

Pupil premium strategy statement – Mercia 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	596
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	41.95% (250 students)
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)	2025-2026 (2024-2026)
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	September 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr Nick Holmes Associate Principal
Pupil premium lead	Mrs Kelly Lundman
Governor / Trustee lead	Dr Alan Jones Chair of Academy Council

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£275,200
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£23,385
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>	£298,585

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our intention is that all pupils, irrespective of their background or the challenges they face, make good progress and achieve high attainment across the curriculum, enabling them to make a successful transition to the next stage in their education or training.

The focus of our pupil premium strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve that goal, including progress for those who are already high attainers. We will consider the challenges faced by vulnerable pupils, such as those who have a social worker and young carers. The activity we have outlined in this statement is also intended to support their needs, regardless of whether they are disadvantaged or not.

High-quality teaching is at the heart of our approach, with a focus on areas in which disadvantaged pupils require the most support. This has proven to have the greatest impact on closing the disadvantage attainment gap and at the same time will benefit the non-disadvantaged pupils in our school. Implicit in the intended outcomes detailed below, is the intention that non-disadvantaged pupils' attainment will be sustained and improved alongside progress for their disadvantaged peers.

Our approach will be responsive to common challenges and individual needs, rooted in robust diagnostic assessment, not assumptions about the impact of disadvantage, to ensure interventions remain effective and responsive to changing needs. The approaches we have adopted complement each other to help pupils excel. To ensure they are effective we will:

- ensure disadvantaged pupils are challenged in the work that they are set
- act early to intervene at the point need is identified
- adopt a whole school approach in which all staff take responsibility for disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and raise expectations of what they can achieve
- closely monitor and promote the importance of good attendance
- increase pupil and parent engagement with the school and support them in participating in a wide range of holistic experiences

This is an update on the 2024 Pupil Premium Strategy which maintains a three-year approach.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Behaviour and attitudes – We have a proportion of our disadvantaged pupils whose behaviour and attitude to learning is a barrier to their progress and outcomes. This is demonstrated in the issuing of behaviour points and other sanctions. By developing a positive culture and growth mindset, we aim to change these behaviours by ensuring every that every pupil is motivated and equipped with the skills needed to succeed.</p>
2	<p>Attendance – This remains a key focus for the academy. The academy has worked hard to improve whole school attendance compared to the previous academic year, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, whose attendance was 82%. Implementing effective strategies to improve pupil and parent engagement in education has resulted in a 5% increase in disadvantaged pupils’ attendance this academic year. However, despite continuing improvements, the disadvantaged gap remains at 5%, compared to non-disadvantaged pupils (92%) and therefore remains a key priority for improvement. We aim to further develop and embed the culture of high attendance and punctuality through a whole school approach resulting in a positive impact on pupil progress and attainment.</p>
3	<p>Metacognition – High quality teaching is the key to success for disadvantaged pupils. They need to further develop the skills of retaining and recalling knowledge through retrieval and assessments, as well as improving their writing stamina, to build their emotional resilience and motivation to succeed. Targeted academic interventions need be more rigorously monitored and continuously refined to accelerate student progress and enhance performance. The quality of education for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, therefore, requires improvement to improve academic outcomes.</p>
4	<p>Low literacy – A significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils have not developed the reading/literacy skills necessary for success at KS2. This is indicated through analysis of SATs reading scores and highlighted by our baseline NGRT testing. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds frequently present with lower reading ages below their chronological age and often do not read for pleasure. This inhibits the development of vocabulary, becoming a barrier to success in secondary education. Implementing targeted intervention early to address lower literacy levels has begun to show evidence of improvement in reading ability and comprehension.</p>
5	<p>Cultural capital and aspiration deficit – Many of our disadvantaged pupils experience a limited range of extra-curricular opportunities and experiences outside school compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. A number of our disadvantaged pupils benefit from support to develop their aspirations so that they can move to appropriate post-16 pathways.</p>

