

Pupil premium strategy statement for 2025 – 2026

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 effect that last year's spending of pupil premium had within our school.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Sycamore L.E.A.D. Academy
Number of pupils in school	465
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	48%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3 year plans are recommended)	2025 – 2028
Date this statement was published	September 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	Termly
Statement authorised by	Emma Thorne
Pupil premium lead	Tracy Hopkins
Governor / Trustee lead	Rachel Hucknall

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£290,000
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	0
Total budget for this academic year	£290,000

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Sycamore Academy's intention is that all pupils, irrespective of their background or the challenges they face make good or better progress and achieve high academic attainment and outcomes across all subject areas. The focus of this strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve that goal.

Sycamore Academy takes into account the wide range of challenges faced by both disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. This includes pupils who have involvement from other agencies, including the Nottingham City MASH team (whether they are PP pupils or not).

High quality teaching and learning is at the heart of our approach. Whilst we are relentlessly focussed upon supporting our disadvantaged learners it is implicit that our approach is intended to support and benefit all learners within our academy. It is our full intention to ensure good or better progress is made by all and that high academic outcomes are our aim for all.

We operate a focused intervention system – provided by our teaching assistants on a daily basis. These include pre-teach interventions (focussed on key knowledge required for the main lesson), post-teach interventions (to help ensure any misconceptions are addressed) and specific interventions (including aspects of Maths, Reading and Writing).

To address the barriers that our pupil premium children face and ensure the gap between them and their non-pupil premium peers is reduced we will prioritise the following areas:

- Improving their good learning behaviours
- Support pupils and their families with social & emotional difficulties
- Support our disadvantaged pupils financially to engage in school trips and enrichment opportunities
- Increase the progress rates made by pupil premium/disadvantaged children
- Improve rates of attendance of our pupil premium/disadvantaged children
- Increase the support for pupils who have limited experiences beyond their home life and immediate community

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Limited Access to Learning Resources and Enrichment Opportunities</p> <p>Many disadvantaged pupils face barriers to accessing extracurricular activities, resources, and enrichment opportunities that can enhance their learning. This can result in gaps in knowledge, skills, and experiences that contribute to achievement disparities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Provide free access to enrichment activities (e.g., trips, clubs, resources), and ensure all pupils are provided with the necessary materials for their learning, including access to digital resources and educational tools.
2	<p>Low Parental Engagement</p> <p>A significant number of disadvantaged pupils experience lower levels of parental involvement in their education. This lack of engagement can impact attendance, motivation, and support for homework and revision.</p> <p>Persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils shows parental engagement barriers, including low stability and reduced home-learning support.</p> <p>Below-national Phonics outcomes for three consecutive years indicate limited home reading practice and parental capacity to support early literacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Strengthen home-school communication and create opportunities for parents to engage through workshops, parent-teacher meetings, and regular updates. Provide support for parents to engage with their child's learning.
3	<p>Emotional and Social Wellbeing Challenges</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils often experience higher levels of emotional and social challenges, including mental health issues, anxiety, or a lack of stable home environments. These factors can negatively impact their ability to focus and engage in learning.</p> <p>Behaviour indicators show that suspensions for disadvantaged pupils are significantly above national over time:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSM6 suspension rate: 2.37% vs national 1.16% (2023/24) <p>This trend has been consistently above national for the last three years.</p> <p>Suspensions for SEND pupils (many of whom are PP) are particularly high at 12.12% vs national 2.37%, indicating a priority for inclusion, targeted pastoral intervention, and strengthened SEMH provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Offer emotional and mental health support, including access to counselling, mentoring, and a designated support team to address social-emotional needs. Develop a positive school culture that fosters resilience and confidence.
4	<p>Attendance and Punctuality Issues</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to have lower attendance rates, which can hinder their academic progress. Chronic absenteeism or late arrival at school leads to missed learning opportunities and gaps in knowledge. At Sycamore Academy disadvantaged (FSM6) pupils have historically demonstrated attendance above national averages, although the IDSR notes this is in relative decline compared with previous years. Persistent absence for SEND pupils, many of whom are also disadvantaged, remains above national, indicating a need for more targeted support to secure regular attendance for the most vulnerable groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Monitor attendance closely and work with families to improve punctuality and attendance. Provide support for pupils who face challenges attending school, such as transport, uniforms, or financial difficulties. Engage in the Inclusive Attendance Bronze kite mark.
5	<p>Low Levels of Academic Preparation and Aspiration</p> <p>Many disadvantaged pupils enter school with lower levels of academic preparedness compared to their peers, resulting in early learning gaps. These gaps can persist throughout their education if not addressed effectively.</p> <p>Early Reading / Phonics - Phonics outcomes have been below national for three consecutive years, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025: 72% vs national 80% • 2024: 73% vs national 80% • 2023: 71% vs national 79%

