

Pupil premium strategy statement – Watling 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	1768
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	22.4%
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)	2025-2028
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2026
Statement authorised by	James Cassidy
Pupil premium lead	Natalie Bennett
Governor / Trustee lead	Helen Pidgeon

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£404,000
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>	£404,000

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Watling Academy, ensuring no student is anonymous is at the heart of everything we do. Regardless of background or socio-economic status, our aim is for every student to access our broad and balanced curriculum, make good progress, achieve high attainment, and access a broad range of opportunities that build cultural capital and prepare them for life beyond school.

Our Pupil Premium strategy is designed to support disadvantaged students so that gaps in attainment, engagement, wellbeing, and access to opportunity are minimised. We recognise that disadvantage presents in many forms, and our approach is tailored to meet the diverse needs of our students — from those facing significant barriers to learning, to high achievers who require support to reach their full potential.

High quality, adaptive teaching is integral to closing the disadvantage attainment gap and as such is central to our Pupil Premium strategy. Additional intervention will give further support to our students so that we can support them in attending school regularly, engage positively with learning, experience good mental and emotional wellbeing, and access meaningful opportunities for personal development. Our ultimate object is to ensure all students finish Year 11 with a range of viable post-16 options that allow them to experience further success in the world of further education, training and employment.

To achieve these aims, our strategy focuses on:

- Addressing key areas of challenge through small, incremental steps. Pupils' individual barriers are identified and shared with all staff. Support is personalised to support individual barriers and overseen by a dedicated Pupil Premium Champion.
- Embedding a culture where all staff view teaching and support through the lens of disadvantage. Our Pupil Premium strategy is owned by all staff, as everyone plays their own part in ensuring the success of disadvantaged pupils.
- Progress being monitored at all levels, including Senior Leaders, Heads of Year, Heads of Department, Form Tutors and classroom teachers to ensure that their progress, attainment and engagement is in line with their non-disadvantaged peers. Regular feedback, monitoring and evaluation is essential to our Pupil Premium strategy, to ensure that interventions and support in place are relevant and effective.
- Delivering high-quality adaptive teaching as the foundation of support, supplemented by targeted and wider interventions to address barriers such as attendance, behaviour, safeguarding concerns and access to resources needed to successfully engage with all parts of school life.

Through this approach, we aim to ensure that all students — regardless of their starting point — are known, valued, and supported to succeed.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Academic Progress</p> <p>Milestone targets for pupils show that disadvantaged pupils have an average target grade lower than their non-disadvantaged peers, meaning there is already a gap when considering their achievement and attainment to date. Academic challenges such as regular completion of homework, low literacy and numeracy levels, identified SEND and academic resilience are posing as barriers for our disadvantaged pupils in Years 7-11, highlighting the need for timely and effective academic intervention to close gaps in achievement especially within Years 10 and 11 when students begin their GCSEs.</p>
2	<p>Attendance</p> <p>The attendance of disadvantaged pupils in the 2024-2025 academic year is of high concern, following national trends of an increase in persistent absenteeism with our most vulnerable student groups. Research shows strong links between good attendance and good academic outcomes, therefore it is essential that support is in place to ensure disadvantaged pupils are in school regularly to access learning and other opportunities</p>
3	<p>Behaviour for learning</p> <p>Data from the 2024-2025 academic year shows that there has been an increase in low-level behaviours of concern with our disadvantaged pupils and notably a high percentage of our students referred for alternative provisions are in receipt of Pupil Premium. We must ensure that a robust and tailored programme of intervention to support engagement and behaviour is in place, including timely communication with parents and carers, to support improvements in pupil behaviour across the academy.</p>
4	<p>Wellbeing including safeguarding</p> <p>Pupils from socio-economically deprived areas are more likely to struggle with their mental health and wellbeing, often due to external anxieties within the family home. We continue to see increasing numbers of disadvantaged pupils who present with mental health and safeguarding challenges, and it is imperative we continue to consider the impact of these experiences on pupils daily life. A trauma-informed approach is essential in supporting our disadvantaged pupils to have a good personal wellbeing.</p>
5	<p>Access to resources and opportunities</p> <p>We know that financial hardship can prevent pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium from regularly attending school, accessing the curriculum and wider personal development opportunities. We want to ensure that all pupils, particularly those</p>

	in receipt of Pupil Premium can access all opportunities provided by the academy, and have the resources that allow them to work effectively at school and at home.
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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
The attainment and achievement gaps between Disadvantaged pupils and their peers have been closed or eliminated	In successive years, the attainment closes based on the results of internal and external assessments compared to milestone targets.
Gaps in attendance between Disadvantaged and their peers have reduced.	The attendance of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding is high, and as a result they are in school and accessing quality first adaptive teaching.
Behaviour and engagement of disadvantaged students is in line with peers, with a reduced number of suspensions.	Pastoral staff have identified disadvantaged pupils whose behaviour is of concern and impacting their learning. Following assessment, a tailored package of intervention and support is in place to reduce behaviour points and other consequences.
Disadvantaged pupils enjoy good emotional and mental wellbeing, enabling them to engage fully in their learning	Bespoke intervention is in place for those disadvantaged pupils with wellbeing or mental health concerns. This is supporting them in being safe and happy within school, and able to access learning alongside their peers.
Watling Academy uses PP funding effectively to support students to access all aspects of school life, including trips, clubs and resources required for learning	All disadvantage pupils have the same levels of access to the wider personal development curriculum as their non-disadvantaged peers, including clubs and trips. They are all able to wear full uniform, have the correct equipment and have access to a nutritious meal.

