

PUPIL PREMIUM STRATEGY STATEMENT

This statement details our **academy's** use of pupil premium (and recovery premium for the 2024-2025 academic year) 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 effect that last year's spending of pupil premium had within our **academy**.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	The Palmer Catholic Academy
Number of pupils in school	1136
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	307 (27%)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended)	2024-2027
Date this statement was published	November 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	November 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr P Downey
Pupil premium lead	Mrs T Pascoe-Matthews
Governor / Trustee lead	Mrs M Leslie-Povoas

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£301,000.00
Recovery premium funding allocation this academic year	£0
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	£301,000.00

Part A: Pupil Premium Strategy Plan

Statement of intent

The funding allocated to The Palmer Catholic Academy for the 2025-2026 academic year is intended to address and reduce the attainment gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers. As an academy, we are committed to embedding our pupil premium strategies within wider school policies and practices, thereby fostering a culture of high aspirations and academic success for every student.

We acknowledge that disadvantaged students have a broad range of needs, which require carefully tailored support and intervention. Building on our academy's experiences and informed by the latest research into effective educational practice, we have developed a new framework. This model places a strong emphasis on the principle of quality first teaching, recognising that high-quality classroom instruction benefits all students, but has the greatest impact on those who are disadvantaged.

In the previous academic year, attendance for disadvantaged pupils was below the academy's expected standard of 96%. In response, we are keen to implement recent national strategies that reflect current best practice and research. Our aim is to maximise attendance, ensuring all students are present in school and able to access the education to which they are entitled. An education that has the power to transform their prospects.

Our academy is committed to a sustained, collaborative approach in addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged students. We ensure that all members of staff understand and embrace both their individual and collective roles in supporting these pupils. Through this shared responsibility, we aim to secure meaningful progress and high achievement for all, irrespective of background or barriers.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>Attainment Gaps in GCSE Subjects</p> <p>The attainment levels of disadvantaged students remain below those of their non-disadvantaged peers in several GCSE subjects. This disparity is reflected in the lower progress scores recorded for disadvantaged students, with the gap being particularly evident in the Open Bucket subjects. High prior attaining boys also continue to face challenges in achieving the expected progress within these subject areas during the 2024-2025 academic year.</p> <p>This persistent challenge, notably in the Open Bucket subjects and among high prior attaining boys, highlights ongoing barriers to academic improvement for these groups. Addressing these attainment gaps is a priority, as it is essential to ensure all students can achieve their full potential regardless of their background.</p>
2	<p>Persistent absence continues to pose a significant risk to the academic performance and prospects of some of our disadvantaged students. Regular non-attendance can lead to gaps in learning, reduced attainment, and diminished life chances. This issue is particularly pronounced among students who serve as carers, as their responsibilities at home often impact their ability to attend school consistently.</p>

	<p>Over the past two years, we have observed an increase in the number of disadvantaged students experiencing changes in their housing circumstances. These changes have frequently resulted in students missing school or facing the challenge of travelling long distances to reach the academy, further exacerbating attendance difficulties and the risk of underperformance.</p> <p>Additionally, Year 8 has emerged as a cohort requiring more focused and higher-level support compared to disadvantaged students in other year groups. The unique challenges faced by these students necessitate targeted interventions to address persistent absence and ensure equitable opportunities for academic success.</p>
3	<p>Since the onset of the pandemic, there has been a notable rise in the demand for access to support services for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as well as for social, emotional, and mental health needs among students. This heightened need reflects the growing challenges currently faced by some disadvantaged students within the academy.</p> <p>These challenges have had a negative impact on both academic progress and overall well-being for affected students. The increased pressure and complexities in their personal circumstances underscore the importance of providing robust pastoral support to ensure that all students can succeed and thrive in the school environment.</p>
4	<p>Annual reading assessments reveal that disadvantaged students who also have special educational needs (SEN) are currently achieving lower literacy and comprehension levels compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. This gap in reading ability highlights the challenges faced by this group, which may contribute to further barriers in their academic progress and overall attainment. The combination of disadvantage and SEN appears to compound difficulties in literacy, underscoring the need for focused support in this area to ensure these students are not left behind.</p>
5	<p>Our ongoing conversations with both students and their families have highlighted a significant disparity in cultural capital between our disadvantaged students and their peers. Many of these students have had markedly fewer opportunities to access and engage with enriching experiences that contribute to broader knowledge and personal development.</p> <p>This reduced cultural capital is evident in limited participation in activities such as visiting museums, libraries, theatres, and large cities. Such experiences not only expand students' horizons but also play a crucial role in supporting their academic progress and developing the skills and perspectives necessary for future success. The lack of exposure to these opportunities further compounds the challenges faced by disadvantaged students, creating additional barriers to achieving parity with their 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
Improved attainment among disadvantaged students across the curriculum at the end of KS4, Attainment 8 score on par with non-disadvantaged students.	<p>By the end of 2025, disadvantaged students achieve Attainment 8 scores that are on par with their non-disadvantaged peers, demonstrating equal or positive Progress 8 outcomes across all subjects.</p> <p>They attain at least expected grades in core subjects, and targeted interventions result in</p>

