Pupil Premium Strategy Statement

Castlefort Academy

This statement details our school's use of pupil 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 outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	203
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	77 (38%)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers **(3 year plans are recommended)**	2026/2027 2027/2028 2028/2029
Date this statement was published	September 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	September 2027
Statement authorised by	Gareth Hawkins – Headteacher
Pupil premium leads	Jennie Platt – Deputy Head of Academy/SENDCo Natasha Wilton – Y3 teacher/PPG 'Champion'
Local School Board Lead	Ceri Porter – Chair of LGB Lucie Dennis - Lead for safeguarding/disadvantaged pupils

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year (2026-27)	£119,980.00
Pupil premium (and recovery premium) funding carried forward from previous years	None
Total budget for this academic year	**£119,980.00**

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our intention is for all pupils in our school, irrespective of their background, to make good progress and achieve their very best possible outcomes in all areas of the curriculum. The Pupil Premium Strategy aims to support all disadvantaged children in our school, to achieve this goal.

We have carefully analysed the challenges faced by our disadvantaged pupils and have identified all additional vulnerabilities including whether there have been safeguarding concerns and support from Children's Services etc.

Our school will:

- aim to provide consistently high-quality teaching for all pupils with targeted support in English and mathematics as this is proven to have the greatest impact on closing the disadvantaged attainment gap. Our intent is for disadvantaged pupils to attain in line with, or above, their non-disadvantaged peers;
- use robust diagnostic assessments to identify and respond to 'gaps' in the knowledge, skills and understanding of our pupils. Interventions are carefully planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure their success;
- monitor the attendance, punctuality and behaviour of all pupils and provide additional support where necessary;
- provide a wide range of inspirational experiences for all pupils (extra-curricular activities, educational visits, residential trips etc), ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are given financial support to access these where required.

All staff in school recognise their responsibility for the outcomes of our disadvantaged pupils and the need to have high expectations of their achievement.

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 discussions with pupils indicate that the oral language skills of disadvantaged pupils in our school are not as advanced as their non-disadvantaged peers. This is very evident on entry to school (baseline data). The **areas of greatest need are identified as C&L, PSED and Literacy.** It is apparent that the knowledge and use of vocabulary by disadvantaged pupils is not as strong/advanced – evident from both oral and written work.
2	Assessment data (statutory and internal) shows that **early reading (including phonics) in EYFS and KS1 and sometimes, reading across KS2, is not as developed for disadvantaged pupils.** This can have an impact on achievement across the whole curriculum as reading is a critical skill for learning. 2026 outcomes for phonics

	evidenced a significant gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupil groups (20%), although by the end of KS2, results show that the school is becoming increasingly successful in closing these. KS2 2026 outcomes showed 88% of disadvantaged pupils attaining a.r.e. in reading compared with 86% of non-disadvantaged pupils.
3	Assessment data (statutory and internal) indicate that **mathematics achievement among disadvantaged pupils is below that of non-disadvantaged pupils in the early stages (EYFS and KS1) but the 'gap' is closing across KS2.** On entry to Reception class in the last few years, a significant number of our disadvantaged pupils start with below age-related expectations; higher than the % of non-disadvantaged pupils. This gap does close across KS1 and KS2 but continues to be a whole-school focus for continued improvement. KS2 2026 outcomes showed 94% of disadvantaged pupils attaining a.r.e. in mathematics compared with 93% of non-disadvantaged pupils.
4	Assessment data (statutory and internal) indicate that **writing achievement among disadvantaged pupils is significantly below that of non-disadvantaged pupils.** On entry to Reception class in the last few years, a significant number of our disadvantaged pupils start with below age-related expectations; higher than the % of non-disadvantaged pupils. This gap does close across KS1 and KS2 but continues to be a whole-school focus for continued improvement. KS2 2026 outcomes showed 88% of disadvantaged pupils attaining a.r.e. in writing compared with 86% of non-disadvantaged pupils.
5	Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and families have identified **social and emotional issues for several pupils, also concerns relating to behaviour.** Teacher referrals for support remain significant. 45 pupils (33 of whom are disadvantaged) currently require additional support from our Safeguarding/Family Support Officer. Many of these children have social and emotional needs and receive small group interventions e.g. 'nurturing minds' or well-being group work. 2 referrals have been made during 2025 – 2026 to Reflexions (both of whom were disadvantaged). The number of pupils receiving support through behaviour plans/watch was 3 last year, 2 of whom were disadvantaged pupils.
6	Our attendance data over the last 2 years indicates that **attendance among disadvantaged pupils** has been lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils: 2024-2025: 92.8% (disadv) v 95.7% (non-disadv) 2025-2026: 92.5% (disadv) v 95.6% (non-disadv) In 2024-2025, 26 disadvantaged pupils were 'persistently absent' compared to 21 non-disadvantaged pupils. In 2025-2026, 26 disadvantaged pupils were 'persistently absent' compared to 15 non-disadvantaged pupils. Our assessments and observations indicate that absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged pupils' progress.
7	Our observations and discussions with pupils and their families evidence **the negative impact that the current cost-of-living crisis is having on them (post-Covid 19).**

	There is an increased number of families requesting support from school for services such as help with school-uniform, housing, local food banks, charity applications, debt crisis, energy bills etc.