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 subject attainment/outcomes among disadvantaged pupils, particularly by the end of KS4, with a specific focus on improving performance in the core subjects.	Narrow the P8 gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils to below -0.1 (when this measure is used). Attainment 8 score of above 38 to be achieved for disadvantaged pupils. Improvement in academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in line with their target grades, because of targeted and purposeful academic intervention.
Improved behaviour and attitudes among disadvantaged pupils resulting in a positive impact on academic progress.	The proportion of disadvantaged pupils receiving behaviour points and other sanctions is reduced, whilst rewards increase. Improved behaviour for learning and positive student engagement in lessons and motivation to succeed. Improvement in academic progress of disadvantaged pupils as indicated by internal assessment data and final examination results.
Sustained improvements in whole school attendance for all pupils, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.	The overall absence rate for all students being no more than 5% and the attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers being reduced, with disadvantaged attendance increasing to at least 92%. The percentage of all students who are persistently absent being below 15% and the figure among disadvantaged pupils being no more than 5% lower than their peers, using the 92% threshold.
Teachers consistently deliver high quality lessons which demonstrate the embedding of the “Principles of Instruction”. The curriculum transition to the Lionheart Trust model is successfully completed.	Quality of education for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged students, is strong. This is evidenced through the range of QA processes: learning walks, work scrutiny, student voice and academy/trust reviews. Disadvantaged pupils are able to demonstrate that they know how to learn and show greater resilience, thereby making improved progress.
Improved reading comprehension/literacy skills among disadvantaged pupils at KS3.	Data from targeted literacy interventions shows an improvement in reading ages and comprehension skills, in line with disadvantage pupils chronological age and

	<p>in comparison to non-disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils making more regular use of the LRC to read for pleasure. Long term desired outcome: disadvantaged pupils will meet national average in basic measures at Grade 4+ and 5+ by the end of Year 11.</p>
<p>Disadvantaged pupils demonstrate higher aspirations and their experiences outside school are broadened. They are more motivated to aim high and accelerate their progress so that they can attain well.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised and careers guidance and support is positively received. Post 16 prospects and destinations are appropriate, and the NEET figure remains low. Increased number of disadvantaged pupils participating in extra-curricular opportunities as data shows that disadvantaged pupils are proportionally represented in visits to universities, trips, visits, talks etc.</p>

Activity in this academic year (2025-2026)

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: £110,221

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Further developing teaching staff CPD programme so that they have the tools to enhance their delivery of quality first teaching.</p> <p>CPD primary focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Retrieval (b) Checking for understanding (c) Assessment (d) Quality of explanation/feedback <p>CPD to also be provided on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adaptive teaching to ensure high levels of challenge. 2) Trauma Informed Approach 3) Pupil Premium and Double disadvantaged 4) SISRA data analysis 	<p>“Good teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Using the Pupil Premium strategy to improve teaching quality benefits all students and has a particularly positive effect on children eligible for the Pupil Premium”.</p> <p><i>The EEF guide to the Pupil Premium: Key Principles</i></p> <p>https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidanceForTeachers/EEF-Guide-to-the-Pupil-Premium-Autumn-2021.pdf</p>	<p>3, 5</p>
<p>Introduction and development of instructional coaching triads with planned implementation of IRIS Connect</p>		<p>3</p>
<p>Further enhance teaching practice through weekly Teaching and Learning briefing sessions and staff training opportunities.</p>		<p>3</p>

Bespoke programme of ECT/UQT development which includes specific training on Pupil Premium.		3
Continued implementation of Lionheart Teaching and Learning Principles		3
Recruit and employ highly skilled subject specialists in English and Maths to improve the quality of education for all pupils.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation	3, 5
Development of Feedback Policy, with specific focus on written feedback	EEF: feedback (+ 6 months) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit	3
Provision of Chromebooks for Year 7 students to complement the laptops for Year 8 to Year 11. Disadvantaged pupils to be prioritised in distribution.	Disadvantaged pupils work engagement figures improve significantly once support with ICT was provided. This will also support home learning and independent study. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/digital	3, 5
Revise and implement the focus on homework/study to encourage independent learning.	EEF: homework (+ 5 months) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit Some disadvantaged students need a quiet place to complete homework	3, 5
Further embed the whole school strategy, through the promotion of reading opportunities e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGRT testing • Form time reading • Book fairs • Buddy Reading • Reciprocal reading • Targeted reading intervention through 	EEF: Reading comprehension strategies +6 months https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/literacy-ks3-ks4	4

