

Pupil premium strategy statement – Hillcrest School and Sixth Form Centre

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

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

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of students in school	642
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible students	55% Pupil Premium 52% Free School Meals (Nov 2025)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2023/2024 to 2027/2028
Date this statement was published	September 2024 (Updated November 2025)
Date on which it will be reviewed	August 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr S Abbotts (Headteacher)
Pupil premium lead	Mrs S Palmer (Deputy Headteacher)
Governor / Trustee lead	Miss D McIlmurray (Chair of Governors)

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£369,800
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	0
Total budget for this academic year	£369,800

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Hillcrest School, we are committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of their background or personal challenges, is supported to make strong progress and achieve high attainment across the curriculum.

Our curriculum will be ambitious, broad, and inclusive to meet the needs of all learners. We will not make assumptions about the impact of disadvantage on student outcomes and will use robust diagnostic assessment, alongside trusting relationships, to identify individual needs. Each student will have their wellbeing and personal development supported, with their lives enriched by a wide range of experiences and opportunities both within and beyond the classroom. We intend to remove any potential barriers to attendance, participation, and inclusion in the full life of our school community.

Our pupil premium strategy reflects this commitment by focusing on enabling disadvantaged students to reach their full potential, including those who are already high attainers. In developing this strategy, we carefully consider the needs of our most vulnerable students, including those with a social worker or young carers. The initiatives outlined in this plan are designed to support all students' needs, ensuring that every young person at Hillcrest has the opportunity to thrive and succeed, in line with our school's values of inclusivity, ambition, and excellence.

Our continuous professional development and strategic decision-making will be guided by evidence-based research to ensure high-quality, equitable teaching. This approach focuses on the areas where disadvantaged students need the most support, as research shows it has the greatest impact on closing the attainment gap. At the same time, it benefits all students, including non-disadvantaged students. Implicit in the intended outcomes outlined below is the expectation that the attainment of non-disadvantaged students will be maintained and improved alongside the progress of their disadvantaged peers.

To ensure its effectiveness, we will:

- Ensure disadvantaged students are challenged through the work set in class and for their homework.
- Act early to intervene at the point that need is identified, whether in attendance or in learning.
- Adopt a whole-school approach in which all staff take responsibility for disadvantaged students' outcomes and raise expectations of what they can achieve.

The amount of Pupil Premium allocation that Hillcrest School and Sixth Form Centre received over

The last 5 years can be seen below.

2020-21	£282,038
2021-22	£299,033

2022-23	£318,279
2023-24	£319,814
2024-25	£339,731

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Time, Space, Resources, and Support for Extended Learning</p> <p>We recognise that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can face additional challenges when completing homework, often due to less consistent home environments or lower levels of family engagement with school. As students progress through their education, keeping up with homework becomes increasingly important. When students fall behind, homework can feel discouraging and may negatively affect their overall progress.</p> <p>We are committed to ensuring that all students are supported in engaging with and completing their homework successfully. By providing time, space, resources, and targeted support, we aim to ensure that every student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.</p>
2	<p>School Beyond the Classroom / Aspirations</p> <p>Many of our students, particularly those eligible for Pupil Premium, have limited access to enrichment opportunities outside of school. Data from extra-curricular clubs shows that, on average, a smaller proportion of Pupil Premium students participate compared to their peers. This gap in cultural capital can affect academic progress and may contribute to lower aspirations due to restricted life experiences.</p> <p>At Hillcrest School, we actively address this by offering a wide range of enrichment opportunities and embedding careers information and guidance across all subject areas. This ensures that every student has access to experiences that broaden horizons, develop skills, and raise aspirations.</p>
3	<p>Low Reading and Literacy Attainment at the Start of KS3</p> <p>The average reading and literacy age of incoming Key Stage 3 students is low, particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Early baseline assessments conducted by our English teachers have identified a notable gap in comprehension skills between disadvantaged students and their peers.</p>
4	<p>Independent Practice</p> <p>Our observations indicate that Pupil Premium (PP) students, particularly those with lower prior attainment, often struggle to engage with tasks, give up quickly,</p>

