of Primary Pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium	77 (45)
Percentage of Primary Pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium	77.7% (51.7%)
Number of pupils on roll in Secondary year groups	72 (47)
Number of Secondary Pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium	15 (18)
Percentage of Secondary Pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium	20.8% (38.3%)
Total Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	53.8% (45.1%)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2023/2024 to 2025/2026
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2026
Statement authorised by	Kieran Grealish, Executive Headteacher
Pupil premium lead	Kendrick Poxon, Deputy Headteacher
Governor / Trustee lead	Antoinette Fisher, lead for disadvantaged pupils

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation Primary for this academic year (2024/ 2025)	£1,480 x 77 = £113,960 (£66,600)
Pupil premium funding allocation Secondary for this academic year (2023/ 2024)	1,050 x 15 = £15,750 (£18,900)
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£129,710 (£85,500)
Equivalent per child Primary	£1,480
Equivalent per child Secondary	£1,050

Part A: Pupil Premium Strategy Plan

Statement of Intent

Merstone Special School is committed to providing high-quality education and support to all students, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding. Pupil Premium funding is allocated to schools to help address the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. This statement outlines how Merstone utilizes Pupil Premium funding to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for our eligible students. Although our strategy is focused on the needs of disadvantaged pupils, it will benefit all pupils in our school where funding is spent on whole-school approaches, such as high-quality teaching. Implicit in the intended outcomes detailed below, is the intention that outcomes for non-disadvantaged pupils will be improved alongside progress for their disadvantaged peers.

Identification of Eligible Students:

Eligibility for Pupil Premium is determined based on the students who are currently eligible for free school meals, those who have been eligible within the past six years (Ever 6 FSM), and children who are looked after (in care) or have been adopted from care. Our school maintains an accurate and up-to-date record of eligible students to ensure targeted support.

Allocation and Utilization of Pupil Premium Funding

The following is a non-exclusive list of areas where Pupil Premium funding has been utilised to support pupils:

- Personalized Learning Support:

Pupil Premium funding is primarily used to provide additional support tailored to individual needs. This includes targeted interventions, specialized teaching resources, and one-to-one support where necessary. Targeted interventions are found in pupil's Individual Education Plans and within the lesson planning, where every child's needs are met. Additional teaching support through high levels of staffing, small group sizes and 1:1 support is given in all subjects including Maths, English and Science lessons. 1:1 tutoring is also offered to individuals that may require it.

- Specialized Staffing:

We allocate Pupil Premium funding to employ specialist staff, including learning support assistants, mentors, family support workers, therapists, educational psychologists, and speech and language therapists, to provide additional support to eligible students.

- Enrichment Activities:

Merstone School ensures that Pupil Premium students have equal access to extracurricular activities, educational trips, and enrichment programs to enhance their learning experiences and broaden their horizons. Inclusion and equality is tracked and monitored by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions - Georgia Travers and Michael Jacques. Enrichment activities range from Theatre Trips to Duke of Edinburgh expeditions.

- Resources and Materials:

Pupil Premium funds are invested in additional learning resources, assistive technology, and materials to support the diverse learning needs of eligible students.

- Professional Development:

Our staff undergo continuous professional development to enhance their skills in catering to the unique requirements of Pupil Premium students, ensuring inclusive and effective teaching practices.

- Monitoring and Evaluation:

We regularly monitor the impact of our Pupil Premium strategies through data analysis, progress tracking, and feedback from students, parents, and staff. This ongoing evaluation helps us refine and adapt our approaches to ensure maximum effectiveness in closing the attainment gap.

- Engagement with Parents/Carers:

Merstone actively engages with parents and carers to ensure they are informed about the support provided through Pupil Premium funding. Regular communication channels including coffee mornings, daily dialogue through meet and greet at the front of school, messaging through our Dojo communication system and more formal events such as parent meetings, are utilized to foster a collaborative approach to student success. Our School and Disability Nurses offer through our Parent Association 'Oak Stone' practical

sessions specific to the conditions our students have, such as workshops on Autism and Sleep clinics. The community paediatrician also holds regular clinics in school.