	<p>This persistent gap indicates an ongoing need to strengthen early reading provision, particularly for disadvantaged pupils who have lower language and communication starting points.</p> <p>MTC (Multiplication Tables Check) - Over the last three years, disadvantaged pupils have performed in line with or slightly above national, with results consistently around 20–21 average score, demonstrating secure basic numeracy for most pupils but still requiring targeted support to push more to full fluency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Implement early intervention programmes focusing on literacy and numeracy, particularly in the early years. Provide targeted academic support and boost aspirations through mentorship, career guidance, and access to high-aspiration role models.
6	<p>Limited Language and Communication Skills</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils often experience limited exposure to vocabulary and language-rich environments at home, which can impact their communication skills and overall academic achievement, particularly in areas such as reading and writing.</p> <p>Three-year phonics underperformance shows early vocabulary and language gaps.</p> <p>Disadvantaged gap in Reading has widened: disadvantaged pupils perform 14 points lower than non-disadvantaged pupils even though whole-school reading has improved. This indicates clear language disadvantage impacting comprehension and fluency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Develop targeted language and literacy interventions, including reading support and vocabulary-building activities. Offer a language-rich environment both in and outside the classroom to boost communication skills.
7	<p>Lack of Access to High-Quality Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils may not always benefit from the same high-quality teaching and individual support as their more advantaged peers, leading to disparities in learning outcomes.</p> <p>Across the last three years, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved at the same levels as their peers in certain subjects, although improvements are visible in Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Expected Standard: Rise from 57% (2023) to 67% (2025)—above national (63%) in 2025. However, the disadvantaged gap has widened, remaining –14 percentage points lower than non-disadvantaged pupils

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths: Outcomes remain consistently below national (68% vs 74%), with little change across the 3-year period—indicating Maths continues to be an area of underperformance, especially for disadvantaged pupils • Writing: Close to national but not a strength, with limited evidence of accelerated progress for disadvantaged pupils across the period . <p>Greater depth outcomes generally mirror expected standard performance, with disadvantaged pupils demonstrating lower attainment compared to their peers in Maths and Writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Ensure that disadvantaged pupils are taught by highly qualified, experienced staff and benefit from personalised, high-quality teaching. Invest in ongoing professional development for teachers to ensure all pupils have access to excellent learning opportunities.
8	<p>Underdeveloped Independent Learning</p> <p>Many disadvantaged pupils struggle with developing effective time management, and independent learning skills. This challenge can particularly affect older pupils when preparing for assessments or future academic steps.</p> <p>KS2 middle prior attainers are below national in Combined RWM (57% vs 62%), showing that pupils—especially disadvantaged—struggle with independent study and consolidation of learning over time.</p> <p>Weaknesses in greater depth outcomes in Maths and Writing show a need for more independence, resilience and higher-order learning habits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy: Provide structured independent learning opportunities, and booster sessions to ensure pupils are equipped with the tools needed to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. Promote self-regulated learning to encourage autonomy.

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
All disadvantaged pupils will have access to the same learning resources, enrichment opportunities, and extracurricular activities as their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of disadvantaged pupils participate in at least one extracurricular activity or enrichment programme each year.

