Pupil premium strategy statement – South Wirral High School

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	991
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	44%
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	September 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	October 2026, October 2027
Statement authorised by	M Cloherty
Pupil premium lead	G Williams
Governor / Trustee lead	J Quayle

Cohort information

Year Group	Total pupils	Total PP	% PP
7	203	88	43%
8	170	82	48%
9	191	79	41%
10	213	97	46%
11	208	93	45%
12	0	0	0
13	6	1	16.6%

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£388,300
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years *(enter £0 if not applicable)*	£0
Total budget for this academic year *If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year*	£388,300

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our Pupil Premium strategy is underpinned by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Pupil Premium Guide, which identifies high-quality teaching as having the greatest impact on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, supported by targeted academic support and wider strategies to address barriers beyond the classroom.

Foundation learning skills are a central driver of our Pupil Premium strategy. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised for early identification and support in literacy (including reading fluency and handwriting), numeracy, oracy, study skills, metacognition and behaviour for learning. Strengthening these foundations at Key Stage 3 is essential to securing equitable access to the curriculum and enabling sustained success at Key Stage 4.

This strategy is shaped by a precise understanding of the school's own internal data, alongside the wider educational context of the Wirral. Our intent is to ensure that disadvantage does not limit achievement, aspiration or access to an ambitious curriculum, and that Pupil Premium funding is used strategically to raise standards and close gaps.

School Context and Barriers to Learning

At our school, 36% of pupils are currently eligible for Pupil Premium, which is above the national average and reflects the socio-economic diversity of the local area. Internal analysis shows that our disadvantaged pupils face several overlapping barriers:

- Socio-economic disadvantage: A significant proportion of PP pupils experience reduced access to academic resources, enrichment opportunities and wider cultural capital, impacting confidence, readiness to learn and engagement.
- Attendance: In 2024/25, attendance for PP pupils was 83.09%, compared to 91.23% for non-PP pupils, with persistent absence disproportionately affecting disadvantaged pupils. Reduced attendance limits curriculum exposure and continuity of learning.
- Reading ages: On entry to Year 7 42% of PP students are below their chronological reading age, on entry to KS4, current Year 10 have 54%, Y11 are at 52% of PP students below the national average, whole school PP, 49% of PP pupils have a reading age below chronological age, with an average gap of 48 months, significantly affecting access to written curriculum content.

- Prior attainment in mathematics: Internal transition data shows that 45% of PP pupils entered the school below the expected standard in KS2 mathematics, reflecting wider Wirral attainment patterns and creating early barriers to progress in a cumulative subject.

- Cognitive load and retention: PP pupils are overrepresented among those who struggle with working memory, task complexity and independent **application,** particularly where learning is not explicitly structured or sequenced.

These barriers guide strategic decision-making across all three EEF tiers.

1. Quality of Education: High-Quality Teaching

In line with EEF guidance, high-quality teaching is the cornerstone of our Pupil Premium strategy, with the majority of funding and leadership focus directed toward improving daily classroom practice. Our high-quality teaching model is built upon a foundation of strong teacher– student relationships. Every teacher is expected to foster an unconditional positive regard within their classroom, combining warmth, consistency, and academic rigour. Research consistently shows that positive relationships are integral to engagement and motivation (EEF, 2023)

- Through the South Wirral Way, we have established a consistent pedagogical approach that directly addresses the needs identified in our school-specific data:

- Lessons are carefully sequenced to address gaps in prior knowledge, particularly in mathematics, where KS2 data shows that PP pupils are 16 percentage points behind their peers on entry.

- Teachers use explicit instruction, modelling and structured practice to support pupils with weaker starting points.

- Deliberate reduction of cognitive load supports disadvantaged pupils by minimising extraneous demand and strengthening retention through retrieval and repetition.

- A strong emphasis is placed on disciplinary literacy; recognising that reading and vocabulary are fundamental to accessing the curriculum. All teachers are responsible for supporting reading development, with explicit teaching of vocabulary and reading strategies embedded in all subjects to address low reading ages.

- In line with the school's Foundation Learning Skills Strategy (2026–2027), high-quality teaching systematically develops the core skills that underpin learning across all subjects. Teachers explicitly model and reinforce reading,

vocabulary, handwriting expectations, mathematical fluency, structured talk and metacognitive strategies within everyday classroom practice.

