

Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2025-26

Birch Wood Special School

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	241
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	30%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended – you must still publish an updated statement each academic year)	2nd year of 3 year strategy
Date this statement was published	December 2024
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2025
Statement authorised by	Phil Leaney
Pupil premium lead	Michelle Walker
Governor / Trustee lead	James Cromwell

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£86,395
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year <i>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year</i>	£86,395

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Birch Wood we aim for all our students whatever their background or learning needs, to be;

- Empowered for independent Lives
- Aspired for their future
- To foster a love of Learning
- Engage with their environment.
- Where appropriate to gain exam currency to support them into the next stages of life.

We aim to support our disadvantaged learners to be self confident, independent, life long learners, who achieve the best possible outcomes they can. Depending on their needs this could be in terms of engagement, independence and or qualifications.

Due to our student's SEN needs the majority of our student's both Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium's communication and interaction skills are below the expected level. To ensure we meet the needs of all our students including our non-verbal students we are investing in Sensory training, Makaton training and Imprint technology to ensure that students can use dual coding to support their language/literacy development and understanding. CPD on our whole school reading and communication is ensuring that all staff can support students to make progress.

Whilst our Pupil Premium and non-Pupil premium are progressing at a similar level in literacy and numeracy they are working at below expected age due to their SEN needs. To support this we are investing heavily in quality research led CPD, to strengthen the quality of teaching across the school. We are also using NPQ qualifications so that we have the leaders of the future to ensure the quality of our student's education into the future.

A key concern for us has been ensuring that we catch up on lost learning without impacting on current learning. As many of our students are brought in via transport, and many having long journeys, we have had to be imaginative in our approach. Hence we have launched the Twilight Academy, where students will be tutored after school from their homes.

We find that many of our disadvantaged learners live a very sheltered life, for a wide range of reasons. Therefore their life experiences are limited in terms of diet, activities, cultural capital and working with others. We aim to aspire our young people by giving them a wider range of experiences, this includes residentials, theatre trips, shopping trips, museum visits, work experience, college visits, being involved in theatre

productions, sports etc. If we can extend the world they know and their aspirations, their thirst for knowledge will increase. These opportunities to communicate with other's in the wider world increases their self-confidence and makes them feel empowered to become more independent.

We know that a healthy lifestyle and regular healthy meals are key factors in student progress and mental health. Therefore we use this funding to give our students healthy snacks and to subsidise their opportunities to learn about and to prepare food and to widen their dietary experiences. We also seek to ensure our students experience a wide range of sports and fitness opportunities including dance, horse-riding, bike riding, tennis and swimming.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Our assessments, observations and discussions show that our disadvantaged pupils make similar progress in Literacy and numeracy to non-disadvantaged pupils however they are still working significantly below age expected outcomes due to their SEN Needs.
2	Through our observations and conversations with students and their families we find that disadvantaged pupils generally have fewer opportunities to develop cultural capital outside of school.
3	Our assessments, observations and discussions with students and families demonstrate that the education, wellbeing and wider aspects of development of many of our disadvantaged pupils have been impacted by the pandemic to a greater extent than for other pupils. These finding are backed up by several national studies.
4	Our assessments, observations, and conversations with students and their families indicate that disadvantaged students often require additional support to develop personal and independence skills e.g. Independent travel, Work experience,
5	Our assessments, observations, discussions with students and their families show that disadvantaged students often have greater challenges around communicating and expressing their needs, including non-verbal, limited language and social interaction difficulties.
6	Our assessments, observations, discussions with students and their families show that some of our disadvantaged students and their families need more support with attending school ready to learn. This may in terms of uniform, support with transport, breakfast (snacks), etc.