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: £104,563

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Staff Training</p> <p>All staff receive training centred on identifying the barriers of Pupil Premium pupils, and how to use identified strategies to support progress of pupils. Form tutors are trained to complete mentoring conversations with their tutees who are identified as Pupil Premium, gathering more qualitative data about identified barriers which allows school staff to put purposeful and targeted interventions in place.</p> <p>Training is targeted to specific groups and focused on their role, e.g. how to support within a pastoral role.</p> <p>All teaching staff have chosen a Professional Learning Group CPD focus, centred on Adaptive Teaching including groups on supporting Vulnerable Pupils, use of data to inform planning, and effective engagement.</p>	<p>A full programme of CPD will be in place, covering a range of areas that are highlighted to have a positive impact on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Research shows that effective professional development should focus on building staff knowledge, developing strategies and embedding practice, which the PLG focus groups allow for.</p> <p>Effective Professional Development EEF</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using Feedback +6 Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning EEF - Metacognition and self-regulation Metacognition and self-regulation EEF 	<p>1, 2, 3, 4</p>
<p>Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit highlights the positive impact of the following strategies:</p>	<p>1</p>

<p>Teaching and Learning CPD is focused on adaptive teaching and ensuring all teachers are making pro-active and reactive adaptations to their lessons to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are PP. Strategies are shared with staff with a focus on meaningful assessment and feedback as a foundation of their teaching and learning.</p> <p>Watling Academy has invested in Teaching and Learning software, Flourish, supporting the accurate tracking and monitoring of teaching across the school. Flourish will enable for quicker analysis of learning walk and observation data, as well as making feedback on targets for staff more focused.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback (+6) - Metacognition and self-regulation (+8) - Reading comprehension strategies Reading comprehension strategies EEF 	
<p>Testing</p> <p>All pupils in Year 7-9 complete a STAR reader test (through Accelerated Reader) three times a year; Autumn, Spring and Summer.</p>	<p>This data allows us to identify those pupils whose literacy skills pose as a barrier for full access to the curriculum. By testing at regular intervals, we can accurately measure the progress individual pupils are making with their reading whilst also identifying those where reading later becomes a barrier.</p>	1
<p>Recruitment</p> <p>A Pupil Premium Champion is in place, with clear responsibility for the progress of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium.</p>	<p>Clear monitoring of student progress by a lead member of staff who is accountable for the progress and cultural capital of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium</p> <p>Pastoral assistants focus on positive interactions and closing gaps in achievement, not just academically but</p>	1, 2, 3, 4

Recruitment of Pastoral assistants to support pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium with identified barriers	with rewards and consequences, alongside the Head of Year team.	
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Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support, structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £79,840

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Literacy Support Additional small group and 1-to-1 interventions for our most vulnerable pupils (PP, SEND) where reading and literacy is a barrier to progress. Interventions are tailored to groups of students and run by trained staff within the SEND and Reading teams.	<p>Interventions in previous years have had a positive impact on pupil progress, as well as confidence with reading.</p> <p>Reading comprehension skills are closely linked with attainment across the wider curriculum.</p> <p>The small group tuition model is shown to be effective (EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, +4)</p> <p>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools EEF</p> <p>Reading comprehension strategies EEF</p>	1
Social skills support Targeted small group interventions based on developing communication and social skills which support positive engagement and behaviour. Pupils are identified through referral, with a focus on including the most	<p>Interventions in previous years have had a marked improvement on pupils' skills of interaction and self-regulation.</p> <p>Small group sizes supports pupils in feeling more comfortable and open to improving these skills.</p> <p>Social and emotional learning EEF</p>	3

vulnerable students (PP, SEND)		
Numeracy support Additional small group and 1-to-1 interventions for our most vulnerable pupils (PP, SEND) where numeracy is a barrier to progress. Interventions are tailored to groups of students and run by trained staff within the SEND (with guidance from the Maths department).	Interventions in previous years have had a positive impact on pupil progress, as well as confidence with reading. EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small group tuition +4 - TA Intervention +4 	1
Herts for Learning Reading Fluency Programme A programme of intervention over an 8-week period focused on improving skills of reading fluency and comprehension. Students who are in receipt of Pupil Premium whose reading levels are just below expected standards are prioritised, alongside other vulnerable groups such as SEND and EAL.	Students will receive small group intervention focused on their reading fluency, a key area of improvement highlighted within government research and curriculum plans. Research on oral language interventions are positive, and suggest an impact of on average +6 months. Initial feedback from the pilot project suggests gains of on average 2 years Oral language interventions EEF	1

