



Pupil Premium Strategy

Date: December 2025

Review Date: December 2026

Relating to all Academies of the
Advance Learning Partnership Multi Academy Trust

This policy coordinates with:

Teaching and Learning

Attendance

Behaviour

Pupil premium strategy statement Dene Academy

This statement details our school's use of Pupil Premium for the 2024 to 2025 academic year. Fundamentally, the funding is utilised to improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

The strategy outlines our Pupil Premium strategy; our intentions relating to the spend of the allocated funds and the impact of last year's expenditure.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Dene Academy
Number of pupils in school	642
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	64.5% (414 students)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-2026
Date this statement was published	December 2024
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2025
Statement authorised by	D. Nelson
Pupil premium lead	M Playfor
Governor / Trustee lead	L Sowerby

Funding overview 2025-26

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£ 507434
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£ 507434

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of Intent

Our vision is that all pupils, regardless of their background or starting point, make good progress and achieve highly across our ambitious curriculum. Our Tiered approach to the strategy is underpinned by research from the EEF on **Successful School Planning**. This framework comprises: Tier 1 (high-quality classroom teaching), Tier 2 (targeted academic interventions), and Tier 3 (wider interventions addressing students' personal and social needs).

Tier 1 – High-Quality Teaching

The EEF emphasises that socioeconomic disadvantage significantly affects educational attainment and students' life chances, particularly for those facing barriers such as communication difficulties (EEF, 2020). With a high proportion of disadvantaged and SEND students at Dene Academy, it is essential that we address these barriers through high-quality teaching, which the EEF identifies as the most powerful lever for improving student outcomes. According to the **Improving Teaching** report (EEF, 2021), effective teaching—through strategies such as feedback, metacognition, and explicit skills instruction—has a profound impact on narrowing the attainment gap.

Tier 2 – Targeted Academic Interventions

Evidence from the EEF shows that small group tuition can have a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils, providing **an average of +4 months' progress** when delivered regularly and with clear focus on areas like literacy or numeracy (EEF, **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**, 2021). These interventions, especially in small groups, offer personalised, focused instruction that addresses specific learning gaps. They are most effective when designed to meet the individual needs of students, ensuring they receive tailored support to progress in core subjects.

Tier 3 – Wider Interventions

The EEF's **Closing the Attainment Gap** report (2020) emphasizes the importance of addressing not only academic progress but also the broader needs of students, such as social, emotional, and physiological support. At Dene Academy, we recognise that meeting these wider needs is essential for enabling pupils to fully engage in learning. This approach aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which highlights the necessity of fulfilling basic needs before students can achieve academic success. Key barriers faced by our pupils include attendance, communicative skills, engagement, aspirations, and physiological and emotional challenges, particularly for those with special educational needs (SEN).

In summary, The Pupil Premium Strategy at Dene Academy integrates all three tiers of intervention to address the complex needs of our most vulnerable students. By adopting a responsive approach to these challenges, we aim to provide consistent,

high-quality interventions that ensure all pupils—particularly those who are disadvantaged—excel.

We will: ensure consistent challenge for disadvantaged pupils; deliver high-quality, targeted interventions; maintain high expectations for all students, with a whole-school commitment to their success (EEF **Guide to Pupil Premium**, 2021).

This integrated approach is designed to close the attainment gap and improve both academic outcomes and overall wellbeing for disadvantaged pupils.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Physiological and Emotional Factors Educational research in the UK highlights significant barriers faced by disadvantaged students, particularly concerning their physiological and emotional needs, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Prolonged school closures disrupted access to free school meals, leaving many children experiencing food insecurity, as documented by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG, 2020). Additionally, economic pressures on low-income households, as reported by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS, 2021), heightened stress levels and contributed to a lack of safe and supportive learning environments. The Education Policy Institute (EPI, 2021) also noted a rise in anxiety, depression, and loneliness among disadvantaged students, who faced limited access to school-based mental health services. These findings collectively illustrate the deepening of existing inequalities, creating significant physiological and emotional barriers to both learning and well-being for vulnerable students.

