

Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium for the 2025 to 2026 academic year. This funding is used 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	Thirsk School and Sixth Form College
Number of pupils in school	1036
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	29% (Years 7-11)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2024-2027
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2026
Statement authorised by	Emma Lambden
Pupil premium lead	George Hollis
Governor / Trustee lead	Irene Marwood

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£248,063
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	£248,063

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our pupil premium strategy aims to remove the entrenched barriers that prevent disadvantaged pupils from achieving in line with their peers. In the period following Covid, significant gaps were seen in attainment, progress, attendance and wider participation. Our initial post Covid planning to address this, which was based on a detailed report written in 2020, was focused on significant levels of tutoring, and pastoral support. This strategy, which builds on from the period 2021-2024, focuses on high-quality teaching, targeted academic intervention, and wider support for pupils' attendance, wellbeing, behaviour and access to enrichment, so that disadvantaged pupils can benefit fully from the school's curriculum and wider offer.

Our intent is to secure:

- Strong academic progress for all disadvantaged pupils
- Improved attendance, reducing persistent absence
- Greater engagement with enrichment, ensuring pupils build social and cultural capital
- Positive wellbeing so that mental health does not impede learning
- Strengthened parental engagement, enabling collaborative support for pupils

This plan builds on the work of the past four years and forms part of a longer-term strategy to close gaps by 2027, with robust annual evaluation.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Attendance and levels of persistent absence.
2	Behaviour incidences including exclusions
3	Academic engagement and ambition, leading to poorer levels of achievement
4	Wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding concerns.
5	Parental engagement
6	Extra-curricular involvement, including the building of greater social and cultural capital
7	Literacy and numeracy levels

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
Attendance is brought in line with all other students	Attendance data shows a gap between PP and all students in all year groups. We will aim to eliminate this gap, whilst also raising the attendance of all students. Our specific aim for 2025-26 is to reduce PP attendance gap from 5.1% to below 3% by July 2026, and reduce PP persistent absence by at least 5 percentage points.
There is a reduction of behaviour incidences including exclusions	Behaviour data will show that we have reduced the number of fixed term exclusions for our PP students.
Academic progress is brought in line with all other students	There will be a closing of the gap in both our P8 and A8 score, with the aim that all students achieve highly, regardless of their situation. Our specific aim for 2025-26 is to narrow A8 gap from 12.08 to below 10, and for PP pupils to make progress increasingly in line with non-PP pupils
Our PP students engage with the full range of extra-curricular activities, in line with all other students	Attendance monitoring of extra-curricular activities will show that participation in clubs, trips and leadership roles is at least equivalent to non-PP pupils.
Our capacity to both strategically and reactively deal with any mental health issues enables mental health issues to be less of a barrier to a successful time in school	Through working with our pastoral team, inclusion unit and external agencies we will see less lesson time missed due to mental health issues.
Parental engagement with the school is strong and positive	Parental surveys will continue to show consistently positive views of the school, and attendance at events such as parent consultation evenings will be equally high for all students.
Literacy levels rise as students move up from school, so that by year 11 there is no longer a PP literacy gap.	Data will show that our PP students are making swift progress in literacy, so that they are measurably in line with their peers by Year 11.

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)

The Sutton Trust report of 2011 assessed the impact of teachers on pupil achievement. This found that the effects of high-quality teaching are especially significant for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over a school year, these students gain 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers. In other words, for our disadvantaged students the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher can be the equivalent of a whole year's learning. Therefore, the single most important thing we can do to support vulnerable students is consistently work to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The actions listed below reflect our strategic engagement with improving teaching and learning for all our disadvantaged students.

Budgeted cost: £70,680

Actions <i>NB: Not all of these actions are directly funded out of money received for our Pupil Premium students. However, they are all relevant to the development of our teaching and learning strategy.</i>	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>The continued employment of a literacy coordinator</i>	The impact of improving literacy levels is widely acknowledged. The coordinator will continue to strategically sharpen our explicit engagement with this.	3 and 7
<i>Build on our strategic overhaul of the teaching and learning strategy to ensure best quality first teaching.</i>	The greatest impact on progress and attainment comes from high quality first teaching. This is widely cited in reports by institutions such as the EEF and Sutton Trust. This strategic overhaul will look to ensure that our disadvantaged students receive the best teaching possible in every classroom	3 and 7