peers, ensuring they have a well-rounded educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils demonstrate improved engagement and motivation through regular attendance at enrichment activities. • Pupils achieve progress in their academic work as evidenced by improved assessments and feedback.
Parents of disadvantaged pupils will be more actively engaged in their child's education, leading to better attendance, higher motivation, and improved academic outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings and school workshops by disadvantaged families. • Positive feedback from parents regarding communication and engagement opportunities. • Improvement in pupils' attendance and academic performance as a direct result of increased parental involvement.
Disadvantaged pupils will receive appropriate emotional and social support to improve their wellbeing, resilience, and ability to engage in learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of pupils accessing emotional and mental health support (counselling, mentoring, etc.). • Positive improvements in pupils' self-esteem and social interactions, evidenced by staff observations and pupil surveys. • Reduction in behavioural incidents linked to emotional and social wellbeing issues.
Disadvantaged pupils will have improved attendance and punctuality, leading to better learning outcomes and a reduction in gaps between them and their peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the overall attendance rate for disadvantaged pupils to match or exceed the school's target. • Reduction in the number of pupils with persistent absenteeism (below 90% attendance). • Pupils who have improved attendance show measurable progress in their academic outcomes.
Disadvantaged pupils will have a stronger academic foundation, and their aspirations will be raised through targeted interventions, preparing them for future academic success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy assessments for disadvantaged pupils. • Increased aspirations and engagement, as evidenced by participation in enrichment activities. • A reduction in the achievement gap in key stages between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.
Disadvantaged pupils will develop stronger language and communication skills, particularly in reading and writing, improving their academic performance across subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved reading and writing levels as measured through formative and summative assessments. • An increase in pupils' vocabulary and verbal communication skills, observed

	<p>through classroom activities and interactions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive progress in English results for disadvantaged pupils.
Disadvantaged pupils will benefit from high-quality teaching and personalised support, leading to improved academic outcomes and closing the achievement gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of high-quality teaching in all classes, demonstrated through lesson observations and feedback from pupils. • Disadvantaged pupils show measurable academic progress, as reflected in regular assessments and end-of-year results. • A reduction in the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in key academic areas.
Disadvantaged pupils will develop strong study skills, time management abilities, and independent learning habits, contributing to better assessment preparation and long-term academic success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in pupils' independence, as measured by feedback from teachers and self-reported pupil surveys. • Increased participation in independent learning activities, with evidence of sustained effort outside of school hours. • Measurable improvement in SATS for disadvantaged pupils.

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: £125,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Professional development Targeted CPD for Teachers Focus on English and Maths Collaborative Professional Development	<p>Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that CPD for teachers is one of the most effective ways to improve pupil outcomes. The impact of high-quality professional development can lead to significant improvements in teaching and learning. Evidence suggests that sustained professional development linked to the curriculum can have a direct impact on pupil achievement (EEF, 2021).</p> <p>Teaching Assistant Interventions and Differentiation are effective when teaching staff receive training and support on how to use data to tailor instruction and provide personalised learning opportunities, particularly in literacy and numeracy (EEF, 2021).</p>	5, 7
Retention and Recruitment Attracting High-Quality Teachers Retention Support for Teachers	<p>Research conducted by the Department for Education (DfE) on teacher quality and pupil achievement demonstrates that teacher quality is the most important in-school factor influencing pupil outcomes (DfE, 2016). Ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are taught by highly skilled teachers significantly benefits their academic performance.</p> <p>The EEF notes that teacher retention strategies, such as mentoring and ongoing professional support, help reduce turnover, leading to more stable and effective teaching. Stability in staffing has been shown to improve pupil engagement and academic outcomes (EEF, 2020).</p>	7

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

Budgeted cost: £85,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Homework and revision support Homework Clubs Targeted Revision Sessions	<p>EEF's Homework research indicates that structured homework support can help improve outcomes for pupils, particularly when tasks are designed to complement classroom learning. Providing dedicated time and space for homework has been shown to improve academic results and engagement (EEF, 2020).</p> <p>Targeted revision sessions are particularly effective in ensuring that pupils are well-prepared for exams. Evidence shows that providing extra revision opportunities for disadvantaged pupils increases their ability to consolidate learning and perform well in assessments (Sutton Trust, 2017).</p>	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8
Access to technology and resources Provision of Devices and Resources Subscription to Online Learning Platforms	<p>Research by the EEF shows that digital learning interventions can have a positive impact on pupil outcomes, particularly when combined with high-quality teaching. Access to technology, such as laptops, is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged pupils, enabling them to complete homework and access additional learning resources (EEF, 2019). The Sutton Trust states that access to digital devices and the ability to engage with online learning tools can help narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, especially in secondary education (Sutton Trust, 2018).</p>	5, 6, 7, 8
Intervention programmes 1:1 or Small Group Tuition Maths and English Catch-Up Programmes	<p>The EEF's small group tuition guidance report suggests that small group tuition (one teacher working with a small group of pupils) can lead to moderate to high gains in pupil achievement. Pupils who are struggling with literacy or numeracy particularly benefit from such targeted support (EEF, 2021).</p> <p>Early intervention is critical. The National Literacy Trust states that children who are behind in literacy by age 7 are much less</p>	2, 5, 6, 7, 8

	likely to catch up later. Early and targeted interventions, especially in literacy, are key for long-term success (National Literacy Trust, 2020).	
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Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £80,460