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
<i>All disadvantaged students are making progress in communication, literacy and numeracy.</i>	<p>All students on the aspire and independence pathway are securing their curriculum in Literacy and Communication(English) and Numeracy(Maths).</p> <p>At GCSE/EL disadvantaged students are achieving equivalently to non-disadvantaged students on the aspire and independence pathway.</p> <p>Engagement students are making progress towards their communication targets on</p>
All disadvantaged students have a wide range of experiences that empower them towards being more independent	<p>All students over the 3 years have a wide range of experiences that include sporting events, residentials, theatre and museum trips, a wide range of sports, work experience, college visits, using public transport and shopping.</p> <p>This will be visible in the enrichment section of the long term and medium term plans.</p> <p>It will also be tracked by the PPG tracking system.</p>
Disadvantaged Students use a wide range of communication tools to aid their understanding and their development of expressive communication skills	<p>Through achievement of their EHCP plan outcomes.</p> <p>Observation of students using the zones of regulation to explain how they are feeling</p> <p>For our PMLD/SLD learners achievement of communication outcomes on the MAPP and Bridge Assessment system.</p> <p>For Mastery/GCSE students their English assessments show progress</p>
Disadvantaged students have greater confidence and independence to help them to engage with the wider community and prepare for adulthood.	<p>Through Observations and discussions with students and their families.</p> <p>Through achieving EHCP- independence targets</p>
Disadvantaged students come to school ready to learn	<p>Attendance figures for disadvantaged students are in line with non-disadvantaged students.</p> <p>Through observation and discussions with students, that students are ready to learn.</p> <p>Parental engagement will increase with our disadvantaged parents. Measured by Kinteract. Parent evening attendance and EHCP review attendance</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: £70,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Investing in staff to ensure a highly skilled workforce and supporting the retention of staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in training New teachers Investing in training future leaders NPQ's. <p>CPD for all staff to aspire to the next steps of their career, TA to STA, or STA to teacher.</p>	<p>The DFE have in their teaching and retention strategy said that improving support for early careers teachers and investing in leadership qualifications, will encourage good teachers to work, stay and develop.</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63cfdb418fa8f53fe33dddb3/Emerging findings from the evaluation of National Professional Qualifications Interim report 1.pdf</p> <p>The DFE's evaluation of NPQ's have shown to have a positive impact directly on their skills and knowledge and that this is particularly impactful if more than 1 teacher has completed this training</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63cfdb418fa8f53fe33dddb3/Emerging findings from the evaluation of National Professional Qualifications Interim report 1.pdf</p>	1
<p><i>Internal CPD of teachers and support staff using Teacher led research models and Cognitive Science to ensure all lessons show progression and differentiation for all learners.</i></p>	<p>Many different evidence sources suggest that ensuring staff receive high quality research led CPD, increases the quality of teaching and the retention of staff.</p> <p>https://www.learningsciences.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/rosenshine li.pdf</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy</p> <p>The Education endowment fund has stated that the potential impact of metacognition and self-regulation approaches is high (+7 months additional progress), although it can be difficult to realise this impact in practice as such methods require pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning and develop their understanding of what is required to succeed.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation</p>	1
<p><i>All staff have CPD on reading and the whole school reading and</i></p>	<p>Evidence suggests that by increasing student's reading we improve attainment this all summarised in the DFE Reading for pleasure.</p>	1

<p><i>communication strategy and further develop their long term and medium term plans for reading and communication.</i></p> <p><i>New Staff have makaton training and imprint training to support dual coding.</i></p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-evidence-on-reading-for-pleasure</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports</p>	
<p><i>The professional growth cycle, which supports staff through regular low stakes observation and feedback to further develop their teaching, because</i></p>	<p>This is a system based around the coaching model, bespoke to our setting. Where regular low stakes observation and feedback feeds to into our professional development training.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-professional-development</p>	1
<p><i>Staff are trained and supported to teach about the zones of regulation to support students ability to express their emotions in a positive way.</i></p>	<p>The education endowment foundation has stated that ‘Social and emotional learning approaches have a positive impact, on average, of 4 months’ additional progress in academic outcomes over the course of an academic year. ‘</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning</p>	3,4
<p><i>High quality staffing of classes that allows individualised instruction, when needed to support learning</i></p>	<p>The education endowment foundation has stated that ‘On average, individualised instruction approaches have an impact of 4 months’ additional progress.’</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/individualised-instruction</p>	1,3

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

Budgeted cost: £ 2,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>Small group tutoring targeting key students</i>	The Education endowment foundation has stated that the average impact of small group tuition is about 4 months progress over a year. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition	1,5
<i>Support for students at KS4/KS5 to complete work experience, college visits</i>	The Gatsby report makes it clear that as part of high quality careers education work experience is essential, to raise aspirations of students. https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf	1, 2, 4
<i>Twilight Academy- extending the school day by offering small group tuition to students via Microsoft teams to overcome the issues of transport.</i>	The Education endowment foundation has stated that the average impact of approaches involving extending school time is about an additional three months' progress over the course of a year. The average impact is influenced by the targeted use of before and after school programmes, which have higher impacts on average. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition	1