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

Budgeted cost: £219,236

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
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<p>Attendance</p> <p>The attendance team has been expanded to allow for more targeted and early intervention.</p> <p>The school have invested in software, Attend, which will support the timely running of reports and tracking of interventions to improve attendance.</p>	<p>Research shows that high attendance has a significant impact on attainment in GCSEs. It is imperative that disadvantaged pupils are in school so that they can access learning and overcome barriers. This supports in ensuring these pupils do not become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) at the end of compulsory education.</p> <p>Supporting attendance EEF</p> <p>Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)</p>	<p>1, 2, 4</p>
<p>Wellbeing support</p> <p>Targeted support from the pastoral, wellbeing and SEND team with students who have emotional barriers to school, including challenges with their mental health and wellbeing. This includes support from the school counsellor, wellbeing mentor and mental health lead.</p> <p>Weekly wellbeing lessons support pupils with their mental, physical and social health. Sessions are run by their form tutor, who can then follow up difficulties in mentoring sessions.</p>	<p>Improving Behaviour in Schools EEF</p> <p>Our PP Champion works alongside the SEND and pastoral teams, helping to intervene and support students overcoming barriers to learning that may vary from behavioural issues, anxiety and mental health problems.</p> <p>We have a well-resourced Wellbeing team including a wellbeing mentor and school counsellor to support students with their mental health and emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>Our weekly CARE meetings show a matrix of individual support and intervention in place for our most vulnerable students, which is attended by the Pupil Premium Champion alongside key pastoral staff members.</p>	<p>3, 4</p>
<p>Access</p> <p>Ensuring that all students can access the curriculum, wider curriculum and extra-curricular activities including clubs and trips.</p>	<p>Enriching a student's education has intrinsic benefits. All children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, deserve a well-rounded and culturally rich education.</p>	<p>5</p>

Where applicable a contribution towards payments for uniform, school equipment and access to meals.		
Focused careers provision A whole school approach to careers education within the curriculum, alongside a Careers Lead and Careers advisor.	A school's careers programme should actively seek to challenge stereotypical thinking and raise aspirations. Meeting Gatsby Benchmark 3, meeting the needs of each young person. A guide to Gatsby Benchmark 3 Gatsby Benchmarks	1, 4, 5
Parental engagement Regular contact between school and parents/carers of those students identified as SEND or Pupil Premium	Increased communication with parents by form tutors and other pastoral staff. EEF Toolkit Parental Engagement +4	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Total budgeted cost: £404,000

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Gaps between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students at Key Stage 4 were evident. In the 2024-2025 academic year, Progress 8 scores were not published due to a lack of Key Stage 2 data for pupils as result of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures. Attainment 8 has therefore been used as an indicator for the 2024-2025 academic year. The average Attainment 8 for disadvantaged pupils was 46.43 compared to 48.63 for non-disadvantaged pupils. The national figure for Attainment 8 for disadvantaged pupils was 34.9, so we are significantly ahead of national figures.

EBacc entry for disadvantaged pupils was 61%, which was lower than non-disadvantaged pupils at 75%. However, the number of disadvantaged pupils entered for the EBacc is significantly higher than the national figure of 29%. The Average Points Score (APS) for disadvantaged pupils was also higher than the national average, at 3.96 against a national figure of 3.02.

43.9% of disadvantaged pupils achieved a Grade 5 or above in both English and Maths, against a national figure of 25.6%. However, there remains a gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils within Watling Academy, with a figure of 58.6%.

A key focus of our Pupil Premium strategy has centred on raising the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils. Whilst it is good to see that our disadvantaged pupils are achieving well above national averages, a high focus must remain on closing the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers. It is worth noting that the pupils included in the performance data will have experienced some disruption due to Covid-19 earlier in their schooling, which will have affected individual pupils differently.

Absence among our disadvantaged pupils in the 2024-2025 academic year was higher than their non-disadvantaged peers by roughly 3%. Consequently, attendance remains a key focus within our strategy and planning as a school.

We have used Pupil Premium funding in a range of ways to ensure all pupils have access to all opportunities at Watling Academy, including providing additional educational materials, supporting with funding for trips, peripatetic music lessons, clubs and uniform. We will continue to look for ways we can develop aspiration within our disadvantaged pupils, for example through university visits and careers opportunities. This will remain a focus for this academic year.

Externally provided programmes

Only DFE programmes were used.

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>
Watling Academy receives no Service Pupil Premium funding.
The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils
Not applicable.

Further information (optional)

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. [EEF evidence on feedback](#) demonstrates significant benefits, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Offering a range of high-quality extra-curricular activities to boost wellbeing, behaviour, attendance, and aspiration. Activities (e.g., The Duke of Edinburgh's Award), will focus on life skills such as confidence, resilience, and socialising. Disadvantaged pupils will be encouraged and supported to participate.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation

In reviewing our current pupil premium strategy, we evaluated why activity undertaken in the previous year had not had the degree of impact that we had expected.

We triangulated evidence from multiple sources of data including exams and assessments, engagement in class book scrutiny, and conversations with parents, students and teachers, in order to identify the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils.

We looked at several 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 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 implemented a robust evaluation framework for the duration of our three-year strategy and will adjust our plan over time to secure better outcomes for pupils.