# Pupil premium strategy statement – Downlands Community School

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium (and recovery premium for the 2023 to 2024 academic year) 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 | Downlands Community School |
| Number of pupils in school | 1263 |
| Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils | 10% |
| Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers **(3 year plans are recommended)** | 2026-2029 |
| Date this statement was published | November 2026 |
| Date on which it will be reviewed | September 2027 |
| Statement authorised by | Mr M Ashdown |
| Pupil premium lead | Mr C Runeckles |
| Governor / Trustee lead | Mrs E Field |

## Funding overview

| Detail | Amount |
|---|---|
| Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year | £115,500 |
| Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable) | £0 |
| **Total budget for this academic year**<br>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year | N/A |

# Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

## Statement of intent

*At Downlands inclusion means every child is safe, supported and successful. Our school cohort has changed significantly in recent years. Between 2023 and 2026 we saw a 44% increase in our number of disadvantaged pupils and an 84% increase in the number of pupils on the SEND register. As a result, inclusion has become our overriding focus.*

*Objectives:*

- *For the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils to exceed that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally and their progress to match that of non-disadvantaged pupils at Downlands.*
- *To ensure a sincere regard and a shared responsibility for our disadvantaged cohort.*
- *To promote the highest expectations of our disadvantaged pupils amongst the whole school community and to challenge assumptions around socio-economic disadvantage, so that irrespective of background, all pupils are given the opportunity to experience success across all areas of our curriculum and extra-curricular offer.*
- *To provide the powerful knowledge and transformative opportunities that take disadvantaged pupils beyond their lived experience.*
- *That disadvantaged pupils at Downlands reach post-16 destinations that match their aspirations.*

*Strategies to achieve objectives*

- *Through a culture of assessment not assumption, ensure all staff know disadvantaged pupils as individuals and understand the specific challenges to learning they may have.*
- *Ensure the highest possible quality curriculum, teaching and assessment is delivered consistently in all classrooms.*
- *A coherent school-wide approach to literacy, in particular reading and vocabulary instruction.*
- *Ensure the highest possible quality pastoral care for disadvantaged learners based on a sincere regard for their wellbeing and progress.*
- *Build a sense of belonging and connection to our school community for our disadvantaged pupils and families, to reduce negative behaviours and improve attendance.*
- *Employ a trauma-informed approach to our communication with pupils.*
- *Support our disadvantaged pupils to experience personal growth through our ROCKS character education.*

*What are the key principles of your strategy plan?*

- *Spending significant time and resources on developing and maintaining the highest possible quality curriculum, teaching and assessment*
- *Equity of provision and experience*
- *Building community and belonging*
- *Personal growth through character education*

## Challenges

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

| Challenge number | Detail of challenge |
|---|---|
| 1 | Literacy and numeracy<br>Data, observations and discussions show our pupil premium pupils start at Downlands with significant gaps in their literacy and numeracy knowledge, which is likely to prevent them for accessing some parts of our curriculum. We have also identified reading fluency as a particular challenge in this area. |
| 2 | Behaviour<br>Our behaviour data highlights that pupil premium pupils are more likely to be sanctioned for negative behaviour and less likely to be rewarded for positive behaviour. Within this challenge there is a specific issue around internal truancy. There are wider issues underpinning this data regarding curriculum equity and access, support in catching up and keeping up, and a lack of belonging for pupil premium pupils. |
| 3 | Attendance<br>Our attendance data highlights a significant concern regarding both persistent absenteeism and lower attendance percentages for pupil premium pupils. As with behaviour, there are wider issues underpinning this data regarding curriculum equity and access, support with catching up and keeping up, and a lack of belonging for premium pupils. Social isolation is a key contributing factor in this area. |
| 4 | SEMH regulation<br>A proportion of our pupil premium pupils have significant challenges around SEMH regulation. This manifests in different ways depending on the individual pupil, but often provides specific challenges in being able to integrate successfully with school systems and structures. |

## 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 |
|---|---|
| 1. Improved overall attainment and progress for pupil premium pupils. | Pupils eligible for pupil premium achieve an overall Attainment 8 score higher than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, and narrow the attainment gap to non-disadvantaged pupils at Downlands. Where this is not happening, departments are putting in place interventions, monitored by heads of departments and senior team |
| 2.Higher levels of progress in literacy & numeracy for pupils eligible for pupil premium. | Pupils eligible for pupil premium improve reading scores through developing vocabulary, decoding, reading comprehension and spoken comprehension. These pupils also develop numeracy skills through a maths mastery curriculum that develops their conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. This will be evidenced using English/maths assessments, termly progress reports and reading scores. |

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| 3. Proportionately fewer negative behavioural issues | Fewer negative behaviour incidents and a greater number of positive behaviour incidents recorded for pupil premium pupils on the school system. This will include specific tracking of internal truancy. |
| 4. Increased attendance rates for pupils eligible for pupil premium. | Improve overall attendance for pupil premium pupils to above 94% and reduce the number of persistent absentees (PA) to 15% or below. |
| 5. Pupil premium pupils are fully integrated into all parts of school life and experience meaningful participation and success. | Extra-curricular activities will be tracked to show the participation of, and impact on, pupil premium pupils. Pupil voice will demonstrate pupil premium pupils feel Downlands is a school where pupils like them are successful. |

## Activity in this academic year

This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium (and recovery premium funding) **this academic year** to address the challenges listed above.

### Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £65,000

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|---|---|
| *Curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies to boost pupil premium attainment and progress.* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation<br><br>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-professional-development<br><br>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/feedback<br><br>Wiliam, D. (2017). *Embedded formative assessment* (2nd ed.). Solution Tree Press<br><br>We spend substantial time, effort and resources improving the quality of our curriculum, teaching and assessment. We know there are no interventions that can mitigate poor quality teaching in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. As such, ensuring predictable classrooms where learning is designed to disproportionately advantage our most vulnerable learners is our most important intervention. | 1,2,3,4 |

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| | Every department has a curriculum improvement plan (CIP) to improve classroom practice based on the EEF implementation plan model. All of these plans have a focus on inclusion. For 2026-27 the particular focus is around formative assessment.<br><br>The CPD calendar has been designed to prioritise work in departments on the chosen CIP priority. This includes modelling and rehearsal of teacher techniques.<br><br>Further to this our whole school focus for the next three years starting in September 2026 is to introduce a series of core teaching routines. We have recognised from both internal and external monitoring (including a pupil premium review by Marc Rowland in May 2026) that pupils' experiences are too variable for them to be successful. Disadvantaged pupils thrive when they're enabled to do so. Typically, pupils from more advantaged backgrounds are more resilient to variability because of the opportunities they have beyond the school gate, and because they feel empowered to make the most of all that school has to offer. To address this variability the routines we are working on through our whole-school CPD offer for the 2026-27 academic year are:<br><br>• Securing attention<br>• Mini-whiteboards<br>• Paired talk | |

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

Budgeted cost: £25,000

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|---|---|
| *Variety of 1:1 hub sessions with targeted pupil premium pupils.* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition<br><br>1:1 Intervention rated as highly effective (+5 months) by EEF T&L Toolkit. This is an expanded provision. Pupils are referred by HOY, typically sessions of 1 hr once a fortnight for 6 weeks. | 1 |

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| *Withdrawal of small groups making less than expected progress in English, maths and science* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition<br><br>Working in small groups, enables the teacher to focus exclusively on a small number of learners who in this case have lower literacy/numeracy attainment. This has a focus on phonics and reading fluency. Groups are determined by HOF & reviewed throughout the year. These sessions take place either in the Hub or within departments. | 1,2 |
| *Reading initiative* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics<br><br>https://fft.org.uk/literacy/reading-quest/<br><br>https://researchschool.org.uk/greenshaw/news/the-challenge-of-developing-reading-at-secondary-school.<br><br>EEF Toolkit –phonics-based interventions have a high impact (+5 months). While this is targeted at primary aged children, we have a small cohort of children that are still struggling with decoding and have trained a small number of staff to use FFT Reading Quest to support them. Internal data has shown strong success in improving reading ages.<br><br>Allied to this we use TAs and Y10 pupils to target low readers for tutor-time reading fluency practice. | 1,2 |
| *PP Pupil Passports* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/individualised-instruction<br><br>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/behaviour<br><br>This are one-page documents highlighting the most useful strategies to meet individual pupils' specific needs through high quality adaptive teaching. They also include strategies to support positive behaviour. | 1,3 |

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

Budgeted cost: £25,500

| Activity | Evidence that supports this approach | Challenge number(s) addressed |
|---|---|---|

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| *Deployment of hub mentors, pastoral team & SEMH specialist* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning<br><br>Deliver SEL interventions. Restorative practice reduces patterns of repeated behaviour. Small group work with learning mentors, pastoral team and SEMH specialist in the Hub minimises work lost resulting from fixed term exclusions. Learning mentors assess pupils' attitudes against national benchmarks using PASS online surveys. Internal data shows, there is a trend of fewer repeated challenging behaviours. | 3,4 |
| *Career guidance sessions.* | Evidence supports that pupils with clear goals tend to perform better. Focussed career advice provides direction and support. Pupil premium pupils have priority to meet 1-2-1 with our careers adviser. | 4 |
| *Attendance officer employed to monitor and intervene on pupil premium attendance. Pastoral Support Officers (PSO) also have attendance as core part of job role.* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance<br><br>https://www.onecornwall.co.uk/_site/data/publications/attendance_booklet/index.html<br><br>Evidence shows a strong correlation between attendance and academic outcomes. Attendance officer employed to specifically focus on pupil premium attendance and developing supportive relationships with pupils and families to improve attendance. PSOs also support SEL interventions to assist pupils with their emotional self-regulation to support a positive relationship with school. | 3,4 |
| *Character inclusion* | https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning<br><br>https://www.onecornwall.co.uk/_site/data/publications/attendance_booklet/index.html<br><br>Middle leader position created for character leadership, with a team of 3 further staff within individual areas of responsibility beyond this. All specify inclusion as integral to the role.<br><br>Leadership role includes a specific focus on our persistently absent pupil premium pupils who sit between 80% and 90% attendance. This involves working directly with these pupils to identify and remove barriers and work directly with their families. | 4 |