<i>Proactively developing the monitoring of teaching and learning, distributed across all levels of leadership.</i>	In order to ensure that all teaching reaches the high standards that we expect, the need to monitor and feedback is crucial. This needs to be a part of leadership at all levels in the school, and will support our drive to ensure that all our disadvantaged students receive the best teaching possible in every classroom	3 and 7
<i>Providing extra time for intervention groups in Maths and English, reducing class sizes and allowing for greater small group/individual support.</i>	The EEF and Sutton Trust both acknowledge that smaller group intervention can have significant impact. This time allows for greater strategic engagement with the curriculum and targeting of students who have been identified as needing extra support.	3 and 7
<i>Purchasing of resources to support pupil premium students in certain subjects (eg: extra revision guides).</i>	Whilst all the resources that students need are provided by the school, there are times when we appreciate the need to support our disadvantaged students.	1, 3, 4, 5, and 7
<i>Continuing to fund the use of the accelerated reader scheme.</i>	Accelerated reader provides an impetus to support reading. It provides us with regular data about reading age and, following a report by our librarian in March 2021, we can see evidence that it engages our students and supports their literacy.	3 and 7
<i>Lexia</i>	This is a more targeted literacy strategy than accelerated reader, and will allow us to support individuals more.	3 and 7
<i>Providing relevant CPD for staff.</i>	We want our staff to be highly trained in the most current pedagogy. This ensures that students get the best experience in the classroom. We also fund specific courses/reading and research that are targeted to individuals with specific roles and responsibilities.	Potentially all
<i>Providing relevant pedagogic research and reading for staff.</i>	Engaging our staff with up to date pedagogic research will enable specific and focused engagement with new ideas from places such as the Huntington research school.	Potentially all

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

Whilst we have our greatest impact through our teaching and learning, we also understand the importance of more individualised academic support, both individually and in small groups. These actions below represent how we are academically supporting students beyond the classroom

Budgeted cost: £74,000

Action	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>The provision of holiday school to students</i>	We run an Easter revision school, which will support our disadvantaged students.	3, 7 and 8
<i>Exploring options for one to one/small group tuition, mentoring and support</i>	One to one mentoring is mentioned by the EEF as an effective strategy for supporting students. This mentoring is mainly academic, and supports revision strategies and attitude to learning. We have previously used 'pupils are people for this approach' and are now exploring new options to support this.	Potentially all
<i>Covering tutor time for the Heads of English and Maths, enabling them to strategically intervene with individuals/groups.</i>	This strategy provides expert support to small targeted groups. The impact of such an approach is widely cited.	3, 7 and 8
<i>Building the 'Be More Thirsk' intervention programme</i>	In a particular focus on our disadvantaged boys this year, we are looking at building community focused interventions to enable greater positive engagement with our school's visions and values. This can be used with all students when required.	Potentially all

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

Education is not simply about academic progress and attainment. We want to develop students who engage positively with our school values. We want to support our students with their mental sense of wellbeing. We hope that all our students will leave Thirsk with a strong sense of positive social and cultural capital, and an enthusiasm for engaging in extra-curricular activity. In order to achieve this we need to firstly work to raise attendance, and then provide every opportunity for our disadvantaged students to engage in all the opportunities that education offers.

Budgeted cost: £103,383

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>Attendance manager employment</i>	Attendance at school enables our students to access all of the other opportunities we offer, both in and outside of the classroom. There is currently a gap between the attendance of our disadvantaged students and all other students. These appointments will help us close this gap.	1 and 5
<i>Internal appointment of Assistant Head of School to line manage the attendance process</i>	This new position should enable fresh strategic eyes on the attendance process, and is a development in 2025 to try and close our attendance gap	1 and 5
<i>Appointment of non-teaching pastoral member of staff to support attendance and home visits</i>	This development of our attendance strategy for January 2026 is building on our initial work on attendance, and is designed to give more targeted support and interventions to our disadvantaged students	1 and 5
<i>Inclusion mentoring</i>	Our inclusion unit is designed to support the mental wellbeing of all our students. Proportionately this support is given to large numbers of our disadvantaged students. By supporting their mental wellbeing, and training them to be resilient, we support their learning in the classroom and approach to extracurricular activities.	4
<i>Extra-curricular funding (eg: provision of musical instruments for students)</i>	Extra-curricular engagement can open up huge opportunities for young people. Wider research is needed on the correlation between engagement in sport/music etc and academic achievement/progress. However, it is anecdotally noted as being important in Thirsk. Therefore we will support our disadvantaged students in engaging with all extra-curricular opportunities.	5 and 6

<i>Transport for students to certain activities/clubs etc.</i>	We provide opportunities for our students that go beyond school, such as engagement with the Thirsk Clock, or outdoor education courses. These opportunities will always be funded for our disadvantaged students.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
<i>Supporting students with resources for school including uniform.</i>	If students struggle to wear our uniform then this can have huge impacts on self-esteem and mental wellbeing. We will therefore support students who are struggling with this.	1, 2, 4, 5 and 6
<i>Funding of extra opportunities in supporting work experience, understanding of career opportunities and potential apprenticeships.</i>	We provide huge opportunities for our students to engage with work experience and careers education. Programmes such as the construction course organised by Willmott Dixon. These opportunities will always be funded for our disadvantaged students.	Potentially all
<i>Developing greater community links for work experience</i>	Our students already benefit from work experience opportunities, but increased links with groups such as Thirsk Rotary have enable some wider opportunities beyond these. The evidence of student feedback from them is very positive, and may enable greater engagement in school.	Potentially all
<i>Funding of cashless catering</i>	Some students feel stigmatised for receiving free school meals. The cashless catering system prevents this.	4, 5 and 6

Total budgeted cost: £248,243

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 2024 to 2025 academic year.