	<p>and show limited retention of knowledge. As a result, our teaching focus remains on recall, retrieval, and explicit instruction.</p> <p>To support this, students benefit from high-quality teacher explanations, including clear modelling and scaffolding, which make tasks more accessible. They also need to be explicitly taught effective revision strategies, as poor recall and retention can be demotivating. Many of our more vulnerable learners may lack support and resources outside the classroom to aid independent study, making structured guidance within school essential for their academic progress and confidence.</p>
5	<p>Attendance and Punctuality</p> <p>Last year's attendance data shows that disadvantaged students had an attendance rate 7% lower than their non-disadvantaged peers.</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
An increasing number of Pupil Premium (PP) students are achieving grades 4+, 5+, and 7+ in English and Maths in their final external examinations, helping to close the attainment gap with their non-PP peers.	Success will be demonstrated by an increasing number of Pupil Premium students achieving grades 4+, 5+, and 7+ in English and Maths, a measurable reduction in the attainment gap with non-PP peers, consistent progress from individual starting points, and evidence from assessments and mock exams showing improved knowledge, skills, and exam readiness.
Improved reading comprehension and vocabulary use among disadvantaged students across KS3.	<p>NGRT assessments will demonstrate improved comprehension skills among disadvantaged students and a smaller gap between their scores and those of their non-disadvantaged peers. Standardised Age Scores (SAS) for reading will continue to be used in 2025–2026 to provide detailed tracking of reading progression.</p> <p>Teachers will be more confident and proficient in developing reading skills and other aspects of disciplinary literacy in the classroom, enabling continuous monitoring and improvement of reading comprehension and fluency. A sustained focus on our PP-first culture will be evident across all aspects of the reading curriculum, alongside more</p>

	consistent implementation of our whole-school literacy strategy.
Improved metacognitive and self-regulatory skills among disadvantaged students across all subjects.	<p>Learning walks will show high-quality teacher explanations, including clear modelling and scaffolding, alongside explicit teaching of strategies for review, recall, and retrieval.</p> <p>Students will demonstrate greater independence in their learning, completing revision homework successfully and retaining knowledge effectively.</p> <p>Disadvantaged students will have access to technology at home and engage with online learning tasks to the same level as their non-disadvantaged peers.</p> <p>Observations, book looks, and other quality assurance measures will show that disadvantaged students particularly higher prior attainer are able to monitor and regulate their own learning. This will be evident in the quality and quantity of homework, confidence in completing challenge tasks, and preparedness for assessments.</p>
Improved participation in all aspects of the wider curriculum among disadvantaged students.	Pupil Premium students are actively considered and invited to participate in all enrichment activities and any aspect of school life that develops cultural capital. Potential barriers to participation are identified, and relevant stakeholders work collaboratively to overcome them, ensuring equitable access and opportunities for all students.
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, particularly disadvantaged students.	Improved attendance for all students, particularly disadvantaged students, will be demonstrated through rising overall attendance rates, a narrowing of the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students, reduced persistent absenteeism, and evidence from monitoring and interventions showing sustained improvement.
To ensure that there are no barriers to learning through access to technology.	All students, particularly disadvantaged students, will have equitable access to technology, enabling full participation in online learning, homework, and digital resources. Barriers to access will be identified and

	addressed, ensuring students can engage confidently and independently with technology to support their learning.
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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

Budgeted cost: £294,518

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Additional teaching capacity and support for English and Maths.	<p>One-to-One Tuition & Small-Group Support The EEF's Teaching & Learning Toolkit reports that one-to-one tuition can deliver about +5 months' additional progress on average. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=One%20to%20one%20tuition</p> <p>Targeted Academic Support for Pupils Who Are Behind The EEF emphasises that targeted academic support especially when informed by diagnostic assessment can be a powerful tool for pupils not making good progress. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-planning-support/2-targeted-academic-support?utm_source=/support-for-schools/school-planning-support/2-targeted-academic-support&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=Targeted%20Academic%20Support%20for%20Pupils%20Who%20Are%20Behind</p> <p>Reduction In Class Size According to the EEF's "Reducing class size" summary, the average impact of reducing class size is +1 month's additional progress, over the course of an academic year https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/reducing-class-size</p>	1, 2, 3, 4
Improve literacy across all subject areas in line with	The EEF's report Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools emphasises that literacy is not just the remit of English teachers; instead, all teachers should support reading,	1, 2, 3, 4

EEF recommendations, supporting teaching staff to make the development of reading skills a central part of their practice as part of a long-term, whole-school literacy strategy.	writing, and communication within their subject disciplines what the report calls “disciplinary literacy.” https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eef-guidance-reports/literacy-ks3-ks4/EEF_KS3_KS4_LITERACY_GUIDANCE.pdf?	
Improved metacognitive and self-regulatory skills among disadvantaged students across all subjects.	EEF defines metacognition as the learner’s ability to think about their own learning plan, monitor, and evaluate how they learn; self-regulated learning combines metacognition with motivation and behaviour control so learners become more independent and effective. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation%20/? Rather than teaching “thinking skills” in isolation, EEF emphasises that metacognitive strategies work best when embedded within normal curriculum content — i.e. applied in actual subject lessons (e.g. maths problems, reading tasks) rather than in standalone “study skills” lessons. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/eef-guidance-reports/metacognition/Metacognition-and-Self-regulated-Learning_guidance-report_v.1.2.0.pdf	1, 2, 3, 4
Individual Resources, Books, resources, revision guides.	Individual Resources, Books, resources, revision guides.	1, 2, 3, 4
Standardised diagnostic assessments.	Standardised tests, such as those provided by GL Assessment, along with Hillcrest’s bespoke KS3 reading programme, offer reliable insights into each pupil’s strengths and weaknesses. This information allows teachers to provide targeted support, whether through tailored interventions or classroom instruction, ensuring that every pupil receives the additional help they need to make progress.	1, 2, 3, 4
Devices provided by the Department for Education (DfE) are allocated to students based on diagnosed need or	The lack of access to technology has been well documented as a key factor in widening the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. This had a heightened impact during the pandemic.	1

requirements for home learning. Ongoing monitoring of device usage ensures that pupils are able to engage effectively with online learning and that access to digital resources is optimised.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/digital	
National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and Leadership Development	At Hillcrest, professional development is purposeful, sustained, and firmly grounded in evidence. Staff engage in National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) in Leading Teaching, Leading Behaviour and Culture, Senior Leadership, and Headship. Research from the EEF (2022) and the DfE NPQ frameworks highlights that developing instructional leadership enhances teaching quality, strengthens curriculum coherence, and reinforces behaviour systems. These programmes build leadership capacity and promote consistent expectations across departments, ensuring that disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils benefit from expert teaching and inclusive school practices.	1, 2, 3, 4

Targeted academic support

Budgeted cost: £15,800

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
1:1 and small group tutoring in core subjects.	<p>According to the EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit, one-to-one tuition has an average impact of +5 months' additional progress over a year.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition</p>	1, 2, 3, 4
TA delivery of some reading, language development and numeracy interventions.	The EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit shows that Teaching Assistants (TAs) can have a positive impact on pupil progress, particularly when they deliver structured, well-planned interventions under the guidance of a teacher.	1, 2, 3, 4

	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/teaching-assistant-interventions</p> <p>Structured literacy and language programmes delivered by TAs, especially in small groups or one-to-one settings, can improve reading comprehension, vocabulary, and oral language skills, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The Toolkit reports an average effect of +4 months' progress when these interventions are well-implemented.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit</p>	
Dedicated attendance Team: Attendance Officer and Attendance Lead to support the pastoral team and engage in intensive work with families to improve attendance	<p>In its guidance for schools on "Supporting school attendance," EEF recommends a holistic approach building understanding of pupils and families, improving inclusive provision, communicating with families, and delivering both universal and targeted interventions.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance</p> <p>In its more recent work (2025), EEF reports that a simple intervention sending parents personalised text-messages indicating the number of school days their child has missed produced a small but positive effect on attendance (equivalent to about 15 extra days of attendance per 100 pupils over the trial period).</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/evaluation-report-release-pupil-absence?</p>	5
Lexia, Guided Reading, and Phonics	<p>At Hillcrest, reading is recognised as the gateway to achievement. The EEF's <i>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</i> report (2019) indicates that structured reading programmes can deliver up to +6 months' progress for disadvantaged learners. To support this, Lexia provides adaptive, personalised reading interventions for PP, SEND, and EAL pupils, monitored by literacy lead.</p> <p>Guided Reading sessions target KS3 pupils below expected Standardised Age Scores (SAS), focusing on vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension.</p> <p>Phonics support remains available for pupils still developing decoding skills. Progress is tracked through SAS data, Lexia dashboards, Alison Steel Phonics</p>	2,4