2	Attendance National attendance data in the UK reveal significant trends before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting its profound and lasting effects on school participation. Prior to the pandemic, overall school attendance rates were relatively stable at around 95% (DfE, 2019). During the pandemic, attendance dropped dramatically, with only 60-70% of eligible students attending school. Post-pandemic, attendance rates have struggled to recover, with persistent absence rising sharply to 22.3% in the 2021/22 academic year—nearly double pre-pandemic levels, and disproportionately affecting disadvantaged students (DfE, 2023). These trends underscore the long-term impact on attendance, particularly among vulnerable groups, and highlight the urgent need for targeted support.
3	Communicative Skills and Reading Ability Standardised reading assessments for Year 8 reveal that 54% of students are behind national average for their reading ability – 69% of these students are disadvantaged. According to the <i>COVID-19 Support Guide for Schools</i> (EEF, 2020), the pandemic has significantly exacerbated existing inequalities in literacy, with more students entering school with reading ages below the expected level. This disparity impacts students' performance across all subjects, as reading proficiency is crucial to academic success. Additionally, evidence from the EEF's <i>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools: Guidance Report</i> (2021) emphasizes the importance of developing writing and oracy skills, especially for disadvantaged pupils, as these areas have a strong influence on overall academic achievement. Despite these challenges, the gap begins to narrow during students' time at our school. Through our tiered intervention programme, which focuses on literacy and oracy, students make on average half a GCSE grade's worth of additional progress per academic year, suggesting that a targeted, evidence-based approach can help mitigate some of the pandemic's long-term impacts.
4	Pupil Aspirations Our data shows that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to participate in co-curricular activities compared to their peers. Discussions with students indicate that barriers to participation are both economic, such as the cost of activities, and social, including low confidence and a lack of support. This aligns with the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) research, which highlights that disadvantaged students often face more obstacles to engaging in extracurricular opportunities, despite their positive impact on academic and personal development (EEF, <i>Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Secondary Schools</i>.2021).

	Additionally, our latest progression data reveals that three students did not remain in education, employment, or training (NEET) for two terms after leaving school. All of these students are classified as Disadvantaged. This underscores the long-term impact of these disparities. To counterbalance this, the school has developed a robust careers, personal development and enrichment programme as EEF research suggests that disengagement from extracurricular activities is linked to greater risk of overall academic disengagement and poorer post-education outcomes (EEF, COVID-19 Support Guide for Schools 2020).
5	Pupil Engagement Our behaviour data over the last two years reveals that suspensions among disadvantaged pupils are approximately 20% higher than their non-disadvantaged peers. This increase in negative behaviour aligns with wider research, including findings from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which suggests the pandemic has exacerbated behavioural issues, especially among disadvantaged students. The EEF's <i>Covid-19 Support Guide for Schools</i> (2020) highlights that disruptions to routines, increased social isolation, and a lack of support during school closures contributed to higher levels of anxiety, stress, and behavioural challenges; we are still seeing the effect of these challenges in 2024. Our interventions, which include targeted pastoral care and behaviour support, aim to reduce exclusions and help students develop more positive attitudes toward school.

Intended outcomes

The following outlines 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 Outcomes	Success criteria
Disadvantaged pupils show significant progress in relation to their communication skills.	□ A high-impact, structured intervention programme is implemented for disadvantaged pupils who are below or significantly below age-related expectations. □ Standardised assessments show improved reading fluency and comprehension skills, resulting in the reduction in the disparity of reading scores compared to peers. □ Curriculum planning includes strategically planned opportunities for all pupils to improve reading, writing and oracy with an emphasis on literacy across subjects.