	measurable improvements, leading to a sustained narrowing of the attainment gap across the curriculum by the end of KS4.
To improve the attendance of disadvantaged students who experience persistent absence to pre-pandemic level , as they are at significant risk of underperforming and reducing their future life chances.	<p>Sustained high attendance from 2024/25 demonstrated by:</p> <p>Attendance among disadvantaged students who are persistently absent shows a sustained increase, with targeted support and interventions leading to a measurable reduction in persistent absence rates. Improved attendance correlates with higher engagement in lessons, greater participation in school activities, and evidence of improved academic progress. The gap in attendance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students narrows, contributing to enhanced overall attainment and better future opportunities for these learners.</p>
To improve reading ages and strengthen reading comprehension for disadvantaged students throughout KS3	Reading comprehension tests show a 5% improvement in the comprehension skills of disadvantaged students, along with a reduced gap between their scores and those of their non-disadvantaged peers. This will be reflected in progress reports at least twice per year, Teachers should have also observed this progress through active participation in lessons and through book scrutiny and students' ability to complete tasks with very little support.
To secure sustained improvements in student wellbeing for all, especially for disadvantaged learners.	<p>All students seeking pastoral support will be seen by one of our mentors. Where necessary, students will also be seen by our school counsellor or referral made to external specialist services.</p> <p>By 2024/25 it will be fully embedded in our practice with disadvantaged students receiving pastoral support as part of early intervention relating to wellbeing and also maintained when needed.</p>
To broadened cultural experiences and enrichment opportunities for disadvantaged students from KS3 through KS5.	Teacher reports and class observations suggest disadvantaged students have access to more knowledge associated with cultural capital and engage more actively in lessons. All disadvantaged students are given the opportunity to attend at least one cultural enhancement activity, such as a visit to a theatre, library, large city, annual year group trips, overseas trips for GCSE options

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: £200,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
The academy will recruit good to outstanding teachers to ensure quality first teaching.	<p>Teaching and learning – Research conducted by the EEF found that “Good teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils”. Quality first teaching, recruitment, retention and professional development will be part of our key focus.</p> <p>High standard of teaching benefits all students including pupil premium (Education Endowment Fund). DFE research 2015 – Leaders in schools that were more successful “focus on high quality teaching first rather than on bolt-on strategies and activities outside school hours”.</p>	1
The academy will invest in top quality CPD for whole staff training needs and will also support colleagues in external training for example the NPQ programmes. The academy will cover the cost for daily cover for staff participating	<p>Teaching is a lifelong learning profession and it is imperative that teachers and teaching assistants are aware of current policies, strategies and research.</p> <p>https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/document/s/guidance/Quality Assurance of Teachers Continuing Professional Development.pdf</p>	1, 2
The academy will carry out subject reviews with internal staff as well as external consultants/experts	<p>Reflecting on current practices will help schools to recognise what is working in the best interest of children and staff for excellent progress.</p> <p>https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/document/s/guidance/Quality Assurance of Teachers Continuing Professional Development.pdf</p>	1, 2

