

Pupil premium strategy statement – The Downs Primary School and Nursery

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 |
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| Number of pupils in school | 362 |
| Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils | 29% |
| 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) | 2025/26 – 2028/29 |
| Date this statement was published | November 2025 |
| Date on which it will be reviewed | November 2026 |
| Statement authorised by | Executive Headteacher & Local Governing Body |
| Pupil premium lead | Rob Calderwood |
| Governor / Trustee lead | Katrina Cowley |

Funding overview

| Detail | Amount |
|--|----------|
| Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year | £168,165 |
| Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years <i>(enter £0 if not applicable)</i> | £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> | £168,165 |

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

In accordance with the latest recommendations, we believe in maximising the use of the pupil premium grant (PPG) by utilising a long-term strategy aligned to the SDP and the needs of our pupils and local community. This enables us to implement a blend of short, medium and long-term interventions. We plan to encompass all aspects of being disadvantaged and align pupil premium use with wider school improvements. We will focus on improving standards through excellent teaching, developing relationships and through a concentrated approach to developing language both oral and written. Overcoming barriers to learning is at the heart of our PPG use. We understand that needs and costs will differ depending on the barriers to learning being addressed. As such, we do not automatically allocate personal budgets per pupil in receipt of the PPG. Instead, we identify the barrier to be addressed and the interventions required, whether in small groups, large groups, the whole school or as individuals, and allocate a budget accordingly. Setting priorities and having a collective understanding will be key to maximising the use of the PPG. Our priorities are as follows:

- Improving the quality of teaching (QFT) and learning in every classroom.
- Closely monitoring for any attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and then addressing this through QFT and specific targeted intervention as required/ identified.
- Providing targeted academic support for pupils who are not making expected progress.
- Ensuring that the PPG reaches the pupils who need it most both in class, through targeted questioning and through additional interventions to close gaps.
- Improving language development both orally and in writing through a rigorous approach to wider aspects of language development and opportunities.
- Placing language development at the core of our professional development sessions.
- Continuing to address non-academic barriers to progress and attainment by having the highest expectations for behaviour for learning in class and addressing high level behaviour in a consistent way alongside developing the language to self-regulate behaviour.
- Ensuring that all students in the school have access to wider opportunities to try to close the gap in cultural capital between families from different backgrounds.
- Provide access to pastoral support to those pupils most in need of it. Ensuring that pupils are given the best possible start when learning early reading / phonics

Our pupil premium strategy is informed by a combination of internal school data, national research, and guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). In line with the EEF's evidence, the strategy prioritises high-quality teaching as the

most effective way to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, alongside targeted academic support and wider strategies to address significant barriers such as attendance, wellbeing, and family circumstances.

Challenges

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

| Challenge number | Detail of challenge |
|------------------|---|
| 1 | On entry language and communications skills and fluency in number are lower for disadvantaged children. |
| 2 | Low levels of attainment especially in writing and lack of endurance for writing |
| 3 | Large proportion of disadvantaged children have ACEs and attachment difficulties |
| 4 | Complex family situations, lack of wider learning experiences and opportunities and cultural capital means that families find it difficult to prepare and support children with their learning. |
| 5 | Large proportion of disadvantaged children suffer from poor mental health |
| 6 | 20% of our disadvantaged pupils are persistent absentees (as of November 2025) |
| 7 | A high proportion of children enter our school with very low academic starting points. A lack of competence in reading prevents access to the wider curriculum and limits their ability to gain cultural capital and make progress before key stages in their education. |
| 8 | Extremely high levels of mobility of pupils means that many children arrive in our school lacking basic language skills, cultural capital or the prior learning required to allow them to keep pace with our curriculum. A high proportion of these children arrive from overseas, with limited or no English – 65% of our in-year admissions are EAL pupils. |