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

Budgeted cost: £ 14,395

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Provide daily snacks and uniform for students to ensure all disadvantaged students can focus on their learning. (ongoing)	Research on the mind shows that the reptilian brain will take over when students basic needs (food/warmth) are not met, and therefore they are not ready to learn and take in more information. <i>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</i> . By ensuring our students have their basic needs met we help our students to focus and make progress. This is an ongoing strategy that we are carrying forward as it has proven to be successful, and many of our students depend on this.	1, 6
Provide a wide range of external activities that support our students independence and communication skills and give them greater cultural capital. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre trips • Residentials • Museum trips • Trip to local shops, cafes Using local transport links	Within the DFE publication on school culture and supporting students who are disadvantaged, section 1.6 explains the importance of trips to inspire young people. This is even more important in an SEN setting as our students often lead an even more sheltered life. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-culture-and-practice-supporting-disadvantaged-pupils	1,3,4,5
Provide ingredients for students for cooking to support their independence skills and their understanding of healthy eating.	Many of our young people due to their sensory needs eat a very limited diet, due to textures or colours. It is important that all of our young people experience a wider range of experiences around food and the cultures related to those foods, and the importance of a healthy diet on their physical and mental health. https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/ https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/diet-and-mental-health	4,5,1

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Provide a wide range of sporting activities that support students physical, mental health and their fine and gross motor skills. These are activities that extend the normal PE activities.</p> <p>These include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming • Bike ability • Horse riding • Dancing 	<p>There are wide ranges of sources that describe the importance of physical activity in mental health, sleep, weight, behaviour and motor skills. Good habits around physical activity learned at a younger age are more likely to continue into adulthood.</p> <p>https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities</p> <p>https://www.fsem.ac.uk/position_statement/the-role-of-physical-activity-and-sport-in-mental-health/</p> <p>https://www.hindawi.com/journals/bmri/2020/8160756/</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/physical-activity</p>	1,3,4,5
<p>To improve parent engagement by simplifying contact between parents and school.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing change at Birch Wood. It has been addressed due to parental feedback being they disliked having to log into so many sites. We are now working with Kinteract/Arbor to develop it further to make it easier for parents. Parental feedback has been positive but we are now working on the points parents have raised to improve it. Education endowment foundation suggests improved parental engagement can add 4+ months of progress.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/parental-engagement</p>	1, 6

Total budgeted cost: £ 86,395

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

At Birch Wood we have a wide range of learners including students with PMLD, SLD, MLD and ASD and many other factors that affect their learning. It is not appropriate therefore for all our learners to complete qualifications. We are aspirational for our learners and balance their abilities and emotional health with getting them qualification currency which will support them to make their next steps. Our Cohorts each year have very differing needs and therefore results fluctuate dependent on student's learning cognition needs.

KS4 Results

We had 18 Year 11 students at the end of 2024. Of these student's 50% were PPG. As we have a range of SEND abilities at Birch Wood, not all students complete qualification pathways. In 2023 16 students were entered for qualifications (aspire pathway).

9 of the 16 aspire students are PP students. This means that 56% of the Aspire cohort are PPG and 44% non PPG.

In English, 89% of the PPG students achieved a GCSE 9-1, whilst 57% of the nPPG achieved this.

In Maths, 67% of the PPG students achieved a GCSE 9-1, whilst 57% of the nPPG achieved this.

In Science, 100% of the PPG students achieved a GCSE 9-1, whilst 71% of nPPG achieved this.

Overall as can be seen the results for PPG and nPPG students have improved from 2024, however PPG students are out performing non- PPG students.

Core Subject Analysis	2024 PPG	2024 nPPG	2025 PPG	2025 nPPG
Students achieving at least 1 qualification in Core subjects	88%	64%	100%	78%
Aspire students achieving at least 1 qualification in Core Subjects	100%	100%	100%	100%
Students achieving English and Maths 9-1	25%	35%	67%	44%
Aspire students achieving English and Maths 9-1	29%	56%	67%	57%
Students achieving English, Maths and Science 9-1	25%	29%	67%	44%
Aspire students achieving English, Math and Science 9-1	29%	44%	67%	57%

KS2 Results

We have 8 students in 2024-25 who were in year 6. 50% were PPG (4 students)

- 25 % (1 student) of PPG students were working below the expected standard, and 75 % (3 students) were not entered as they were working below the level of the test.
- 25% (1 student) of nonPPG students were achieving the expected level of progress, 50% (2 students) were working below the expected standard, and 25 % (1 student) were not entered as they were working below the level of the test.

Due to the very small cohort these differences are not statistically different.

Attendance

Across the country attendance in special schools for 24-25 was 87% overall.

Our Pupil premium cohort achieved 88%, which is due to the ongoing elements of our Pupil premium supporting students with snacks and uniform, to ensure students are ready to learn and feel part of the school community.