Direct instruction and That Reading Thing	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics	
Provide further training opportunities for selected staff interested in delivering literacy interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust Training on Direct Instruction and Reciprocal Reading That Reading Thing 	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/reading-comprehension-strategies	3, 4, 5
Reinstate the provision of GCSE Pod for Key Stage 4 as an effective learning resource to support classroom learning.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/digital	2, 3, 5

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

Budgeted cost: £57,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Continue to provide reading intervention for targeted pupils in need of improving their reading age in line with their chronological age.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/reading-comprehension-strategies	3, 4, 5
Provide all KS4 pupils, prioritising disadvantaged pupils, with core subject revision materials to support academic progress.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mastery-learning https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/learning-styles	3, 5

Increased focus on the quality of education and progress of Y11 disadvantaged pupils as part of RAB programme with core Middle Leaders	To identify quickly when progress is slipping and to address. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit EEF: individualised instruction (+2 months)	3,5
Increased parental contact and feedback following internal data drops	Feedback (+8 months) Parental involvement (+ 3 months)	3, 5
Further develop after-school intervention and introduce targeted intervention through small group and 1-1 tutoring: initial focus on the core subjects to raise attainment and maximise progress	EEF – 1:1 tuition (+5 months) https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/summer-schools https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/extending-school-time	1 2, 3, 5
Continue to provide holiday intervention school to support GCSE exam revision and preparation: (Feb/Easter/May)		1, 2, 3, 5
Continue to work with external providers, such as Elevate Education, to support pupils with study skills, revision technique and wellbeing.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions	1, 2, 5
Introduce a supervised independent study room for		1, 2, 5

Year 11 pupils before and after school to support with coursework completion and subject revision.		
Improve subject QA processes to review disadvantaged pupils progress against non-disadvantage pupils e.g. Dept 360s focusing on pupil voice, book looks, lesson drop ins etc.		3, 5

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

Budgeted cost: £152,645

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Continue to improve whole school attendance, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils</p> <p>Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form tutor: Continue to provide Attendance Matters and introduce daily connect • Daily phone calls – disadvantaged pupils prioritised. • Letters at x% • Learning Manager intervention • Appointment of second full-time 	<p><u>Attendance interventions rapid evidence assessment EEF</u></p> <p><u>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring</u></p> <p><u>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/reducing-class-size</u></p> <p><u>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning</u></p> <p><u>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/parental-engagement</u></p>	1, 2

<p>attendance officer from October 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visits to check safe and well and encourage attendance • Introduce The Hive to provide a soft landing for pupils at risk of ESBA 		
<p>Further develop recognition of positive behaviours for disadvantaged pupils to raise aspirations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reward system and trips • Continuation of the 'Golden Ticket' prize draw • Academic recognition in assemblies • Provide certificates and incentives • Head of House interventions 	<p>EEF: Behaviour interventions +4 months</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>
<p>Further develop refreshment provisions to support with pupil attendance and engagement in before and after school interventions to raise academic outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering breakfast, supervised support and quiet space for Year 11s before school. • Providing food for pupils who attend afterschool interventions 	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/extending-school-time</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/homework</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/feedback</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/individualised-instruction</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mastery-learning</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>

<p>Continue to provide school uniform and other essential items for disadvantaged pupils in need of support.</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/school-uniform</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>
<p>Further improve parental engagement activities, prioritising communication with parents of disadvantaged pupils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Beehive communication • Attendance to key events e.g. Parents Evenings, Year 11 Commitment to Success Evenings, Post-16 Evenings etc. • Weekly Associate Principal communication • Parent Focus Group • Telephone contact to encourage attendance to events 	<p>EEF: Parental engagement +3 months</p> <p>EEF – Working with parents to support children’s learning</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/supporting-parents</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>
<p>Ensure disadvantaged is a key focus on department development plans. Subject areas to have a disadvantage (PP) champion to ensure disadvantage pupils are receiving high quality education and support to improve academic outcomes.</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mastery-learning</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</p>