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

Budgeted cost: £50,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Funding provided for Lexia subscription and also payment to staff who lead on morning interventions to support pupils attending Lexia sessions.	<p>Young people who leave school without good literacy skills are held back at every stage of life. (EEF 2019) The EEF further <i>asserted “by attending to the literary demands of their subjects, teachers increase their pupil’s chance of success in their subjects”</i></p> <p>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</p> <p><i>Reading comprehension, vocabulary and other literacy skills are heavily linked with attainment in maths and English:</i></p> <p>word-gap.pdf (oup.com.cn)</p>	2
Pupil Premium Lead / Progress and Outcomes Lead Practitioner and other key staff to all plan and implement a school-led tutoring similar to the offerings under the previously successful National Tuition Programme that ended summer 2024, for pupils are working below expected levels at KS4. Disadvantaged and SEN children will be prioritised as progress dipped for both groups in the 2025 GCSE exams.	<p>Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both one-to-one:</p> <p>One to one tuition EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)</p> <p>And in small groups:</p> <p>Small group tuition Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p>	2
Our progress and Outcomes -Lead Practitioner to collaborate with HOD to ensure disadvantaged students in years 11 & 13 are included in master classes	<p>Targeted support, guided by teacher assessments and tailored implementation, has consistently helped students address smaller gaps in their learning. Master classes will focus on preparing students with exam-style questions. Research suggests that when students are selected based on specific needs, rather than through broad group interventions, they tend to make significant progress.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition</p>	1

Students to be assessed and allocated appropriate intervention groups for reading comprehension using Accelerated Reading, Fresh Start, Lexia or Language for Thinking.	<p>The academy has invested in Accelerated Reader, Fresh Start and Lexia and they have been known to help students progress with reading comprehension.</p> <p><i>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</i></p> <p><i>Reading comprehension, vocabulary and other literacy skills are heavily linked with attainment in maths and English:</i></p> <p><i>word-gap.pdf (oup.com.cn)</i></p> <p>Small group interventions have a positive impact on students' language skills and reading comprehension.</p> <p>https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/2022/01/small-group-interventions-vive/#:~:text=A%20Campbell%20systematic%20review%20shows,often%20only%20limited%20positive%20effects.</p>	2
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Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: 25,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Provide additional training for our pastoral team and ensure all Key Stages have staff members with non-teaching commitments to support students.</p> <p>The academy will maintain the current provision of 3 fulltime mentors and 3 pastoral assistants.</p>	<p>Pastoral needs – There is a strong pastoral team and we will look to use this as a strategy to support students who show signs of social and emotional mental health concerns. The pastoral team will be vital in our parental engagement strategies with early and regular communication between home and the academy.</p> <p>As a Catholic academy, we recognise the needs of the individual and the care for those most vulnerable. Catholic social teaching promotes the 'preferential option for the disadvantaged' and the attention to put the needs of others first. The clear focus on the overall care and development of our disadvantaged students is integral to the ethos of the academy.</p>	3
We will retain our current pastoral/disadvantaged support assistant to work specifically with our disadvantaged students who are prior low attainers on areas of	As a non-teaching member of staff students have regular meetings with the named staff and a good partnership has been established with families.	4

concerns around engagement in lessons and attendance.	Attendance and attitude to learning are tracked and support provided.	
The EWO will continue to meet with HOYs on a regular basis to support students and families where attendance is a cause for concern.	<p>Attendance – This remains a whole school focus. There is no denying the link between good progress and attendance.</p> <p><i>Embedding principles of good practice set out in DfE's Improving School Attendance advice.</i></p> <p>The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4 (DFE 2016). The links between attendance and achievement are strong.</p> <p>Students with persistent absence are less likely to attain at school and stay in education after the age of 16 years (National Strategies)</p>	4
Funding for trips, visits and extracurricular learning. Including university visits, external speakers and careers advice This will be supplemented with raising the pupil premium participation in wider school activities	<p>Findings from EEF – Teacher Toolkit – art participation and aspiration interventions, reveals a moderate impact for low cost.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions</p> <p>https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Parent-Power-2018.pdf</p>	5
Contingency fund for acute issues. Such as uniform etc.	£16,000 has been set aside to support disadvantaged students in areas not identified above such as educational trips, uniform, laptops etc.	

Total budgeted cost: £ 354,000 + £25,000 contingency

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 students in the 2024 to 2025 academic year.