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Well-being and behaviour programme Behavioural Support Programmes Wellbeing Workshops	<p>The EEF's Behavioural Interventions report suggests that structured behavioural interventions can significantly reduce disruptive behaviour and improve engagement with learning. These interventions are particularly effective when tailored to the specific needs of the pupil (EEF, 2021).</p> <p>The Impact of Wellbeing: Research shows that wellbeing programmes that focus on mental health and emotional support lead to improvements in pupil engagement, academic performance, and behaviour (NHS, 2018). Providing wellbeing support has been shown to reduce anxiety and increase focus, which is critical for disadvantaged pupils who may face additional emotional challenges.</p>	1, 3, 4
Mentoring and Pastoral support Mentoring Programmes Counselling Services	<p>EEF's Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) research shows that social and emotional learning interventions can improve pupil outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. It has been found to lead to improvements in academic performance and attitudes towards learning (EEF, 2020).</p> <p>Mentoring programmes, both peer and adult-led, have shown to be effective in improving engagement and self-esteem, leading to better academic outcomes.</p> <p>Mentoring can also significantly help pupils develop self-regulation and resilience (EEF, 2021).</p>	1, 3, 4

Total budgeted cost: £290,460

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 2024 to 2025 academic year.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, Sycamore Academy experienced several changes within the senior leadership team, alongside wider staffing movement. These transitions affected the consistency and delivery of some interventions, meaning that not all pupil premium strategies achieved the level of accelerated progress originally intended. Despite this, the IDSR highlights several areas of strength which demonstrate the positive impact of targeted work with disadvantaged pupils.

Phonics tutoring and booster sessions in reading, writing, and maths were particularly effective, improving pupil confidence and engagement. Although phonics outcomes remain below national for the third consecutive year (72% vs 80%), pupils receiving targeted early reading support made stronger gains, and whole-school reading outcomes improved significantly. IDSR data shows Reading at the expected standard rose to 67% (above national at 63%), despite a widening –14 point gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Regular pupil progress meetings ensured that teachers maintained a clear understanding of learning needs and were able to swiftly identify and support disadvantaged pupils requiring further intervention.

The IDSR also reflects sustained strengths in numeracy fluency. The Year 4 MTC average score (21.0) remained slightly above national for the third consecutive year, demonstrating effective mathematical foundations for many disadvantaged pupils. However, overall KS2 Maths outcomes remained below national (68% vs 74%), indicating that disadvantaged pupils require more targeted support to secure expected and higher-standard outcomes.

Attendance for disadvantaged pupils remained broadly positive, with FSM6 pupils historically attending above national. Although the IDSR notes a relative decline this year and persistent absence remains high for SEND pupils (many of whom are disadvantaged), continued close monitoring, increased family communication, and early intervention work have helped improve the consistency with which disadvantaged pupils access learning.

Safeguarding continues to be a major strength. Staff understand and fulfil responsibilities confidently, and vulnerable pupils and families receive timely and effective support through strong multi-agency partnerships. This is reflected in the IDSR through clear improvements in wellbeing and readiness to learn. However, behaviour data from the IDSR highlights elevated suspension rates for disadvantaged and SEND pupils (FSM6 2.37% vs national 1.16%; SEND 12.12% vs national 2.37%). This signals a need for strengthened SEMH support and more consistent implementation of inclusive behaviour systems.

While leadership changes created challenges, the commitment and resilience of staff ensured that disadvantaged pupils continued to make progress across the year. The impact of targeted phonics work, booster programmes, and strengthened pastoral systems has been evident despite wider instability. Moving forward, the school's priority is to embed greater consistency in

intervention delivery, reduce behaviour-related barriers, accelerate progress in early reading and maths, and build on established strengths in attendance, safeguarding, and high-quality teaching.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Music Tuition	Nottingham City Council Music Provision
Therapat	
Read, Write Inc CPD	Read, Write Inc