<p>Continue to provide Alternative Provision and pastoral/academic support where appropriate for disadvantaged pupils so that they continue to achieve well.</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>
<p>Continue to provide careers and Post 16 guidance and support from our full time Careers Officer, prioritising disadvantage pupils to raise aspirations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening Participation Programme • Mock/Trial Interviews • Post 16 applications and visits • Year 9 Options support • University visits • Duke of Edinburgh Award – Bronze & Silver 	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/careers-education</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/outdoor-adventure-learning</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>
<p>Further develop the Year 5/6 Enhanced/Transition Programme prioritising disadvantaged/vulnerable pupils to ensure they have the best possible start to their secondary education.</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-planning-support/3-wider-strategies</p>	<p>1, 2, 5</p>

Total budgeted cost: £319,866.00

Part B: The Review of the previous academic year outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (2024-2025)

Many strategies were utilised effectively last academic year to bring about improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

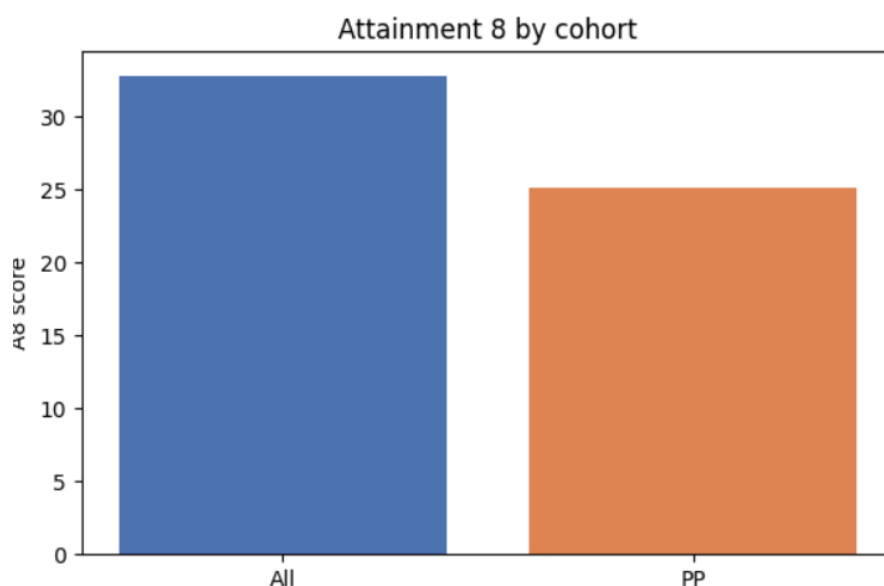
The main key positives from our strategy implementation are:

- Disadvantaged pupils outperform All students at Grade 9–7 in English (+4.3pp), which is a strong indicator that targeted strategies like Big Teach, breakfast and pre-exam revision sessions, and reward systems worked well for higher ability students.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Science are almost on par with All students (gap only – 0.2pp) at Grade 9-7, suggesting interventions and revision support helped maintain equity in high attainment.
- Effective Literacy Interventions have shown substantial progress in reading age which is foundational for success across subjects - Direct Instruction (English): Average improvement of +20.4 months. Direct Instruction (Maths): Average +22 months (Y8). Reciprocal Reading: +4.2 months (weighted). Buddy Reading: weighted improvement of +11 months, with 75% of disadvantaged pupils participating in Year 7.
- Strong PP targeting in Buddy Reading (75%) and DI Maths (66.7%) demonstrates that resources were directed where they were most needed.
- KS3 disadvantaged pupils are showing that in some subjects the attainment gap is closing gaps effectively.
- Behaviour ethos has shown improvement with the change in culture starting to take affect across the academy. This is supported by the increased focus on the academies reward system which recognises pupil achievement and celebrates their engagement and motivation to behave well in school. Reward trips, early introduction of “Golden Ticket” reward system for Year 11’s and wider school opportunities have been greatly welcomed providing pupils with enriching experiences.
- Comprehensive support strategy through the delivery of regular assemblies/information sessions, 1-1 careers guidance, revision holiday schools, and exam attendance sweeps has shown a well-structured approach to removing barriers and supporting disadvantaged pupils holistically.
- A large majority of Year 11 students, including disadvantaged pupils, secured Post 16 destinations, minimising the academy’s NEET figure overall.
- In 2024-2025, disadvantaged pupils’ attendance was 9.5% below that of non-disadvantaged pupils (disadvantage attendance = 82.3% vs non-disadvantage = 91.8%). Embedding Trust Attendance processes and procedures has created a strong foundation for the improved drive and increased focus on the importance