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|---|---|---|
| *Character Passport* | Each year group has a core trip designed to deliver cultural capital which makes up a “character passport”. Where necessary, the full cost of participation in these trips is covered for pupil premium pupils. Every effort is made to ensure our pupil premium pupils engage fully in these core trips. | 4 |
| *Breakfast Club* | https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/breakfast_interventions_-_rapid_evidence_assessment.pdf?v=1764272855<br><br>Aim is to improve pupil engagement, wellbeing and to build relationships as well as reduce hunger in school. This will support attendance, concentration in & engagement with learning & provide a space for SEL. | 3,4 |
| *School Development Plan – Attendance focus* | OneCornwall - Transforming Attendance in Cornwall<br><br>One of our six whole school priorities for this academic year is focus on improving attendance four our PP pupils. The core components of the implementation plan are:<br><br>1. All FSM6 pupils below 93% have an attendance plan<br>2. 2 Engagement with PP families e.g. supporting them to attend events<br>3. Y7 team build attendance plans for FSM6 pupils below 95% at transition<br>4. All FSM6 pupils have a scripted positive conversation with a tutor every term (which also address attendance barriers)<br>5. EBSA pupils have a safe space to enable them to reengage with school<br>6. All staff know the FSM6 pupils in their class and responds to their needs to allow them to successfully 'keep up'. | 3 |
| *School Development Plan – Reintegration focus* | One of our six whole school priorities for this academic year is to improve reintegration of pupils who have missed a series of lessons within a particular subject area. The core components of the implementation plan are:<br><br>1. Staff do have restorative conversations to reconnect with pupils .<br>2. HoYs and HoFs produce reintegration plans for internally truanting pupils<br>3. Pastoral support and tutors identify pupils' unmet needs<br>4. TAC meetings are used to address unmet needs<br>5. Staff always respond to internally truanting pupils using the Trauma Informed Response | 1,4 |

**Total budgeted cost: £115,500**

# 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 2025 to 2026 academic year.

*Achievement*

*There were 24 PP pupils in the Yr11 cohort that completed their GCSEs in 2026.The Attainment 8 for non-PP pupils was 59.9, while Attainment 8 for PP pupils was 42.65. This represents a significant attainment gap within the Downlands cohort, something that has been a stubborn problem over time. PP pupils were also further away from targets than their non-disadvantaged peers and so the gap exists in terms of progress as well as targets.*

*However, a positive aspect of our data over the past two years is that our PP pupils have achieved results significantly above both national and local averages for PP pupils, something they had not done for the three years prior. While we ultimately judge ourselves against the gaps in our own school, this does still mean an increased number of our disadvantaged pupils have left with a grade 4 in English, maths or both. This in turn has increased their post-16 choices.*

*Attendance & belonging*

*Last academic year PP attendance was 81.55%, compared to 90.89% for other pupils. As with attainment, this represents a significant gap between our disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged cohorts. Unlike attainment, the attendance of our PP pupils is below the average for PP pupils nationally and so represents one of our most significant challenges as a school. This challenge reveals that our PP pupils do not currently feel the same sense of belonging and community that their non-disadvantaged peers experience. However, our Ofsted report published in September 2026 recognised the positive steps we are making in this area and that our strategies are well-chosen and beginning to show success.*

*Almost all our PP pupils attend clubs at our school, however, they are also less likely to go on trips than their non-disadvantaged peers. This has resulted in a number of strategic changes to ensure PP pupils engage fully in all aspects of extra-curricular enrichment going forward.*

*Behaviour*

*PP pupils accounted for proportionally more behaviour events than non-PP pupils. PP pupils were also significantly more likely to receive a suspension, although the number of suspensions in the cohort dropped dramatically through the year. Allied to this our PP cohort received fewer positive ROCKS points over the course of year. However, in this area at least, the gaps significantly narrowed in comparison to previous years.*

## Externally provided programmes

*Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you purchased in the previous academic year. This will help the Department for Education identify which ones are popular in England*

| Programme | Provider |
|---|---|
| Online mentoring | Action Your Potential |