

Pupil premium strategy statement

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	Dorset Studio School
Number of pupils in school	335
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	33.1% (111)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-26 to 2027-28
Date this statement was published	November 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	November 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr. Jason Malone, Principal
Pupil premium lead	Mr. Paul Chapman, Assistant Principal
Governor / Trustee lead	Mr. Andy Daw, Chair of Governors

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£120,695.00
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£120,695.00
If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year	Not applicable

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our intention is to provide outstanding Land & Environment learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of socio-economic background, through a dynamic, integrated curriculum which reflects the unique context of Dorset Studio School. As a result, all students, regardless of their background or academic starting point, will be enabled to thrive in their environment and make excellent progress in their learning. Our students leave us with a suite of qualifications achieved through our pathways process. These include English, Maths, Science, Geography, and our specialism qualifications of Animal Care and Land Based Studies.

At Dorset Studio School, our Pupil Premium strategy is shaped by the understanding that disadvantage affects young people in different ways and that each pupil's experience is unique. Although Pupil Premium eligibility offers only a limited picture of need, we use it as one indicator within a broader, more nuanced approach. As a small mainstream secondary school with a land and environment specialism, we are able to combine our inclusive whole-school practices that benefit all learners with finely tuned, individual interventions made possible by our close working relationships with students and their families. We also remain attentive to pupils who may be vulnerable for other reasons—such as those with a social worker, young carers, and looked after children—regardless of whether they receive Pupil Premium funding.

We recognise that barriers to learning can be academic, emotional and/or social, and can be a combination of all of these. Our response, therefore, has to be broad and coordinated. Staff across the school - teachers, pastoral leads, SENCOs, vocational mentors, and external partners - work together to provide effective and efficient support within the capacity of our resources. Our small-school structure enables us to know each pupil well, and our strong pastoral systems ensure that the commitment and insight of our staff translates into practical action that helps disadvantaged learners succeed both in the classroom and in our specialist outdoor and vocational settings.

Central to our strategy is the belief that every student is entitled to an ambitious and engaging curriculum, including the skills, knowledge and understanding through land-based learning which is what we are about. We do not dilute expectations for disadvantaged pupils; instead, we focus on ensuring they have the teaching, resources, and guidance they need to access the full curriculum. High-quality, well-structured teaching—supported by clear explanations, strong routines, and a focus on progression—remains the most effective way to secure long-term improvement and close attainment gaps. Every member of staff understands their shared responsibility for championing disadvantaged students and helping them build the knowledge, confidence, and resilience needed for future study and employment.

We are committed to self-evaluation in order to get better at what we do. By reviewing our Pupil Premium strategy throughout the year and adapting it in response to evidence, we ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively, experience success across school life, and are never further disadvantaged.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Literacy and Numeracy - Diagnostic assessment and reading age tests indicate that a significant number of disadvantaged pupils have lower literacy and numeracy skills. Upon entry to Dorset Studio School disadvantaged pupils in year 7 have an average scaled literacy score of 99.9 compared to 100.5 for non-disadvantaged pupils, and an average scaled numeracy score of 86.7 compared to 90.9 for non-disadvantaged pupils. 23.5% of disadvantaged pupils score significantly below age related expectation (85 or lower) for literacy,</p>
2	<p>Achievement - Disadvantaged pupils have historically made less progress than other pupils from the same prior attainment band in some subjects at KS4, compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. This is in line with national trends. However, in 2024/25 the gap between the attainment of PP pupils compared to non-PP pupils has been narrowed significantly.</p>
3	<p>Wellbeing & Safeguarding – Many disadvantaged pupils face social and emotional challenges, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which are being intensified by the cost-of-living crisis. The pastoral team identify that the number of Pupil Premium students experiencing difficulties is proportionally higher than other students. Internal data shows that a disproportionate percentage of safeguarding referrals are made for our disadvantaged students when considered in the context of the whole school population. This results in a large proportion of our Safeguarding and Pastoral Team (DSL & DDSLs) time being spent supporting disadvantaged students</p>
4	<p>Aspirations - Low aspirations and self-esteem for a number of pupil premium pupils across all year groups is having a detrimental impact on their academic progress. Internal research backs up wider studies which suggest that disadvantaged pupils can often lack resilience and self-regulation strategies when faced with challenging tasks.</p>
5	<p>Attendance - Our attendance data over the last 3 years indicates that attendance among disadvantaged pupils has been between 3 - 5% lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils. Our assessments and observations indicate that absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged pupils' progress.</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
<p>1. Literacy and Numeracy</p> <p>Disadvantaged students can access the full KS3 and KS4 curriculum without literacy being a barrier. Students identified as needing support receive targeted interventions and make accelerated progress in their identified area of literacy and/or numeracy development, which in turn enables them to fully access the curriculum and make accelerated progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading tests demonstrate improved fluency and comprehension skills and accelerated progress among disadvantaged pupils and will be in line or above their chronological age • Internal quality assurance and work in books will demonstrate extended writing which is well structured, 'word rich' and uses subject specific vocabulary appropriately • Pupils will have the skills to tackle challenging texts suitable for their chronological reading ages and in summative assessments
<p>2. Achievement</p> <p>Disadvantaged students benefit from the whole school approach to teaching and learning. Disadvantaged students achieve well in public examinations compared to national averages and go onto meaningful post 16 pathways. Attainment gaps are narrowed between disadvantaged students and their peers. Individual barriers to learning are removed so that the targeted disadvantaged and vulnerable students are supported in their academic growth. All staff are aware of the Pupil Premium Strategy and their part in it, having high expectations for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in books shows a high level of challenge demonstrating good or better progress alongside continually deepening their understanding and skills. There is clear evidence of checking for understanding (CFU) and directed improvement and reflection time (DIRT). • KS4 outcomes demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils achieve an average Attainment 8 score in line with their 50th centile target.
<p>3. Wellbeing and Safeguarding</p> <p>Sustained and improved wellbeing for all pupils, with particular support for disadvantaged students, so that they are engaged, confident, and able to make strong academic progress. Students requiring additional support receive a bespoke offer of targeted support from skilled professionals, which positively impacts their wellbeing. Disadvantaged students receive timely, consistent, and effective safeguarding support. Strong in-school Early Help offer supports disadvantaged students and their families. Regularly signposting to outside agencies and community projects to support families in need. -Referrals for additional support are targeted and purposeful to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged students who are targeted for SEMH interventions show better self-regulation and better relationships with staff and peers. • Disadvantaged students requiring it, have access to high quality alternative provision and are thriving there. • All staff consistently identify and make safeguarding referrals, with disadvantaged students' referrals addressed promptly and accurately logged. • A coordinated approach through support plans leads to tangible improvements in disadvantaged students' wellbeing, attendance, and engagement