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 **oral language** skills and **vocabulary** among disadvantaged pupils.	Assessments and observations indicate significantly improved oral language among disadvantaged pupils. This is evident when triangulated with other sources of evidence, including engagement in lessons, book scrutiny and ongoing formative assessment. The 2026/2027 EYFS C&L outcomes will show that **at least 70% of disadvantaged pupils meet the expected standard.** Internal data will evidence improved/accelerated achievement (progress and attainment) for disadvantaged pupils in the development of their oracy skills (evidenced by teacher judgements on Arbor, online achievement tracker).
Improved **reading** attainment among disadvantaged pupils.	2026/2027 Year 1 phonics screening outcomes will show equalised attainment for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils; **at least 80% passing the screening check.** 2026/2027 KS2 reading outcomes will show equalised attainment for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils; **at least 75% meeting the expected standard.** Internal data will evidence improved/accelerated achievement (progress and attainment) for disadvantaged pupils.
Improved **mathematics** attainment for disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS2.	2026/2027 KS2 mathematics outcomes will show equalised attainment for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils; **at least 75% meeting the expected standard.** Internal data will evidence improved/accelerated achievement (progress and attainment) for disadvantaged pupils.
Improved **writing** attainment for disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS2.	2026/2027 KS2 writing outcomes will show equalised attainment for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils; **at least 75% meeting the expected standard.** Internal data will evidence improved/accelerated achievement (progress and attainment) for disadvantaged pupils.

To achieve and sustain **improved wellbeing** for all pupils in our school, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	**Sustained high levels of wellbeing** by 2026/27 demonstrated by: • qualitative data from pupil voice, pupil and parent surveys and teacher observations • 'Nurturing Minds' outcomes • a significant increase in participation in enrichment activities, particularly among disadvantaged pupils e.g. after-school clubs • improved behaviour evidenced by a reduction in the number of pupils receiving yellow/red cards or requiring the support of a behaviour plan (GtbG)
To achieve and sustain **improved attendance and punctuality** for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	**Sustained high attendance by 2026/27** demonstrated by: • the overall unauthorised absence rate for all pupils being no more than 5%, and the attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers being reduced by at least 1%. • the percentage of all pupils who are persistently absent being below 10% and the figure among disadvantaged pupils being no more than 3% lower than their peers. • The number of 'late marks' for all pupils being reduced by at least 10% and the figure among disadvantaged pupils being no more than 3% lower than their peers.

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: £17,765.00

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Purchase of standardised diagnostic assessments – NTS. **Training** for staff to ensure assessments are interpreted and administered 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, 4 NTS test papers: **£2,500.00**
Embedding dialogic activities across the school curriculum. These can support pupils to articulate key ideas, consolidate understanding and extend vocabulary.	There is a strong evidence base that suggests oral language interventions, including dialogic activities such as high-quality classroom discussion, are inexpensive to implement with high impacts on reading:	1, 4 Resources: **£350.00**

We will purchase resources and fund ongoing **teacher training** and release time, including Poetry/Granny's Basket, Wellcomm, Talk Boost, ELKLAN, Snack and Chat/Circle Time (EYFS), 'Word of the Week' (KS1/2), speech and language SEND groups, pragmatics groups and the development of a whole-school approach (e.g. Voice 21) towards improved oracy skills (also impacting positively on writing development) etc.	Oral language interventions | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	Staffing (TA S&L support): **£3,120.00** (4 hours per week x 39 weeks)
Continue to enhance the DfE validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme (RWI) to secure stronger phonics teaching for all pupils, including the purchase of new resources including 'take home' books and the introduction of 'challenge tasks' in sessions. The 'Reading Leader' will receive **non-contact** during RWI sessions to carry out duties such as **coaching, mentoring, monitoring and assessment** etc.	Phonics approaches have a strong evidence base that indicates a positive impact on the accuracy of word reading (though not necessarily comprehension), particularly for disadvantaged pupils: Phonics | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	2 Early reading and RWI phonics resources: **£500.00** RWI training: **£600.00** Reading Leader non-contact time: **£1,755.00** (1 hour per week x 39 weeks)
Enhancement of our mathematics teaching and curriculum planning in line with DfE and EEF guidance. We will fund teacher release time for the mathematics lead to review the provision for teaching and learning in mathematics and how we can further enhance the current mastery programme. The mathematics lead will also attend **CPD network meetings** within our trust of schools which focus on developing 'best practice models.	The DfE non-statutory guidance has been produced in conjunction with the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, drawing on evidence-based approaches: Maths_guidance_KS1_and_2.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk) The EEF guidance is based on a range of the best available evidence: Improving Mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3	3 Network mtgs (Ma Lead): **£405.00** (3 hours per term x 3 terms) Monitoring & release time for review (Ma Lead): **£540.00** (2 hours per half-term x 6 half-terms)