of attendance, which has started to see the disadvantage gap narrow by 4.5% compared to last academic year as a result.

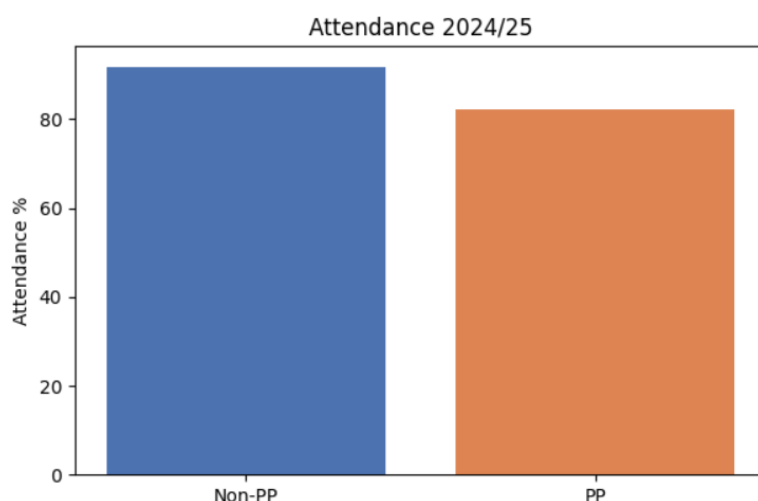
Whilst noticeable improvements have been made, academic outcomes are still not where we would like them to be. The key areas in need of further improvement therefore include:

- Further improve the quality of education within the academy, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, so the Attainment 8 gap is reduced. PP A8 = 25.1 vs All = 32.8 (gap -7.7). Despite additional staffing and interventions provided in Maths, disadvantaged pupils are still underperforming compared to All students. Improved focus required through precision tutoring, targeted intervention for borderline grades Grade 3→4, Grade 4→5, Grade 5 and Grade 7, to ensure pupils achieve their true potential. There is a need to revise or further develop core subject intervention as key priority for improving overall outcomes and to ensure early intervention in KS3 is applied to prevent gaps widening by KS4.



- Attendance remains a key focus area for continued improvement as this strongly correlates with lower attainment and academic outcomes. The academy is to intensify its attendance drive and monitoring of disadvantage pupils' attendance by utilising the additional Attendance Officer to support with daily contact/communication, home visits and parental engagement, whilst

further increasing opportunities for rewards linked to attendance.



- Reciprocal Reading shows modest gains (+4.2 months) compared to Direct Instruction (+20.4 months) and Buddy Reading (+11 months). Further embedment of the reading strategy is needed by increasing the dosage and fidelity of Reciprocal Reading to raise its average improvement towards Direct Instruction levels. Increased CPD training for staff on Reciprocal Reading is also required to support curriculum outcomes and to enhance overall literacy levels at KS3.

Upon reflection of strategies deployed and lesson learnt from the previous academic year, we continue to strive for excellence in our Pupil Premium provision by ensuring disadvantaged pupils are provided with the correct tools to achieve well and succeed as they enter adulthood.

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you used your pupil premium to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider
Y10 Study Sensei	Elevate
Y11 Ace Your Exams	Elevate
Y11 Time Management	Elevate

Service pupil premium funding (optional)

<i>For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information: How our service pupil premium allocation was spent last academic year</i>
N/A
The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils
N/A

Further information (optional)

Use this space to provide any further information about your pupil premium strategy. For example, about your strategy planning, implementation and evaluation, or other activity that you are delivering to support disadvantaged pupils that is not dependent on pupil premium funding.