Our summer 2025 results indicated that disadvantaged students had a positive progress 8 score based on internal data as we are awaiting the official figures. While this is positive and should be celebrated it is below the progress of when compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. Our initial assessment has identified specific areas such as underperformance boys who had high prior attainment in specific subjects, attendance, mental health challenges and low performances in some open bucket subjects.

GCSE Analysis (2024- 2025 – Verified data)

Category	Attainment 8
PP	42.1
Whole school	48.7
Redbridge	53.8
National	45.9
Gap compared to non-disadvantaged nationally	8.2

Objective 1

Improved attainment 8 score among disadvantaged students across the curriculum at the end of KS4 for the academic year 2025- 2026, ensuring the reducing of the gap.

Update: Achieved for the 2024- 2025 Cohort

The year 11 cohort benefitted from the Master Classes, academic mentoring, small group teaching in the core subjects and in various subjects where they were working at least one grade below expected levels. This has contributed to a positive progress based on our internal data for the cohort of disadvantaged students albeit lower than non-disadvantaged students. Due to staff workload we were unable to deliver 1;1 or small group tuition as most teachers were delivering Master classes to support learners.

Objective 2

Improved reading ages/reading comprehension among disadvantaged students across KS3.

Update: Achieved for the academic year 2024-2025.

Students in years 7, 8 and 9 benefitted from the Accelerated reading programme with one lesson per fortnight dedicated to the programme. This took place in the library for 100 minutes. A literacy Coordinator was also appointed to support the whole school approach to literacy. (Awaiting the results of our most recent NGRT reading ages to compare with last academic year)

Objective 3

To achieve and sustain improved wellbeing for all students, including those who are disadvantaged.

Update: Achieved and will remain for current cohort

Students identified as needing pastoral support were allocated a mentor to provide regular guidance and encouragement throughout the academic year. For those students whose needs were more complex or required targeted intervention, referrals were made to the school counsellor for specialist assistance. In circumstances where further support was deemed necessary, the Special Educational Needs (SEN) department worked in close partnership with the pastoral team to coordinate referrals to external agencies. This included accessing services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and other specialist providers to ensure students received the appropriate level of care.

It is noteworthy that, during the 2024-2025 academic year, there was a significant rise in the number of students requiring support from CAMHS. This increased demand reflects the growing prevalence of mental health challenges post the pandemic, highlighting the importance of robust internal and external support systems. This was the first year that referral to CAMHS for ADHD assessments exceeded 10 referrals as some pupils have struggled with engagement and concentration.

Objective 3

To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, particularly our disadvantaged students.

Update: Achieved and will remain for current cohort

FSM6 - Persistent absence

Year	Cohort	School	National	National distribution banding	Trend
2024/25	285	23.9%	34.5%	Below (sig-)	Sig decrease
2023/24	262	33.2%	42.5%	Below (sig-)	No sig change
2022/23	299	27.8%	43.8%	Below (sig-)	Sig increase
2018/19	297	12.5%	24.7%	Below (sig-)	Not available

Chart

During the last academic year, our overall attendance rate remained below the levels recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic. Several complex and interrelated factors have contributed to this trend. These include a rise in mental health difficulties among students, instances of school-based anxiety, and external challenges such as housing issues and the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Despite these challenges, our school's attendance continues to exceed the national average. This achievement can be attributed to the effective collaboration between the pastoral team, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) department, the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), as well as ongoing parental engagement and a variety of support mechanisms that have been put in place to sustain and improve student attendance.

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
Fresh Start	Ruth Miskin
Accelerated Reader	Renaissance Learning
Lexia	Lexia Learning Systems
Twinkl	Twinkl Education Company
Sparx	Sparx Learning
CPD Genie	Genie Suite

Service pupil premium funding (optional)

For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information:

Measure	Details
How did you spend your service pupil premium allocation last academic year?	N/A
What was the impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible students?	N/A

Further information (optional)

The Pupil premium funding will also be used to support students for specific individual needs such as DofE (<https://www.dofe.org/>), uniform, equipment, trips, music lessons and other areas of needs. We will also be introducing a group of students to Stepladder (<http://thestepladder.org/>)

Parental engagement will be key to the successful implementation of the pupil premium policy especially in areas of attendance and extra tuition offered in the academy.

It might become necessary to fund private specialist assessments for students who are waiting on appointments from Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS).