Pupil premium strategy statement – Darwen Aldridge Community Academy

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

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

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	958 (Year 7-11)
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	37.2 %
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers **(3 year plans are recommended)**	2023/2024 to 2025/2026
Date this statement was published	September 2024
Date on which it will be reviewed	September 2026
Statement authorised by	Allan Glover – Principal
Pupil premium lead	Stephen Clarke – Assistant Principal
Governor / Trustee lead	Allison Cannon – Chair of Governors

Funding overview (2025-26)

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£409300
Recovery premium funding allocation this academic year	£0
Pupil premium (and recovery 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*	£409300

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

The Academy is committed to ensuring that all children, irrespective of background or the challenges they face, make good progress and achieve their full potential socially and academically.

The focus of our pupil premium strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve that goal, including progress for those who are already high attainers. We will consider the challenges faced by vulnerable pupils, such as those who are EAL, have a social worker, are LAC, post-LAC and young carers. The activity we have outlined in this statement is also intended to support their needs, regardless of whether they are disadvantaged or not.

We aim for our Pupil Premium students to consistently achieve academic outcomes well above the national average when compared to the national proxy for Pupil Premium students. We aim for all our students to achieve well and for there to be no gap within the Academy in academic outcomes between the achievements of Pupil Premium students and non-Pupil Premium students. We aim for pupil premium students to thrive socially and to be able to access the full entitlement of additional opportunities offered by the academy.

We have researched the barriers to educational success within our community, all of which are prominent barriers for many Pupil Premium students. Pupil Premium funding is used to support any activity that will directly address these barriers. Our philosophy and ethos, underpinning our holistic approach, guides all our work with our students.

High-quality first teaching is at the heart of our approach, with a focus on areas in which disadvantaged pupils require the most support. This has proven to have the greatest impact on closing the disadvantage attainment gap and at the same time will benefit the non-disadvantaged pupils in our school. Implicit in the intended outcomes detailed below, is the intention that non-disadvantaged pupils' attainment will be sustained and improved alongside progress for their disadvantaged peers.

The key areas our strategy targets are quality of education, of which teaching and learning play a large part, targeted support including tutoring and pastoral support, parental engagement and support with mental health and resilience and are outlined in more detail below.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Assessments, observations and discussion with KS3 pupils indicate that disadvantaged pupils generally have lower levels of reading ability and comprehension than peers. This impacts their progress in all subjects. On entry to year 7 over the last year, 68% of our disadvantaged pupils arrive below age-related expectations compared to 43% of their peers. This gap remains steady during pupils' time at our school.
2	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and families suggest that the education and wellbeing of many of our disadvantaged pupils have been impacted by partial school closures to a greater extent than for other pupils. These findings are backed up by several national studies. This has resulted in significant knowledge gaps resulting in pupils falling further behind age-related expectations.
3	Our observations suggest many lower attaining disadvantaged pupils lack metacognitive / self-regulation strategies when faced with challenging tasks, notably in their monitoring and evaluation of their answers. This is indicated across the curriculum, particularly in the mastery of disciplinary knowledge.
4	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and families have identified social and emotional issues for many pupils, such as anxiety, depression (diagnosed by medical professionals) and low self-esteem. This is partly driven by concern about catching up on lost learning and exams/future prospects, and the lack of enrichment opportunities, (partly due to the pandemic). These challenges particularly affect disadvantaged pupils, which has significantly impacted on their attainment.
5	Our attendance data over the last year indicates that attendance among disadvantaged pupils was 7% lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils, with disadvantaged student attendance at 82.7%. 36.8% of disadvantaged pupils have been 'persistently absent', (below 90%), compared to 25.0% of their peers during that period, 11.8% lower. Our assessments and observations indicate that absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged pupils' progress.
6	The attainment of disadvantaged pupils at KS4 is generally lower than that of their peers. 27% of PP students achieved a grade 4 in both English and maths last year compared with 60% of non-PP students, a difference of 33%. The A8 measure was 27.88 for PP students in comparison to – 40.37 for non- PP students, a difference of 12.49, (*before validated).

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 pupils across the curriculum at the end of KS4.	By the end of 2025/26 KS4 outcomes demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils achieve: • an Attainment 8 score of 40.0 • an average grade of 4.20 • No significant gap between PP and non-PP students • 50% of PP students achieving a 4+ in English and Maths • Increased numbers of students going on to higher education and university.
Improved reading ages and comprehension among disadvantaged pupils across KS3.	Reading age and comprehension tests demonstrate improved comprehension skills among disadvantaged pupils in line with age related expectations, and a smaller disparity between the scores of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers. Teachers should also have recognised this improvement through engagement in lessons and book scrutiny.
Improved metacognitive and self-regulatory skills among disadvantaged pupils across all subjects.	Teacher reports and class observations suggest disadvantaged pupils are more able to monitor and regulate their own learning. This finding is supported by independent task completion rate in classrooms and homework completion rates across all classes and subjects.
To achieve and sustain improved wellbeing for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.	Sustained high levels of wellbeing from 2025/26 demonstrated by: • qualitative data from student voice, student and parent surveys and teacher observations. • a significant increase in participation in enrichment activities, particularly among disadvantaged pupils.

To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high attendance from 2025/26 demonstrated by: • the overall absence rate for all pupils being no more than 10%, and the attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers being reduced by 5%. • the percentage of all pupils who are persistently absent being below 10%, and the figure among disadvantaged pupils being no more than 5% lower than their peers.

Activity in this academic year (2025-26)

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: £163720

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Strategy booklet including tiered response to support and individual strategies for each Pupil Premium child provided to all staff to implement in their teaching.	The EEF toolkit raises the need for a tiered response to Pupil Premium so that students have the support they need where all staff are aware and this is the rationale for this. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidance-for-teachers/pupil-premium/Tiered_model_and_menu_of_approaches_1.0_pdf.pdf?v=1649418813	1, 2, 3 and 6

Developing high quality first teaching and learning throughout the academy including developing metacognitive and self-regulation skills in all pupils. This will involve ongoing teacher training through a coaching programme. All teaching staff to have access to 1-2-1 coaching if required.	Teaching metacognitive strategies to pupils can be an inexpensive method to help pupils become more independent learners. There is particularly strong evidence that it can have a positive impact on maths attainment: Metacognition and self-regulation | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	3 and 6
Continued enhancement of our maths and English teaching and curriculum planning in line with DfE KS3 and EEF guidance. English will use a Mastery curriculum designed to enhance cognition and self regulation. English and maths to have weekly co- planning time built into all subject teacher timetables to address any adaptive and responsive teaching requirements.	The impact of mastery learning approaches is an additional five months progress, on average, over the course of a year. Mastery learning also appears to be particularly effective when pupils are given opportunities to work in groups or teams and take responsibility for supporting each other's progress https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mastery-learning	1, 2, 3 and 6

Purchase of standardised diagnostic assessments. Training will be provided for staff to ensure assessments are interpreted correctly.	Standardised tests can provide reliable insights into the specific strengths and weaknesses of each pupil to help ensure they receive the correct additional support through interventions or teacher instruction: Standardised tests | Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	1, 2, 3 and 6

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

Budgeted cost: £159627

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Engaging with Virtual Aldridge tutoring programme to provide school-led tutoring for pupils. A significant proportion of the pupils who receive tutoring will be disadvantaged, including those who are high attainers. Further 1-2-1 tuition along with in English and Maths, including Bespoke intervention for disadvantaged students.	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: One to one tuition | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk) And in small groups: Small group tuition | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	1, 2, 3 and 6
Peer Tutoring programme to be embedded alongside with training and support for both students and staff leading. Mentoring programme with Y11 disadvantaged students to discuss barriers and potential solutions to learning in their lessons.	According to EEF, peer tutoring, on average, has a positive impact on both tutors and tutees and may be a cost-effective approach to delivering one to one or small group tuition in a school. It is estimated to add +5 months onto normal progress. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring	1, 2, 4 and 5
Engage the hardest to reach students through BRFC Premier League inspires mentoring programme with an athlete mentor.	The EEF toolkit shows that sports participation can add +2 months in terms of impact but also these sessions include metacognition and self- regulation with can add +7 months and so this is the rationale for this. Metacognition and self-regulation | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	3 and 6

Continue to use Accelerated Reader and use for both reading for pleasure and targeted intervention at Key Stage 3. In addition Freshstart will be used to develop phonics with students significantly below Age related expectation.	The EEF study found that Year 7 pupils who were offered Accelerated Reader made 3 months' additional progress in reading compared to other similar pupils. For pupils eligible for free school meals the figure was 5 months' additional progress. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/accelerated-reader	1