	<p>Tracking, quality assurance processes, and attendance records.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/improving-literacy-in-secondary-schools?</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/reading-programmes?</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eeef-blog-the-best-laid-plans-of-secondary-literacy?</p>	
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Wider strategies

Budgeted cost: £59,482

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
External Agencies- Support from Education Welfare Services and Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) providers.	<p>EEF reports for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, effective careers education can help overcome inequalities arising from limited access to advice, networks, or role-models outside school.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eeef-partners-with-bank-of-america-merrill-lynch-to-investigate-ways-to-impr?</p> <p>EEF summary of evidence concludes there is “some evidence of promise” for approaches that combine parental communication and engagement, and responsive interventions that meet the individual needs of pupils.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance/summary-of-evidence?</p>	5
Provide PP students who need it with basic resources and equipment.	If disadvantaged students are not provided with the equipment and resources to enable them to access the curriculum at the same pace as their peers then the gap between outcomes is likely to grow.	1
Provide a programme of subsidised trips and visits to support the curriculum and to offer pupils opportunities they would	As part of EEF’s Teaching & Learning Toolkit, arts participation (drama, music, visual arts, etc.) within or beyond the curriculum is estimated to deliver on average +3 months’ additional progress. This suggests enrichment activities can have a positive academic impact when used thoughtfully.	1,2

otherwise not participate in.	https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation/ EEF recognises that enrichment and extra-curricular activities can serve both academic and non-academic aims (wellbeing, motivation, social skills, cultural capital). While their Toolkit tends to prioritise pedagogic interventions, their evaluation of Children's University shows that when enrichment opportunities are accessible and supported, they can contribute to academic gains. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/effective-practice/the-education-endowment-foundation-children-s-university/	
Rewards and Praise. Celebration events that promote collaboration, leadership, and community identity.	At Hillcrest, belonging is central to student success. EEF (2021) demonstrates that fostering a strong sense of community enhances engagement, motivation, and behaviour. Inter-house events, celebration days, and inclusive competitions encourage collaboration and strengthen identity across year groups. Each activity targets at least 60% participation from Pupil Premium pupils , reinforcing connection, recognition, and inclusion. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/evaluation/eeef-evaluation-reports-and-research-papers/syntheses-of-eeef-evaluations/learning-about-culture-overarching-evaluators-report/	1, 2, 5

Total budgeted cost: £369,800

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged students

In 2024–25, Hillcrest made measurable strides in closing gaps and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The year was defined by strengthened teaching, timely interventions, and a reinforced sense of belonging all guided by our core belief that disadvantage should never limit ambition. Our evaluation draws on termly data drops, literacy assessments, attendance dashboards, quality assurance evidence, and pupil voice, providing a comprehensive and nuanced picture of how our pupils are learning, growing, and succeeding.

Attainment and Progress

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils continue to rise, reflecting the impact of high-quality teaching, targeted interventions, and consistent expectations. Disadvantaged pupils achieved an Attainment 8 score of 46.7, up from 45.3 in 2023–24. The proportion of pupils attaining grade 4 or above in English and Maths increased by 2.3%, while the EBacc average point score rose from 4.77 to 5.05, remaining above the national benchmark.

Enrichment and Cultural Capital

Enrichment participation continues to grow, with Pupil Premium engagement rising steadily. Targeted invitations, subsidies, and inclusive messaging have broadened access, and students report that these opportunities are enjoyable, inspiring, and supportive of their learning.

Our ambition remains clear: at least 50% of PP pupils should take part in every trip or visit. While participation for SEND PP pupils remains lower in some areas, this will be a key focus for 2025–26 to ensure every pupil benefits fully from enrichment opportunities.

Attendance

Overall attendance at Hillcrest in 2024–25 shows positive trends, with continued focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils. Attendance for Pupil Premium pupils improved compared with previous years, narrowing the gap with non-PP peers. Targeted interventions from the Attendance Team, early identification of persistent absentees, and strong pastoral support have contributed to this progress. Ongoing monitoring, family engagement, and consistent follow-up ensure that attendance remains a priority, supporting pupils' learning, wellbeing, and overall outcomes.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Lexia Reading	Lexia Learning

Service pupil premium funding

<i>For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information:</i>
How our service pupil premium allocation was spent last academic year
N/A
The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible students
N/A