- Disadvantaged and SEND pupils are prioritised through adaptive teaching, scaffolding and targeted checking for understanding, ensuring gaps in foundational skills do not become barriers to curriculum access.

Staff have immediate access to prior attainment and contextual data through KS2 information, which is available ahead of baseline assessments including CATs, GL assessments and Reading Age testing. This early intelligence enables teachers to identify pupils who require targeted support or appropriate challenge from the outset, ensuring that disadvantage does not delay access to effective teaching.

Alongside this data, staff are provided with clear, evidence-informed strategies to support reading development within lessons, enabling consistent classroom practice across all subjects and supporting pupils with lower starting points to access ambitious curriculum content.

As the first academic term progresses, diagnostic information from CATs, GL assessments and Reading Age testing is incorporated to refine understanding of individual pupil need. This information is updated regularly and shared through Arbor, which acts as the school's central platform for current pupil data, ensuring consistency, accuracy and responsiveness in classroom practice.

- Consistent routines, expectations and behaviour for learning, ensuring calm, purposeful classrooms.

Staff professional development is sharply aligned to these priorities, ensuring that quality first teaching consistently supports disadvantaged learners without lowering expectations. This comprehensive professional development is designed and delivered by experts and aligned with EEF's Effective CPD principles. Training is:

• Sustained: delivered across the year through coaching, modelling, and peer collaboration.

• Targeted: informed by ongoing assessment of staff and student needs.

• Evidence-informed: rooted in current research and adapted for our local context. This ensures consistent, high-quality implementation across subjects.

2. Targeted Academic Support

While high-quality teaching remains the main driver of improvement, targeted academic support is deployed where internal data identifies specific and persistent gaps.

All foundation learning interventions operate within a clear intervention hierarchy to ensure pupils receive the right support at the right time without intervention overload. Interventions are time-bound, evidence-informed and have clearly defined entry and exit criteria, with impact reviewed regularly using diagnostic assessment and progress measures.

Targeted support is used to:

- Accelerate progress in **reading**, particularly for pupils with below-age-related reading ages, through structured, evidence-based interventions and regular practice.
- Address gaps in **mathematics**, particularly those linked to KS2 transition, fluency and core mathematical knowledge.
- Support pupils who have experienced disrupted learning due to absence or wider vulnerability.
- Improve attendance, punctuality and engagement for pupils identified as persistently absent, recognising the direct impact of missed learning time on progress and attainment.
- Provide personalised support and curriculum adjustments for pupils with SEN, including those with EHCPs, ensuring provision is closely aligned to identified needs and enables sustained progress over time.

All interventions are time-limited, evidence-informed and reviewed regularly to avoid dependency and maximise impact.

3. Wider Strategies

Our wider strategies are designed to remove non-academic barriers that disproportionately affect disadvantaged pupils, ensuring they are ready to learn, attend regularly and engage positively with school life. These approaches align with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance, combining **Targeted Academic Support (Tier 2)** with **Wider Strategies (Tier 3)** to complement high-quality teaching.

Improving attendance is a critical priority for disadvantaged pupils, as absence significantly limits access to learning and intervention. Our whole-school attendance strategy is underpinned by a culture of high expectations, consistent routines and strong communication with families. Daily systems, including morning line-ups, form-time attendance tracking and same-day follow-up, ensure that absence is identified and acted upon quickly. Assistant Heads of Year utilise a protected *Golden Hour* each morning to complete targeted phone calls, prioritising pupils whose attendance is declining or who are persistently absent.

Regular communication with parents, half-termly attendance resets delivered through assemblies, and visible incentives such as weekly and monthly attendance rewards reinforce the importance of attendance across the school community. Attendance data is reviewed daily and analysed at pupil, cohort and group level through the school's Vulnerability Index. This enables patterns of concern to be identified early, with timely and informed intervention, particularly for Pupil Premium pupils who are disproportionately represented in persistent absence data.