<p>ensure families can access the help they need.</p>	
<p>4. Aspirations Disadvantaged students experience a range of high-quality vocational and enrichment experiences so they; build their cultural and social capital; develop wider soft skills; can fully access and appreciate the curriculum; have clarity about their post 16 options; move onto meaningful post 16 destinations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum enables meaningful opportunities for building cultural and social capital across a wide range of disciplines. • All students regardless of background successfully engage with opportunities to develop vocational skills, including sustained work placements at KS4. • Destinations data shows all disadvantaged students have suitable post 16 pathways
<p>5. Attendance Disadvantaged students regularly attend school, feel a sense of belonging and have positive in-school relationships with staff and peers. The whole school attendance strategy supports disadvantaged students and their families to maintain regular attendance. Disadvantaged students who struggle with regular attendance receive timely and targeted support from pastoral staff and where appropriate the local authority inclusion team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged students targeted for additional support for attendance show improvement in attendance figures across the academic year. • The attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers is below the national gap. • Overall attendance rate for disadvantaged students is in line with or better than the national average. • The proportion of disadvantaged students who are Persistently Absent (PA) is in line with or better than the level of PA for others nationally.

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: **£40,506**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Provide CPD time and training so that across all subjects there is high quality teaching that utilises effective checking for understanding and tailored directed improvement and reflection time	<p>The best strategy for reducing the gap is quality-first teaching.</p> <p>High Quality Teaching EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-planning-support/1-high-quality-teaching</p> <p>Effective Professional Development EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-professional-development</p>	1,2,4
Provide CPD time and training so that across all subjects there is strong curriculum design ensuring that each subject curriculum is inclusive, with a multiple focus on language, metacognition & key vocabulary being explicitly taught	<p>Acquiring disciplinary literacy is key for students as they learn new, more complex concepts in each subject.</p> <p>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/literacy-ks3-ks4</p> <p>Teaching metacognitive strategies is an inexpensive method to help pupils become more independent learners.</p> <p>Metacognition and self-regulation EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation</p>	1,2,4
Provide sufficient CPD time to ensure that every staff member understands their role in supporting disadvantaged students and to foster a unified approach across the school.	<p>Sharing values around the unique strengths and needs of your pupils will unite your school community around what is being put in place to support the children in your setting.</p> <p>The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/using-pupil-premium</p>	1,2,3,4,5

A six-period day extending to 4pm provides lessons in a supportive, teacher-led environment for disadvantaged students.	Extending school time can lead to improved attainment through additional learning hours providing pupils with more exposure to teaching, more time to engage with content, and generally more learning. Extending school time EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/extending-school-time	1,2,4
Provide training for staff so that there are DDSLs and DSL trained pastoral leads for both KS3 and KS4.	Children learn best when they feel safe and valued. Fordham Institute https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/children-learn-best-when-they-feel-safe-and-valued	3,5
Purchase baseline diagnostic reading software so that data is used regularly to identify those needing extra support and to monitor their progress over time.	When used effectively, diagnostic assessments can indicate areas for development for individual pupils, or across classes and year groups, leading to improving outcomes. Diagnostic assessment EEF Education Endowment Foundation	1,2