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

Budgeted cost: £85953

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Pastoral team developed and restructured to create specific roles and responsibilities to support disadvantaged students with additional barriers to their learning e.g. mental health co-ordinator, LAC co-ordinator, PP co-ordinator, EAL co-ordinator, nurture group, additional attendance officer and behaviour mentors, expanding safeguarding team	The EEF toolkit shows that interventions for social and emotional skills, behaviour interventions and small group support adds +3 or +4 months in terms of impact and so this is the rationale for this. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions	2, 4 and 5

Increase amount and range of parental engagement activities to include calendared parent council, parent and child workshops, mental health workshops for parents etc. Family Support Worker who is based at DACA.	The EEF toolkit shows that parental engagement adds +3 or +4 months in terms of impact and that more intensive support should be embedded for those families who need it and so this is the rationale for this. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/parental-engagement	2, 3, 4 and 5
All classrooms to have a wellbeing and equipment box designed to reduce/remove barriers to learning, including classroom equipment.	This strategy has been implemented as assessments indicate that students to not always arrive to lessons ready to learn	4 and 5
Full access for disadvantaged students to attend educational visits, careers events and enrichment opportunities to ensure they are future ready	No child should be left behind and assessments have indicated that students are reluctant, (particularly our most vulnerable groups), to attend enriching activities designed to help our students be successful both in and beyond school.	2, 4, 5 and 6

Total budgeted cost: £409300

Part B: Review of the previous academic year
Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Year 7-10 assessment data
All faculty data is based on in-class assessments sat at the end of the academic year.
In year 7, the number of students at expected levels in Maths is 56%. In English expected levels is at 73%.
In year 8, the number of students at expected levels in Maths is 33%. In English expected levels is at 68%.
In year 9, the number of students at expected levels in Maths is 52% . In English expected levels is at 79%.
In year 10, the number of students at expected levels dropped and in Maths it is 21%. In English expected levels is at 30% for literature and 9%. Students below will be targeted for appropriate interventions at the start of the academic year.

GCSE results
27% of disadvantaged students achieved a 9-4 in both English and Maths which was 14% for 9-5. There is still a gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged as 60% of the non-disadvantaged cohort achieved 9-4 and 28% 9-5.
41% of disadvantaged students achieved a 9-4 in English which was 31% for 9-5. In Maths at 4+ this was 31% and for 5+ 14%. Again, there is a gap where for non-disadvantaged students, 70% achieved a 4+ in English which was 52% for 5+ and in Maths, 64% achieved a 4+, which was 35% at 5+. Work needs to continue on closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in English and Maths.
In Science a similar gap in performance was observed with 22% of disadvantaged students achieving a 4+ for 2 entries which was 55% for non-disadvantaged students.
Only 13 disadvantaged students opted for languages (French/Spanish), for the disadvantaged students that opted for languages, the success was high with 77% of students achieving a Grade 4+, compared to 90% of non-disadvantaged students achieving a Grade 4+.
Disadvantaged gap with the Humanities subjects at Grade 4+ was significant with History 4+ at 23% compared to 53%, and Geography 4+ at 11% compared to 47%.
Disadvantaged students performed well in Photography with 87% 4+ and Food, with 73% 4+.

Additional impact
Peer Mentoring
Students sat a baseline at the start of the programme where the biggest concerns identified were motivation, behaviour, attitude to school and careers, which was what the peer tutors were then asked to focus on to ensure that students in year 7 were able to settle in well and have the skills needed to be successful. Students did make significant progress in these target areas but also across all areas of the baseline. In all categories, no students rated themselves at 5 (significant concern) for any category which is a significant improvement from the baseline where 25 of the students on the programme did. By the end, the majority of students (23) placed themselves at 1 (no concern) which shows how well this has worked.

In school CAMHs provision
23 students have been seen by the in-school CAMHS team since September. 10 students have been discharged due to making good progress and no longer requiring intervention for their mental health. 4 further students are ready to be discharged due to progress made. 0 students failed to engage. All other students are making progress but work is ongoing.

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you used your pupil premium (or recovery premium) to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider
Virtual Aldridge Tutoring	Aldridge Education Trust
BRFC Inspire	Blackburn Rovers FC
Maths/English Tutoring	Aldridge Education Trust
Phonics	Fresh start
GL Assessments	Aldridge Education Trust