In 2025 we saw a slight rise in attainment levels amongst our pupil premium (PP) students, with the average Attainment 8 increasing from 31.22 to 31.32. This also represented a narrowing of the attainment gap from 12.95 to 12.08, potentially reflecting the improving impact of targeted interventions. By nearly all measures at Key Stage Four, the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils improved compared with the previous year. There was a 7% increase in PP students achieving a Grade 5 or above in both English and Maths, and a 3% increase in those achieving Grade 4 or above. In addition, there was a 19% increase in the number of disadvantaged pupils entering the EBacc, and it has been extremely positive to see more PP pupils attaining higher grades in traditionally challenging subjects. Progress 8 data is not available for this cohort because they did not sit SATs due to Covid. However, estimates using CAT data

suggest an improvement in progress from -0.75 in 2024 to -0.51 in 2025. Although the gap in attainment and progress between PP and non-PP students remains an area for considerable continued focus, these improvements indicate that the school's strategic approach is having a measurable impact. The decline in outcomes seen in 2023–24 was a step backwards in an otherwise positive post-Covid trajectory; the improvement in 2025 provides encouraging validation of the interventions set out in our PP strategy.

A significant development in last year's strategy was the expansion of Lexia to provide more personalised, diagnostic literacy interventions. Lexia has enabled targeted support that adapts to individual need more precisely than accelerated reader alone, helping pupils close specific literacy gaps that have previously limited their access to the wider curriculum. Early indicators from NGRT assessments, conducted alongside a control group, show some evidence of positive engagement and increased reading confidence among pupils accessing the programme. However, this is still under review.

While high-quality teaching remains the cornerstone of success for our disadvantaged pupils, we recognise that attendance remains a significant barrier. Attendance nationally has declined since Covid, and this pattern is reflected in the school's data. In 2024–25, whole-school attendance fell to 90.8%, while PP attendance declined to 85.7%– down from 87.2% the previous year. As a result, the attendance gap widened from 3.6% to 5.1%. Attendance also declines as pupils move up the school, and this remains a priority for intervention in Years 10 and 11. Strengthening attendance will continue to be a major feature of the PP strategy over the next two years, as pupils cannot benefit from high-quality teaching or targeted intervention if they are not consistently in lessons. A new strategy, along with some significant new appointments, have been planned to explicitly address this issue in 2025-26.

A clear ambition of this plan has been to reduce behavioural incidents amongst disadvantaged students. In 2024–25, there was a strong focus on increasing the number of positive points awarded to reward students. Amongst the PP cohort, the number of positive points recorded on Bromcom rose significantly, from 28,891 in 2023–24 to 45,929 in 2024–25. The ratio of positives to negatives has also moved in a favourable direction, with PP students receiving an average of 4.2 positives for every negative in 2024–25, compared with 3.5 the previous year. However, the ambition to reduce fixed-term suspensions for disadvantaged pupils has not yet been achieved, and this will remain a key area of focus in 2025–26.

A further important strand of the PP strategy is ensuring disadvantaged pupils can access the school's full range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. In 2023–24, this work had clear and measurable impact, with disadvantaged pupils actually more likely to engage in enrichment than their peers: 79.4% of PP students took part in a club or trip, compared with 77.7% overall. Engagement was particularly strong in Year 7 (83%), supported by highly inclusive activities such as the first-term choir, and in Year 10 (85%), where curriculum trips and Duke of Edinburgh saw strong participation.

Data up to July 2025 shows that the strong pattern of PP engagement established in 2023–24 has developed further, with 83.3% of our PP students taking part in at least

one club or trip across the year. This rise has been shown particularly through the increased development of school-based, inclusive activities such as house competitions, school sport, and Young Leaders. The overall profile in July 2025 reflects continued success in ensuring disadvantaged pupils access the wider offer at similar or better rates than their peers. However, this participation varies by cohort. Year 7 and Year 10 have remained strong groups for engagement, while Year 8 and Year 9 participation continues to be an area requiring focused development. As part of our next phase of strategic work, the school is expanding opportunities such as the new radio station, developing the house competition programme, and improving the visibility of leadership and mentoring roles, with the aim of raising participation in these middle year groups. As we publish this report, comparison of Summer and December 2025 data shows a clear increase in PP participation in extracurricular activities, with a significant number of previously disengaged pupils now accessing enrichment opportunities.

Overall, disadvantaged pupils at Thirsk School are beginning to benefit more fully from both the academic and wider curricular support in place. Attainment and participation data shows improving impact, although attendance and progress gaps remain key areas for continued focus. Leaders have a strong understanding of the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, and the evidence from 2024–25 demonstrates that current strategies are moving the school in the right direction. Continued refinement and rigorous monitoring will remain central to maintaining momentum and ensuring that improvements are sustained

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
National Tutoring Programme 3-1 and 1-1 tutoring	www.mytutor.co.uk
Accelerated reader programme	www.renaissance.com
Lexia	www.lexiauk.co.uk