Further improve the quality of social and emotional support and learning. Approaches will be embedded into routine educational practices and supported by **professional development and training for staff** e.g. restorative practice, Nurturing Minds, wishes and feelings etc.	There is extensive evidence associating childhood social and emotional skills with improved outcomes at school and in later life (e.g., improved academic performance, attitudes, behaviour and relationships with peers): EEF_Social_and_Emotional_Learning.pdf(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	5 Nurturing Minds (TAs): **£4,680.00** (6 hours per week) SEMHS inc Mental Health Lead and 'wishes and feelings' (TAs) etc: **£1,365.00** (1 hour per week x 39 weeks – teacher) and **£1,950.00** (2.5 hours per week – TA)

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

Budgeted cost: £141,189.00

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Provide **in-class, teaching assistant support** during English and mathematics lessons e.g. **'live marking'** to address misconceptions etc as they occur.	Feedback during lessons has a highly positive impact on pupil achievement. Feedback | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	2, 3, 4 In-lesson support/feedback: **£81,900.00** (6 x TAs 17.5 hours per week x 39 weeks)
Specific s**peech and language programmes (ELKLAN, Wellcomm and Talk Boost) to improve pupils' oracy development (all phases).**	Oral language interventions can have a positive impact on pupils' language skills. Approaches that focus on speaking, listening and a combination of the two show positive impacts on attainment: Oral language interventions | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	1, 4 TA-led speech and language intervention groups – already costed and included

		under 'Teaching' section above
Whole school approach and programme to improve oracy skills for all pupils but particularly disadvantaged pupils who have relatively low spoken language skills.	Oral language interventions can have a positive impact on pupils' language skills. Approaches that focus on speaking, listening and a combination of the two show positive impacts on attainment: Oral language interventions | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	1, 4 Voice 21 tbc
Additional phonics sessions targeted at disadvantaged pupils who require further phonics support. These will be delivered by fully trained teaching assistants and monitored by the school's Reading Leader.	Phonics approaches have a strong evidence base indicating a positive impact on pupils, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds. Targeted phonics interventions have been shown to be more effective when delivered as regular sessions over a period up to 12 weeks: Phonics | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF	2 Phonics catch-up: **£9,360.00** (12 hours per week x 39 weeks)
Small group tutoring/catch-up sessions/interventions for reading fluency and comprehension, writing (SPAG) and mathematics (pre-teaching and gap tasks) - planned for by teaching staff and delivered by trained teaching assistants. Monitored by DHT/SENDCo and Headteacher.	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	2, 3, 4 Small group catch-up: **£11,700.00** (15 hours per week x 39 weeks) Little Wandle intervention: **£3,120.00** (4 hours per week x 39 weeks)

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

Budgeted cost: £30,348.00

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Behaviour interventions include: restorative practices (inc whole staff training), well-being groups, mentoring, social skills, friendships, transitions, nurture	Both targeted interventions and universal approaches can have positive overall effects:	5

provision (specialist trained staff), l.time support, bespoke programmes to develop self-esteem, resilience and confidence (specialist trained staff), **GtbG half-termly rewards, shop/bank rewards system for pupils (Sept 2026).**	Behaviour interventions | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	Behaviour support: **£2,000.00** (GtbG reward events and Castle Coins shop prizes)' **£780.00** (1 x TA 1 hour per week x 39 weeks)
Embedding principles of good practice to improve **attendance and punctuality** set out in the DfE's Improving School Attendance advice: • Policy and practice review in line with the 'Inclusive Attendance' programme/approach • Expectations shared with parents/carers • Attendance and punctuality rewards • First-day calling • A system of letters and meetings to address and reduce persistent absenteeism	The DfE guidance has been informed by engagement with schools that have significantly reduced levels of absence and persistent absence.	6 Office admin for attendance duties: **£3,510.00** (1 hour per day x 39 weeks)
Support for **families experiencing financial hardship** as a result of the cost-of-living crisis will be provide by the school's Family Liaison Co-ordinator – support, welfare, safeguarding etc.	Parental engagement refers to teachers and schools involving parents in supporting their children's academic learning. It includes more intensive programmes for families in crisis: Parental engagement | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	7 Safeguarding /Family Support Worker **£24,058.00**

Total budgeted cost: £189,302.00

TA hourly rate inc oncosts to school: £20.00

Teacher hourly rate inc oncosts to school: £45.00

Office admin hourly rate inc oncosts to school: £18.00

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

We have analysed the performance of our school's disadvantaged pupils during the 2025/26 academic year using EYFS, key stage 1 and 2 performance data, phonics check results and our own internal assessments.