Targeted attendance support is implemented through a structured, tiered approach. *Attendance Passports* are used for pupils on the cusp of persistent absence, typically those with attendance between 88–90%, and operate on two-week monitoring cycles with daily sign-in to build routines and accountability. *Attendance Focus Groups*, led by Assistant Heads of Year, provide small-group intervention for identified cohorts, including disadvantaged pupils. These groups run weekly over a six-week period and focus on identifying barriers to attendance and developing practical strategies for improvement.

Additional targeted interventions include focused Friday attendance initiatives to address identified dips, personalised support plans for individual pupils, and engagement with external agencies where barriers extend beyond the school's direct influence. These approaches directly address **Challenge 1 (Attendance and punctuality)** and strengthen disadvantaged pupils' sustained access to learning.

Strengthening Minds is a structured, evidence-informed intervention designed to support pupils with behaviour, engagement and emotional regulation, complementing the strong universal behaviour systems already in place across the school. The programme directly addresses barriers that can inhibit learning for disadvantaged pupils, including difficulties with self-regulation, resilience, relationships and attitudes to learning.

Pupils are identified through triangulation of behaviour data, attendance patterns and Head of Year referral, ensuring that support is targeted effectively and informed by both quantitative data and pastoral insight. This approach ensures that disadvantaged pupils with emerging needs are identified early and that no pupil requiring additional support is overlooked.

The intervention is delivered weekly in small groups using a structured programme of resources focused on developing self-awareness, resilience and positive decision-making. Sessions are logged on Arbor to ensure visibility and accountability, with impact monitored through changes in behaviour incidents, attendance and Attitude to Learning scores. Where implemented consistently, the programme has already shown evidence of improved engagement, stronger relationships and a reduction in repeated low-level behaviours.

Due to staffing absences in the current academic year, delivery has not yet reached full capacity. To strengthen and scale provision, all Assistant Heads of Year will receive dedicated training to lead the programme effectively. This will enable up to six groups to run simultaneously, significantly increasing capacity and allowing earlier intervention. This development will improve consistency across year groups and maximise the

impact of *Strengthening Minds* as a core component of the school's behaviour, inclusion and pastoral strategy. This approach supports **Challenge 1 (Attendance)**, **Challenge 3 (Deprivation)** and **Challenge 4 (SEN)**.
.

Key priorities include:

- **Attendance**: Early identification of attendance concerns, targeted pastoral support and strong communication with families to improve engagement and reduce persistent absenteeism.
- **Pastoral support and wellbeing**: Ensuring pupils feel safe, supported and ready to learn, enabling them to engage positively with school life.
- **Raising aspiration and cultural capital**: Providing access to enrichment activities, trips, careers guidance and extra-curricular opportunities that broaden experiences and raise expectations.
- **Parental engagement**: Working in partnership with families to support learning, attendance and behaviour.

These strategies ensure that pupils are not only academically supported but also emotionally and socially ready to succeed.

High Expectations, Monitoring and Impact

Across all tiers, our strategy is underpinned by uncompromisingly high expectations. We do not reduce curriculum ambition for disadvantaged pupils; instead, we improve access through teaching quality, structure and support.

Impact is evaluated using a combination of:

- Attendance and persistent absence data
- Reading age assessments and curriculum access
- Progress and attainment gaps between PP and non-PP pupils
- Behaviour, engagement and pupil voice

Our Pupil Premium strategy is evidence-led, locally responsive and regularly reviewed, ensuring sustained improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Attendance and punctuality Our data shows our whole school attendance has increased. However, our disadvantaged students still have higher absence rates than their peers. For 24-25 attendance among disadvantaged students was 3.5% lower than for the whole school • Attendance for whole school for 24-25 - 90.61 • Attendance for PP 24-25 - 87.39% • PA for whole school 24-25 - 27.3% • PA for PP 24-25 - 39.63% • Punctuality for whole school 24-25 3.57% • Punctuality for PP 24-25 -5.02% Our data shows our whole school attendance has increased. However, our disadvantaged students still have higher absence rates than their peers. Our attendance data over the last 3 years indicates that attendance among disadvantaged pupils has been between 6 - 7% lower than for non disadvantaged pupils. 38.4 % of disadvantaged pupils have been 'persistently absent' compared to 22.4% of their peers during 2024-2025. Our assessments and observations indicate that absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged pupils' progress.
2	Maths KS2 data indicates many of our disadvantaged students have developed gaps in Mathematical fundamentals during periods of remote learning and as a result there is a greater risk to their outcomes across at KS4. Across years 7, 8 and 9 45% of our disadvantaged students arrive below age-related expectations compared to 29% of their peers. Subsequent external assessments show that this gap remains with 38% of disadvantaged students achieving grade 4+ in Maths compared to 74% of non disadvantaged students (in-school) securing this measure.
3	Deprivation 356 of 381 Pupil Premium students are identified under deprivation criteria indicates that deprivation is the dominant characteristic shaping this cohort's progress. Pupils experiencing deprivation often face sustained barriers beyond the classroom, including limited access to learning resources, reduced opportunities for academic enrichment, attendance and punctuality challenges, and factors linked to family income, housing instability or wider social need. These barriers mean that progress for many pupils is slower to secure and more vulnerable to fluctuation