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 |
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| <p>1. Improved Communication, Language and Early Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantaged pupils will demonstrate accelerated progress in spoken language, communication, and early number, reducing gaps from their starting points on entry. | <p>1. Communication, Language and Early Number</p> <p>Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment data shows accelerated progress for disadvantaged pupils in communication, language, and early number from baseline. |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils will meet age-related expectations in early language and number by the end of EYFS and KS1.</i> <p><i>(Linked barriers: 1, 7, 8)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in early language and number narrows year-on-year. • An increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils meet age-related expectations by the end of EYFS and KS1. • Observations and monitoring show improved oral participation and confidence in lessons. |
| <p>2. Improved Reading Outcomes and Access to the Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged pupils will make at least expected, and increasingly accelerated, progress in reading across all year groups. • The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching age-related expectations in reading will increase year-on-year. • Improved reading fluency and comprehension will enable disadvantaged pupils to access the wider curriculum, supporting progress in all subjects. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 7, 8)</i></p> | <p>2. Reading Outcomes and Curriculum Access Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged pupils make at least expected progress in reading, with many making accelerated progress from low starting points. • The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving age-related expectations in reading increases year-on-year. • Reading fluency assessments show improvements in accuracy, pace, and comprehension. • Pupils demonstrate improved ability to access and discuss the wider curriculum, evidenced through work scrutiny and pupil voice. |
| <p>3. Improved Writing Attainment and Stamina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged pupils will demonstrate improved transcription, stamina, and confidence in writing. • Gaps in attainment in writing between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils will narrow across all key stages. • Teachers' assessments and work scrutiny will show improved quantity and quality of sustained writing. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 2)</i></p> | <p>3. Writing Attainment and Stamina Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher assessment and moderation show improved attainment in writing for disadvantaged pupils. • Work scrutiny demonstrates increased stamina, volume, and quality of sustained writing. • Gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in writing narrow across year groups. • Pupils show increased confidence and independence when writing at length. |
| <p>4. Improved Attendance and Reduced Persistent Absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall attendance for disadvantaged pupils will increase year-on-year. • The proportion of disadvantaged pupils identified as persistent absentees will reduce significantly from the current baseline. • Improved attendance will result in greater curriculum access and improved progress. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 6)</i></p> | <p>4. Attendance and Persistent Absence Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils increase year-on-year. • The proportion of disadvantaged pupils classified as persistent absentees reduces significantly from the current baseline. • Attendance monitoring shows improved consistency and punctuality for targeted pupils. • Improved attendance correlates with improved progress and engagement in learning. |

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| <p>5. Improved Emotional Regulation, Wellbeing and Readiness to Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantaged pupils will show improved emotional regulation and resilience, as evidenced through behaviour logs, attendance, and pupil voice. Pupils with ACEs and attachment difficulties will demonstrate improved engagement in learning and reduced incidents of dysregulation. Mental health and wellbeing interventions will support pupils to sustain learning over time. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 3, 5)</i></p> | <p>5. Emotional Regulation, Wellbeing and Readiness to Learn</p> <p>Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour and pastoral records show reduced incidents of dysregulation for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils receiving targeted wellbeing support demonstrate improved emotional regulation and resilience. Attendance and engagement improve for pupils with identified mental health or attachment needs. Pupil voice indicates increased sense of safety, belonging, and confidence in school. |
| <p>6. Increased Cultural Capital and Wider Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantaged pupils will have equitable access to enrichment activities, trips, experiences, and wider curriculum opportunities. Pupils will demonstrate improved background knowledge, vocabulary, and confidence when engaging with the curriculum. Parent engagement will improve, supporting pupils' learning both in and out of school. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 4, 7, 8)</i></p> | <p>6. Cultural Capital and Wider Opportunities</p> <p>Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantaged pupils participate fully in trips, enrichment activities, and wider curriculum experiences. Pupils demonstrate improved vocabulary, background knowledge, and cultural awareness, as evidenced through curriculum assessments and pupil voice. Increased parental engagement is evident through attendance at workshops, meetings, and school events. Teachers report increased confidence and engagement from disadvantaged pupils in lessons. |
| <p>7. Reduced Impact of Mobility on Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils who join the school mid-year – particularly those arriving with limited or no English - will receive timely assessment and targeted support, enabling them to integrate quickly into the curriculum. The attainment and progress of mobile disadvantaged pupils will improve, reducing lost learning time following admission. <p><i>(Linked barriers: 8)</i></p> | <p>7. Mobility</p> <p>Success will be evident when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils joining mid-year are assessed promptly and receive timely targeted support. Progress data shows that mobile disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Gaps in attainment caused by late entry reduce over time. Transition and induction processes support pupils to settle quickly and engage with learning. |