	□ Monitoring of reading interventions and progress through regular formative assessments and analysis of termly reading scores.
Increased academic progress for pupil premium pupils at the end of KS4, with a focus on EBacc subjects.	□ Staff CPD and training focus on the intent and implementation of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, with particular emphasis on supporting disadvantaged students. □ Intervention programmes are strategically used to close gaps in attainment for pupil premium pupils. □ Reduction in the disparity of achievement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, with progress tracked regularly through internal assessments and external exam data.
Disadvantaged pupils develop greater personal confidence, aspirations, and cultural capital, resulting in improved post-16 outcomes.	□ The careers programme ensures that all students are supported in securing an appropriate place for their next stage in education, reducing the percentage of disadvantaged pupils classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). □ The personal development programme and introduction of a new house system equips students with the essential skills, knowledge, and confidence to become well-rounded citizens. □ Inter-house competitions and rewards programmes ensure that all disadvantaged pupils participate in a range of co-curricular activities school trips each year to enrich their cultural capital and personal growth. □ Regular monitoring and feedback on pupils' engagement with the personal development programme and post-16 transition rates for disadvantaged pupils.
Disadvantaged pupils are more engaged in their learning, leading to better attendance and fewer exclusions.	□ Overall attendance and persistent absence rates improve, exceeding national averages for attendance, with the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowing further. □ Suspension data shows a reduction in the number of suspensions for disadvantaged pupils in order to reduce the disparity between disadvantage and non-disadvantaged groups. □ A range of mental health support, including counselling, is provided to identified pupils. □ Analysis of attendance data and trends through 'The Attendance Monitoring Report' (TAMR) to

	identify pupils at risk and ensure timely intervention to prevent persistent absence. □ Regular review of exclusion data to ensure that targeted support interventions are reducing suspension rates for disadvantaged pupils.
Disadvantaged pupils receive the mental health support they need to thrive academically and personally.	□ The provision of targeted mental health support for disadvantaged, and well-being initiatives, ensuring pupils' emotional needs are met. □ Increased engagement with mental health services, measured by the number of pupils accessing support and the outcomes of targeted interventions. □ Improved emotional well-being indicators for disadvantaged students, such as increased participation in school activities and improved behaviour and attendance.

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.

Tier 1: Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £ 34000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
1. Recruitment of specialist teachers in Maths and Science.	- Evidence: Specialist teachers in core subjects can better support disadvantaged students in mastering key subject content. Research shows that high-quality teaching in these subjects, particularly in subjects like maths and English, is crucial for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (<i>Teaching and Learning Toolkit</i> (EEF)). Teaching and Learning Toolkit EEF	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (ensuring high-quality subject-specific support to meet academic needs). Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (improving literacy and numeracy).
2. Autonomous CPD to ensure bespoke staff development to cater for all groups of students.	- Evidence: Tailored, ongoing professional development ensures that teachers have the specific skills needed to meet the needs of all students, especially disadvantaged pupils. The effectiveness of tailored CPD is supported by research from the EEF, showing that high-quality professional development leads to better outcomes for pupils (<i>Effective Professional Development</i> (EEF, 2016)). Effective Professional Development EEF	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (empowering teachers to support diverse learning needs). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (helping staff foster better engagement strategies for all students).
3. Culture of research and collaboration fostered through learning triads.	- Evidence: Collaborative learning among staff and a culture of research-based practice lead to improved teaching strategies and better pupil outcomes. Research indicates that when teachers collaborate and engage with evidence-based practices, it has a positive impact on student progress (<i>Effective Professional Development</i> (EEF)).	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (creating a supportive environment where teachers share and learn best practices). Challenge 4: Pupil