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

Budgeted cost: £ 29,539

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Targeted reading interventions are provided for struggling readers, including small group withdrawal with specialist teaching assistants	Targeted support matched to individual pupil needs can be employed to help boost language development & oracy. Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit	1,2
Termly tracking data is used to identify cohorts of disadvantaged students at risk of	Closing the disadvantage gap - Small group mentoring offers greater levels of interaction and feedback compared to whole class teaching which can support pupils to spend more time	1,2

underachieving. Head of subject set intervention groups, setting targets and providing bespoke interventions	<p>on new or unfamiliar, overcome barriers to learning and increase their progress through the curriculum.</p> <p>High quality interventions have a big impact on the outcomes of struggling pupil premium students.</p> <p>Using pupil premium EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium</p>	
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Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £ 50,650

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Tiered layers of support for students' mental health to allow them to develop a healthy self-esteem and mental health and improve their emotional wellbeing. Strong links are established between pastoral & safeguarding staff and appropriate external agencies.	<p>Mental health & safeguarding concerns negatively affect the education and readiness to engage with education of pupil premium students.</p> <p>Using pupil premium guidance for school leaders Using_pupil_premium_guidance.pdf</p>	3,5
All disadvantaged students receive a one-to-one careers meeting, a mock interview and are supported with preparing applications to post-16 education and training providers.	<p>High-quality careers advice can make a real difference to young people's outcomes after school, particularly those from disadvantaged homes.</p> <p>Career aspirations EEF review of evidence on the impact of careers education</p>	2,4
Disadvantaged students at risk of becoming PA supported by KS	Supporting attendance EEF	3,5

<p>Pastoral Leads. KS Pastoral Leads develop strong relationships with hard-to-reach families of disadvantaged students</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance</p>	
<p>Visits, trips and experiences are subsidised for disadvantaged students</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that engaging in extracurricular activities has a positive impact on attendance at school, behaviour and relationships with peers Life skills and enrichment EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/life-skills-enrichment</p>	<p>3,4,5</p>

Total budgeted cost: £ 120,695.00

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.

Raising achievement:

- Whilst progress measures are not available for the 2024-25 academic year, it is notable that this is the first year that PP students have out-performed non-PP students in the achievement of higher academic grades, with the percentage of PP students achieving Grade 7 or higher in GCSE English and Maths being over double the percentage of non-PP students.

Narrowing the gap:

- The gap between PP students achieving Grade 5 or higher in GCSE English and non-PP students was 9.3%. This is significantly narrower than the National Percentage Gap of 25.4%.
- The gap between PP students achieving Grade 5 or higher in GCSE Maths and non-PP students was 6.5%. This is significantly narrower than the National Percentage Gap of 26.8%.
- The gap between PP students achieving Grade 7 or higher in both GCSE English and Maths was removed completely, with over double the percentage of PP students achieving Grade 7 or higher than non-PP students.
- The percentage of PP students achieving both English and Maths at Grade 5 or above was also marginally higher than the percentage of non-PP students achieving this benchmark.

Areas for improvement:

- Whilst the percentage of PP students achieving both GCSE English and Maths at Grade 4 or above improved when compared to the previous academic year, it remains 14.9% percentage points lower than for non-PP students. Pupils join DSS with numeracy levels below the national average and the gap between literacy and numeracy attainment levels needs to be narrowed further throughout the journey from Year 7 to Year 11 in order to improve the percentage of pupils achieving both English and Maths GCSEs at grade 4.
- Attendance for PP pupils in 2024/25 was 4.33% lower than non-PP pupils across all year groups and 4.57% lower in Year 11. Whilst this is a narrower gap than the national picture for 2022/23 (6.5% lower across all year groups and 8.4% lower in Year 11), further effort to improve attendance for PP pupils is required to eliminate the attainment gap between PP and non-PP pupils.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Lexia	Lexia
Reading Plus	Dreambox Learning
CAT4	GL Assessments
ART	Hodder Education
AMT	Hodder Education
Toe-by-Toe	Toe-by-Toe
Power of 2	123 Learning

Further information

The Dorset Studio School Pupil Premium Strategy will work hand in hand with our whole school priorities, ensuring that all pupils make good progress and where pupils start classed as disadvantaged, they do not leave disadvantaged. We will continue to evaluate the implementation of all our chosen strategies through regular assessment of resultant impact and value for money and where identified as being necessary strategies will be refined accordingly.