4	SEN Approximately one third of our Pupil Premium students also have identified special educational needs, with 11% holding an Education, Health and Care Plan, resulting in a high-need cohort whose progress is shaped by multiple, overlapping barriers to learning. The intersection of disadvantage and SEN often means pupils begin from lower starting points and face challenges related to literacy, numeracy, communication, behaviour, and emotional regulation, which can restrict their ability to access the curriculum in the same way as their peers. As a result, progress for this group is typically slower, less linear, and more vulnerable to interruption, with attainment gains taking longer to embed.
5	Literacy On entry to the school, analysis of KS2 data indicates that, on average, **between 25–33% of students enter Year 7 as 'Not Secondary Ready' in English**. These students typically present with gaps in reading fluency, comprehension, or broader literacy skills. This cohort is disproportionately represented among disadvantaged pupils. Transition data is triangulated with standardised assessments early in Year 7 to develop a refined understanding of individual literacy profiles. Prior attainment information from KS2 is used in advance of baseline assessments, with CATs, GL reading assessments and Reading Age testing providing diagnostic insight during the first term. This ensures that pupils with emerging literacy needs are identified quickly and supported through high-quality classroom practice and targeted intervention where required. At Key Stage 4, targeted literacy support is embedded within the curriculum through an enrichment model. Disadvantaged pupils who take one fewer option access additional English-focused sessions, with curriculum time dedicated to developing reading fluency, comprehension and examination literacy. This ensures that Pupil Premium pupils continue to receive structured reading support throughout their secondary education, maintaining ambition while improving access.

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
Disadvantaged pupils demonstrate improved reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension,	• Reduced proportion of PP pupils with reading ages below chronological age. • Majority of PP pupils make expected or better progress in reading age each year.

enabling secure access to the full secondary curriculum.	• Narrowing gap in average reading age between PP and non-PP pupils. • Evidence from QA and pupil voice shows increased independence when accessing texts.
Disadvantaged pupils benefit from consistently high-quality, evidence-informed literacy teaching across the curriculum.	• Whole-school use of agreed reading strategies and explicit vocabulary instruction. • CPD and QA confirm consistent implementation. • Reduced attainment gaps linked to literacy across subjects.
Disadvantaged pupils at KS4 sustain literacy development and improve examination literacy and outcomes.	• Improved performance in extended responses in English and foundation subjects. • Year-on-year improvement in GCSE English outcomes for PP pupils. • Narrowing gap in Grade 4+ attainment.
Attendance for disadvantaged pupils improves, reducing persistent absence and increasing access to learning and intervention.	• Improved overall attendance for PP pupils. • Reduced proportion of PP pupils persistently absent. • Narrowing attendance gap between PP and non-PP pupils. • Sustained improvement following Attendance Passports and focus groups.
Disadvantaged pupils demonstrate improved behaviour, engagement and emotional regulation, supporting learning and attendance.	• Reduced repeated behaviour incidents. • Improved Attitude to Learning scores. • Improved attendance for pupils receiving behaviour support. • Positive pupil voice feedback.
Targeted pastoral interventions are delivered consistently and at scale, enabling earlier and more effective support.	• Trained staff deliver interventions with fidelity. • Increased availability of Strengthening Minds groups. • Clear intervention records and impact evidence on Arbor. • Reduced waiting time between identification and support.
Disadvantaged pupils transition into Key Stage 4 with secure foundations in literacy,	• The proportion of Pupil Premium pupils working below age-related expectations in mathematics at KS3 is reduced compared with the 2024–25 baseline.