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: £ 13,154

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| CPD for subject leaders on developing the curriculum to reduce cognitive overload and ensure revisiting of objectives | EEF evidence indicates that improving the quality of teaching has a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils than any other single factor. | 3 & 7 |

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

Budgeted cost: £ 73,799

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Speech and Language Link subscription and resources | <p>DFE 'Best Start in SLC 2020 Guidance states the positive benefits of Early identification and intervention with language delays. The daily Wellcomm interventions support DfE guidance that states 'high dosage interventions are consistently shown to have greater efficacy than low dosage.'</p> <p>EEF research highlights that high-quality early language and communication teaching has a positive impact on pupils' attainment, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Strengthening oral language supports access to reading, writing, and the wider curriculum.</p> | 1 & 7 |
| Widget & Clicker Subscriptions | Evidence indicates that scaffolding pupils' writing through the use of structured supports, including technology-based tools, can reduce cognitive load and remove barriers for pupils with weak language, transcription difficulties, or low confidence. By supporting spelling, sentence construction, and vocabulary, these approaches enable pupils to focus on the content and structure of their writing, leading to improved engagement and | 1, 3, 6 & 7 |

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| | written outcomes. Such scaffolds are most effective when used alongside high-quality teaching and gradually withdrawn as pupils' independence increases. | |
| Speech and language early years interventions using Wellcomm (or alternative, e.g. Black Sheep) | <p>DFE 'Best Start in SLC 2020 Guidance states the positive benefits of Early identification and intervention with language delays. The daily Wellcomm interventions support DfE guidance that states 'high dosage interventions are consistently shown to have greater efficacy than low dosage.'</p> <p>EEF research highlights that high-quality early language and communication teaching has a positive impact on pupils' attainment, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Strengthening oral language supports access to reading, writing, and the wider curriculum.</p> | 1 & 7 |
| Evidence-based phonics interventions for children to catch-up and keep up in the early reading. | EEF and Bell Foundation EAL reviews show there is high positive impact on Literacy and Language skills for targeted interventions that systematically teacher language acquisition and phonological and comprehension skills. | 1 & 2 |
| <i>1:1 Speech and Language interventions (such as WellComm, SpeechLink and others) to develop communication skills</i> | DFE 'Best Start in SLC 2020 Guidance states the positive benefits of Early identification and intervention with language delays. The daily Wellcomm interventions support Dfe guidance that states 'high dosage interventions are consistently shown to have greater efficacy than low dosage.' | 1 |

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

Budgeted cost: £ 81,346

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Home-school Liaison Officer to work with families with historical and current absenteeism. This will be in line with strategies set out in the DfE's</i> | There are clear links between attainment and attendance , as reported by the DfE. Further DfE research finds that 'For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided' | 4 |