To help us gauge the performance of our disadvantaged pupils we compared our results to those for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils at a national level. We also looked at these comparisons using previous data, in order to assess how the performance of our disadvantaged pupils has changed over time.

Data from tests and assessments suggest that, despite some strong individual performances, the achievement of the school's disadvantaged pupils overall is below non-disadvantaged pupils. This is reflective of national figures and demonstrates the additional ongoing impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged pupils. Please note that % should be interpreted with caution where the disadvantaged group is significantly smaller than the non-disadvantaged group.

EYFS

GLD	2022 (6 dis;24 non)	2023 (5 dis;24 non)	2024 (5 dis;24 non)	2025 (7 dis;23 non)	2026 (5 dis;24 non)
Disadvantaged	67%	20%	60%	43%	60%
Non-disadvantaged	67%	79%	67%	78%	75%
Gap	0%	59%	7%	35%	15%

Year 1 Phonics Screening

% passing the test	2022 (10 dis;20 non)	2023 (8 dis;22 non)	2024 (6 dis;21 non)	2025 (6 dis;20 non)	2026 (7 dis;23 non)
Disadvantaged	70%	50%	50%	83%	71%
Non-disadvantaged	80%	91%	90%	80%	91%
Gap	10%	41%	40%	3%	20%

End of KS2 outcomes

% expected standard	2023 (12 dis;18 non)			2024 (8 dis;21 non)			2025 (19 dis;10 non)			2026 (17dis; 14 non)		
	Rdg	**Wtg**	**Ma**	**Rdg**	**Wtg**	**Ma**	**Rdg**	**Wtg**	**Ma**	**Rdg**	**Wtg**	**Ma**
Disadvantaged	75%	58%	83%	75%	58%	83%	75%	58%	83%	88%	88%	94%
Non-disadvantaged	83%	89%	89%	83%	89%	89%	83%	89%	89%	86%	86%	93%
Gap	8%	31%	6%	8%	31%	6%	8%	31%	6%	2%	2%	1%

The 2025-2026 attendance figure for PPG-eligible pupils was 92.5% compared with 95.6% for non-PPG eligible pupils (3.1% higher). There were also 11 more PPG-eligible pupils falling into the 'persistent absentee' category. We recognise this gap remains too large which is why raising the attendance of our disadvantaged pupils is a focus of our current plan.

Our observations and assessments demonstrated that pupil behaviour improved significantly last year, but challenges in relation to wellbeing and mental health remain higher than before the pandemic. The impact on disadvantaged pupils has been particularly acute.

Other activity in our school to support all pupils:

- Effective practice around feedback – live marking in lessons to address misconceptions as they occur
- Full curriculum review
- Interventions including pre-teach and review tasks
- Review of retention and retrieval practices so that pupils know more and can remember more
- Mental health and well-being approaches including EBSA strategies
- Providing high-quality extra-curricular activities

Further information (optional)

Additional activity

Our pupil premium strategy will be supplemented by additional activity not being funded through pupil premium. This will include:

- embedding more effective practice around feedback. EEF evidence demonstrates this has significant benefits for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- mental health and emotional wellbeing support
- attendance approaches e.g. Inclusive Attendance
- offering a wide range of high-quality extra-curricular activities to boost wellbeing, behaviour, attendance, and aspiration. Activities will focus on building life skills such as confidence, resilience, and socialising. Disadvantaged pupils will be encouraged and supported to participate.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation

In planning our new pupil premium strategy, we evaluated why activity undertaken in previous years had not had the degree of impact that we had expected.

We triangulated evidence from multiple sources of data including assessments, engagement in class book scrutiny, conversations with parents, students and teachers in order to identify the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils. We also used the EEF's families of schools database to view the performance of disadvantaged pupils in schools similar to ours and contacted schools with high-performing disadvantaged pupils to learn from their approach.

We looked at a number of reports, studies and research papers about effective use of pupil premium, the impact of disadvantage on education outcomes and how to address challenges to learning presented by socio-economic disadvantage. We also looked at studies about the impact of the pandemic on disadvantaged pupils.

We used the EEF's implementation guidance to help us develop our strategy, particularly the 'explore' phase to help us diagnose specific pupil needs and work out which activities and approaches are likely to work in our school. We will continue to use it through the implementation of activities.

We have put a robust evaluation framework in place for the duration of our three-year approach and will adjust our plan over time to secure better outcomes for pupils.