numeracy and learning behaviours, enabling sustained engagement with an ambitious GCSE curriculum.	• Disadvantaged pupils identified as below expected standard on entry show accelerated progress in core mathematical skills across KS3, as evidenced through internal and external assessments. • Year-on-year improvement in the percentage of Pupil Premium pupils achieving Grade 4+ in GCSE Mathematics. • The attainment gap between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium pupils in mathematics narrows over the strategy period.

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: £ *[insert amount]*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Whole-school Quality First Teaching of Reading, embedded across the curriculum through explicit instruction in vocabulary, comprehension and disciplinary literacy strategies.	EEF guidance identifies high-quality teaching and disciplinary literacy as key drivers in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Explicit vocabulary instruction, comprehension strategies and structured reading approaches support access to complex texts across subjects.	5 (Literacy), 4 (SEN), 3 (Deprivation)
Staff CPD focused on explicit teaching of reading skills, including phonics (where	Research shows that explicit instruction and frequent opportunities for guided practice are particularly effective for pupils with lower starting	5 (Literacy), 4 (SEN)

appropriate), Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, the Frayer Model, and 'High Five' comprehension strategies.	points, including those experiencing disadvantage or additional learning needs.	
Explicit teaching of oracy, handwriting fluency and metacognitive study strategies within lessons and targeted small-group intervention for identified Pupil Premium pupils	Research indicates that structured talk, fluent transcription and metacognitive instruction significantly improve access, retention and independent learning for pupils with weaker starting points	4 (SEN), 5 (Literacy), 3 (Deprivation)

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

Budgeted cost: £ *[insert amount]*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Initial and ongoing identification of literacy need through KS2 data, CATs, GL assessments and Reading Age testing, with all information recorded and updated regularly on Arbor.	Early identification and diagnostic assessment allow interventions to be precisely targeted and adjusted over time, increasing impact and avoiding unnecessary dependency.	5 (Literacy), 4 (SEN)
Graduated reading support model, including phonics screening for pupils with standardised scores below 90, prioritising Pupil Premium and SEND	Structured phonics approaches are effective for older struggling readers when delivered with sufficient frequency and fidelity. A graduated response ensures efficient use of resources and maximises impact.	5 (Literacy), 4 (SEN)

pupils. Targeted phonics intervention delivered in small groups three times per week during registration.		
Use of SPARX Reader in English lessons to provide equitable access to age-appropriate texts matched to pupils' reading ages, with embedded comprehension checks and data tracking.	Digital reading platforms can increase reading volume and engagement, particularly for pupils with limited access to books at home. Diagnostic feedback supports responsive teaching.	5 (Literacy), 3 (Deprivation)
Bespoke SEN interventions aligned to EHCPs		

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

Budgeted cost: £ *[insert amount]*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Whole-school attendance strategy including daily tracking, same-day follow-up, Golden Hour calls and attendance incentives	EEF research highlights attendance as a prerequisite for learning; consistent routines and early intervention improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils	1 (Attendance and punctuality)
Tiered attendance interventions, including Attendance Passports, attendance focus groups and personalised support plans	Targeted, time-limited interventions address specific barriers to attendance and prevent escalation to persistent absence	1 (Attendance and punctuality), 3 (Deprivation)

Vulnerability Index and daily attendance data review to identify patterns and trigger early intervention	Data-led identification enables timely and proportionate support, reducing the impact of absence on learning	1 (Attendance and punctuality)
Strengthening Minds small-group intervention to support behaviour, engagement and emotional regulation	Targeted social and emotional interventions improve engagement, behaviour and attendance, particularly for pupils experiencing disadvantage	1 (Attendance and punctuality), 3 (Deprivation), 4 (SEN)
Training Assistant Heads of Year to deliver *Strengthening Minds* consistently across year groups	EEF guidance emphasises implementation quality and staff training as critical to intervention impact	3 (Deprivation), 4 (SEN)

Total budgeted cost: £ *[insert sum of 3 amounts stated above]*