Review and Update:

This statement is reviewed annually, taking into account the latest data and educational research. Any necessary adjustments to our Pupil Premium strategies are made to continually enhance the support provided to our eligible students.

December 2025

Kendrick Poxon

Deputy Headteacher

Merstone and Forest Oak Special Schools

Challenges

This outlines the main obstacles to success that we've pinpointed among our students facing disadvantages. These challenges are based on information from the DfE website and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), aligning with our own observations. It's important to note that our MLD pupils have diverse conditions and needs, making it difficult to directly compare the progress of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. Nonetheless, the patterns listed below are acknowledged in school and are evident in the progress made from similar starting points.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	External data shows that disadvantaged pupils generally make less progress from their starting points when entering the school. Whilst the types of barriers to learning and the difficulties disadvantaged pupils experience vary, their overall academic progress tends to be lower in most subjects compared to non-disadvantaged pupils. This trend is most recognisable in maths outcomes.
2	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils show that disadvantaged pupils are generally more likely to have language comprehension difficulties than non-disadvantaged pupils in our school.
3	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils show that disadvantaged pupils generally have greater challenges around communicating and expressing their needs than their peers, including non-verbal, limited language and social interaction difficulties.
4	Through observations and conversations with pupils and their families, we find that disadvantaged pupils generally have fewer opportunities to develop cultural capital outside of school.
5	Our assessments, observations and conversations with pupils indicate that disadvantaged pupils often require additional support to develop personal skills, e.g., independent travel.
6	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and families demonstrate that the wider aspects of development of many of our disadvantaged pupils are impaired by lack of access to other services. 'Early Help' is an essential cornerstone to providing access to these services which can make a massive difference to our pupil's lives.

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
Improved attainment for disadvantaged pupils in all subjects, notably maths, relative to their starting points as identified through baseline assessments.	<p>Through achievement of improved performance, as demonstrated by our end of year assessments at the end of our strategy in 2025/26. We aim for no difference in progress for pupils with similar profiles regardless of their socio economic background.</p> <p>An increase in the percentage of disadvantaged pupils entered for Level 1 and Level 2 subjects, particularly maths by the end of Key Stage 4, and 5.</p>
Improved language comprehension for disadvantaged pupils so that they can independently comprehend subject-specific texts with challenging terminology.	Assessment of pupils' language comprehension shows a reduction in the disparity in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and their peers by the end of our strategy in 2025/26.
Pupils can use a range of communication systems to aid their understanding and to develop expressive communication skills.	Through achievement of EHC plan termly outcomes.
Disadvantaged pupils have greater confidence and independence to help them engage more with the wider community and prepare for adulthood.	<p>Through our drive for equality, diversity and inclusion monitoring and intervention, we aim for all students to have equal opportunities in the outside community – this will present itself as different for each pupil.</p> <p>Through monitoring by our equality, diversity and inclusion champions.</p>
Disadvantaged pupils feel better prepared for career progression and / or HE opportunities through mentoring, work experience and opportunity.	<p>All disadvantaged pupils can access high quality work experience and careers mentoring.</p> <p>By the end of 2025/26, disadvantaged pupils are progressing to higher or further education at the end of KS5 in the same proportions as their peers.</p>

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: **£10,000**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>The maths Teaching and Learning Responsibility lead will develop and improve maths teaching across the school in line with DfE guidance.</p> <p>Pupils accessing Pupil Premium will be monitored by class teachers delivering Maths and whilst all students will gain a high quality education, specific focus will be on directing resources to this group.</p> <p>The lead will develop the quality of maths teaching through CPD of all teachers, with an understanding that Maths is not taught in isolation, but across all subject areas.</p>	<p>The DfE non-statutory guidance has been produced in conjunction with the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, drawing on evidence-based approaches:</p> <p>Maths guidance: key stages 1 and 2</p> <p>Teaching mathematics at key stage 3</p>	1
<p>CPD for teaching staff on developing pupils' mental models.</p>	<p>Evidence from cognitive science suggests that teachers must carefully introduce new content to pupils to ensure they can reference this against existing knowledge. All staff will have CPD on Cognitive Load Theory to assist them in building up pupil's skills.</p>	1
<p>Carefully direct Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) time to empower class teams to develop communication skills for</p>	<p>The Communication Trust worked with the Better Communication Research Programme to develop the What Works database of evidenced interventions to support children's speech, language and</p>	2, 3