	Effective Professional Development EEF	aspirations (building teacher expertise in supporting all students to achieve their full potential).
4. Staff CPD	- Evidence: High-quality CPD on assessment and communication strategies enables teachers to better support disadvantaged pupils. Evidence from the EEF suggests that effective formative assessment is a key strategy for improving pupil outcomes, especially in subjects like maths and English. Additionally, focusing on hard-thinking and communication helps improve both cognitive and social skills, which are critical for disadvantaged students (<i>Mastery Learning</i> and <i>Communication and Language</i> toolkit, EEF). Mastery learning EEF	Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (developing communication skills and ensuring effective formative assessments). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (ensuring teaching is responsive to student needs, with clear and consistent feedback).
5. Development of Pen Profiles for target PP students.	- Evidence: Pen Profiles provide a detailed and holistic picture of individual pupil needs, enabling more targeted and responsive teaching strategies. Research on personalised learning and student profiles shows that this approach helps teachers adapt their methods and resources, improving also support greater continuity in pastoral care and academic support (<i>Individualised Instruction</i> EEF). Individualised instruction EEF	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (better support for individual learning needs). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (improving tailored support for academic and personal development).

Tier 2: Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £190,600

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Targeted Literacy and Numeracy Intervention delivered by two academic mentors for literacy, a phonic lead and a numeracy specialist.	Academic mentors provide targeted support to bridge gaps in core skills, particularly for students significantly behind their peers. Research highlights their effectiveness in improving outcomes through intensive, focused support (EEF, <i>Academic Mentors Evaluation</i>). National Tutoring Programme: NTP Academic Mentoring EEF Reading comprehension strategies can have a positive impact on pupils' ability to understand a text, and this is particularly the case when interventions are delivered over a shorter timespan. Reading comprehension strategies Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF	Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (raising literacy and numeracy standards).
Structured interventions for EBacc subjects delivered by specialist staff, including an English HLTA; Maths Progress Leader; Humanities Progress Leader an MFL teacher.	Targeted interventions in EBacc subjects such as science, history, and geography ensure improved attainment for disadvantaged pupils, supporting them to meet GCSE requirements. Evidence supports that subject-specific small group tuition increases engagement and attainment (EEF, <i>One-to-One Tuition Toolkit</i>). One to one tuition EEF	Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (support across subjects). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (structured academic engagement).
Further development of Pen Profiles for Year 11 students.	Pen Profiles provide a detailed and holistic picture of individual pupil needs, enabling more targeted and responsive teaching strategies. Evidence from personalised learning research highlights the effectiveness of tailoring interventions to individual student profiles (EEF, <i>Individualised Instruction</i>). Individualised instruction EEF	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (better support for individual learning needs). Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (tailored academic support).
Use of diagnostic assessments to inform	Diagnostic assessments help identify specific areas of need and allow interventions to be	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors

interventions, including GL testing.	tailored for maximum impact. Research emphasises the importance of formative assessment in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (<i>EEF, Diagnostic Assessment and Formative Feedback</i>). Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning EEF	(identifying key barriers to learning). Challenge 3: Communicative skills and reading ability (targeted literacy support).
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Tier 3: Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)

Budgeted cost: £316,800

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Embedding principles of good practice in DfE's Improving School Attendance advice. A designated SLT lead oversees the strategy and provides support to school attendance officer. The attendance officer is also supported by the pastoral and wider staff team to ensure high levels of attendance for all pupils.	Improving school attendance requires a whole-school approach, with targeted interventions for persistently absent students. The DfE's "Improving School Attendance" advice emphasises the importance of collaboration between attendance officers and wider staff teams (<i>DfE, 2022</i>). Improving School Attendance Department for Education DfE	Challenge 2: Attendance (reducing absence and persistent absenteeism).
Structured mental health and emotional well-being support (for example, counselling provided by 1.5 school counsellors and CBT-based interventions) A structured programme of mental health awareness is delivered through the PD calendar and PSHE programme.	Evidence from the EIF and EEF highlights the effectiveness of structured mental health support in reducing anxiety, depression, and social isolation, improving both attendance and academic engagement (<i>EIF, Adolescent Mental Health, 2021</i>). Adolescent mental health: A systematic review on the effectiveness of school-based interventions Early Intervention Foundation (eif.org.uk)	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors (mental health support). Challenge 2: Attendance (emotional barriers to school attendance).
Development of targeted co-curricular programmes and Introduction of inter-house systems with competitions and rewards	Participation in co-curricular activities is shown to improve engagement and aspirations, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. These activities help develop cultural capital and build social confidence (EEF, Improving Social and	Challenge 4: Pupil aspirations (improving cultural capital and confidence).