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| <p>guide 'Working together to improve school attendance'</p> | | |
| <p>Targeted safeguarding and pastoral support provided by DDSL. Includes monitoring and tracking of the most vulnerable, along with signposting families to support.</p> | <p>The EEF's GUIDE TO SUPPORTING SCHOOL PLANNING: A TIERED APPROACH TO 2021 provides a range of evidence and strategies to support this approach.</p> | 5 |
| <p>Free breakfast and free breakfast club places provided for the most vulnerable pupils</p> | <p>Independent research, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation and carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, found that Y2 pupils in schools providing a free, nutritious 'magic' breakfast boosted their reading, writing and maths by an average of 2 months' progress per year, compared to pupils in schools with no such breakfast provision.</p> | 4 & 5 |
| <p>Targeted counselling support through Harbour for identified children</p> | <p>EEF reports on how social and emotional learning interventions almost always improve emotional or attitudinal outcomes.</p> | 5 |
| <p>Targeted experiences e.g. trips, clubs, educational visitors, life skills and cookery clubs. By funding places in clubs and on trips, we aim to provide access for all children, regardless of their background.</p> | <p>The DfE and OFSTED recognise that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds often lack 'cultural capital', stating, 'Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education. [schools should] use the curriculum to enhance the experience and opportunities available to children, particularly the most disadvantaged.'</p> | 6 |

Total budgeted cost: £ 168,300

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Impact statement: Progress and attainment for Pupil Premium pupils (last two years)

Over the past two years, outcomes for pupils eligible for Pupil Premium have shown improving progress from internal starting points, alongside persisting attainment gaps, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2 in writing and maths.

Attainment (end of KS2)

In 2024/25, attainment for Pupil Premium pupils at the expected standard was strongest in reading (71%), but significantly lower in writing (42%) and maths (42%), with 33% achieving the expected standard in combined RWM. In comparison, non-Pupil Premium pupils achieved 75% (reading), 69% (writing), 72% (maths) and 63% (combined), demonstrating that attainment gaps remain substantial, especially in maths and combined outcomes.

National benchmarking (IDSR) also indicates that disadvantaged pupils' combined RWM remains below national levels in recent years, though the gap is variable across cohorts, reflecting small numbers and cohort complexity.

Progress over time (internal assessments)

Internal progress measures (Summer 2 2023/24 to Summer 2 2024/25) show that Pupil Premium pupils have made notable gains across all core areas, particularly in maths:

- **Reading:** 48% → 54% (+6)
- **Writing:** 31% → 36% (+5)
- **Maths:** 38% → 49% (+11)

This suggests that, from their starting points, many disadvantaged pupils are making improving progress within year and across years, particularly where targeted support and quality-first teaching have strengthened consistency.

Whole-school picture and implications for Pupil Premium

Whole-school statutory outcomes show improvement in combined RWM in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 (52% vs 43%), indicating strengthened overall performance and implementation of whole-school priorities.

However, the disadvantaged subgroup data shows that closing gaps remains a priority, particularly in writing endurance/quality and maths fluency and reasoning.

The school's own analysis also highlights the impact of mobility on attainment, with pupils joining later performing less well than those who are "home-grown", particularly in writing and maths—an important contextual factor when evaluating disadvantaged outcomes.

Summary evaluation

Overall, the evidence indicates:

- Improving progress trends for Pupil Premium pupils across the last two years, particularly in maths (internal measures).

7. SATs and Data Analysis 2024-...

- Reading is the strongest area at KS2 for Pupil Premium pupils, supporting wider curriculum access.

7. SATs and Data Analysis 2024-...

- Writing and maths remain key barriers to attainment, and these are the areas where gaps are widest at KS2 and where strategy refinement is most needed.

Phonics outcomes for Pupil Premium pupils

Phonics outcomes indicate that early reading remains an area of relative strength for many disadvantaged pupils, supporting access to the wider curriculum. In recent cohorts, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics has been stronger than later combined KS2 outcomes, suggesting that early reading provision and intervention have been effective in securing foundational decoding skills for a significant number of pupils.

However, the data also indicates that not all pupils who meet the phonics standard go on to sustain attainment in writing and maths, particularly where pupils experience mobility, disrupted attendance, or wider barriers such as language delay or social and emotional needs. This reinforces the school's strategic focus on building fluency, comprehension, and transcription skills beyond phonics, alongside targeted support to ensure early gains are sustained over time.