<p>all students, with progress tracked to ensure disadvantaged students make as much progress as non disadvantaged.</p> <p>High levels of staffing in each classroom by Teaching Assistants who are trained in communication techniques such as Makaton and PECs as needed.</p>	<p>communication, which is endorsed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists:</p> <p>What works database</p>	
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Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: **£90,000**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Provide Maths additional tutoring for identified student(s)	<p>Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both one-to-one:</p> <p>One to one tuition Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF</p> <p>And in small groups:</p> <p>Small group tuition Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF</p>	1, 6
Structured interventions, 1:1 support and small group support as identified on IEPs which are enabled through increased staffing (budgeted for above)	What works database	1, 2, 3

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

Budgeted cost: **£19,710**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Enhanced sensory regulation equipment for PP pupils with enhanced sensory needs, including autism. We will also fund staff training.	We have observed that sensory equipment and resources such as mattresses, lap pads, tunnels, weighted jackets, and additional proprioceptor equipment can be effective at providing support for our pupils with sensory needs.	3
Mentoring and therapeutic input through play therapy, lego therapy, equine therapy, etc. will help identified students feel safe, heard, and understood and assist them with meeting life's challenges. This work will be carried out through internal appointments and external services.	What works database Observations	4,5
Mental Health First Aiders will be trained to assist students who need additional support.	What works database Observations	4,5
Family Support Worker will work closely with identified families to signpost them to the right services to get the correct help through the early help programme.	What works database Observations	6
Equality and Inclusion is tracked to ensure all opportunities such as Cultural trips, Work Experience, D of E, etc. are offered to all students.	As well as being valuable for wider development outcomes, arts participation can have a positive impact on education performance when interventions are linked to academic targets. Arts participation Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF	4

<p>Travel training for Year 9. Involves CPD and release time for staff members.</p>	<p>Independent Travel Training is likely to enhance pupils' social and employment opportunities: Travel to school for children of compulsory age - Department for Education</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Three Team Teach tutors trained, and Level 2 Team Teach training for all staff to enable the school to effectively deescalate any issues and when necessary carry out physical interventions which are in the best interests of the child, proportionate and necessary.</p>	<p>Behaviour analysis report.</p>	<p>3</p>

Total budgeted cost: £129,710

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

We have analysed the educational performance of our school's disadvantaged pupils during the previous academic year, drawing on national assessment data and our own internal summative and formative assessments.

The data demonstrated that pupils who were in receipt of Pupil Premium did meet their IEP targets and their Academic targets

Comparing different cohorts, analysis of data for the 2023/24 academic year has indicated that in English, our Pupil Premium cohort made slightly better progress than our non Pupil Premium cohort. In Maths progress was similar, and for our sensory curriculum for our PMLD students, our Pupil Premium cohort made slightly better progress than our non Pupil Premium cohort.

Subject	Pupil Premium Student Progress	Non Pupil Premium Student Progress
English	0.20	0.16
	Average level progress	Average level progress
Maths	0.29	0.30
	Average level progress	Average level progress
Sensory	0.4	0.31
	Average level progress	Average level progress

Analysis of our disadvantaged pupils' wider development outcomes indicates that there was no difference in exit destinations between differing groups – All students regardless of status have transitioned to either The Hive, Herewood or QAC collage.

Based on all the information above, the performance of our disadvantaged pupils met expectations, and we are at present on course to achieve the outcomes we set out to achieve by 2025/26, as stated in the Intended Outcomes section above.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
None.	