	Emotional Learning in Secondary Schools, 2021). Social and emotional learning EEF Structured rewards and team-based systems promote engagement, teamwork, and a sense of belonging. Evidence suggests that positive reinforcement strategies motivate pupils to engage more fully in school life (EEF, Behaviour and Rewards Toolkit, 2021). Improving Behaviour in Schools EEF	Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (increasing participation and belonging).
Structured behaviour and pastoral support system provided by 3 non-teaching progress leaders and 3 heads of year/key stage. Bespoke CPD for key staff members.	A tiered behaviour support programme ensures early identification of at-risk pupils and tailored support for emotional regulation. Evidence from the EEF shows that structured behaviour interventions improve engagement and reduce exclusion rates (EEF, <i>Improving Behaviour in Schools</i>, 2021). Improving Behaviour in Schools EEF	Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (reducing exclusions and improving behaviour).
NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) prevention programme	Our tailored careers support and post-16 transition programme helps disadvantaged students make informed decisions about their futures. The EEF highlights that robust guidance and targeted support reduce NEET rates and improve long-term outcomes (EEF, <i>Careers Education and NEET Prevention</i>, 2021). Careers education EEF	Challenge 4: Pupil aspirations (improving post-16 outcomes).
Development of structured mentoring for targeted students identified through the creation of student PP Pen Portraits.	Mentoring programs, especially those focused on building aspirations and addressing barriers, have shown positive impacts on disadvantaged pupils' engagement, attendance, and confidence (EEF, <i>Mentoring Toolkit</i>, 2021). Mentoring EEF	Challenge 4: Pupil aspirations (mentorship to raise goals and ambitions). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (fostering connections and positive relationships).
Parental engagement initiatives (calendared events and workshops)	Research indicates that engaging parents in their child's education improves attendance, behaviour, and attainment. The EEF's Parental Engagement Toolkit highlights the importance of home-school partnerships in reducing barriers to learning (EEF, 2021). Parental engagement EEF	Challenge 2: Attendance (parental support for school participation). Challenge 5: Pupil engagement (building stronger home-school links).
Implementation of tailored emotional resilience workshops delivered by	Workshops on emotional resilience equip students with tools to manage stress, build self-esteem, and cope with challenges. Evidence	Challenge 1: Physiological and emotional factors

school counsellor to targeted students.	from the EEF emphasizes the role of emotional resilience in improving attendance and academic performance (<i>EEF, Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit, 2021</i>). Social and emotional learning EEF	(building resilience and emotional well-being).
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Total budgeted cost: £ 507434

Part B: Review of Outcomes in the Previous Academic Year (Website Summary)

This section provides a comprehensive evaluation of outcomes for disadvantaged students at Dene Academy during the 2024-2025 academic year. It includes an analysis of the activities, interventions, and assessment processes that contributed to these results.

Reading Attainment

A persistent challenge within our community—exacerbated by school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic—is low reading attainment upon entry to Dene Academy. This challenge is addressed through a structured, tiered reading strategy, detailed in a separate document. Daily evidence within the school reflects the positive impact of this approach.

Over the past three years, the reading strategy has delivered remarkable results. For example, the current Year 11 cohort entered the school in 2021/22 with an average standardised age score of 93.2. By the end of KS3, this cohort achieved an average score of 101.5, surpassing the national average for reading age. This progression rate is consistent across year groups, with the tiered intervention programme demonstrating an average annual improvement equivalent to half a GCSE grade.

Targeted Academic Interventions

Tier 2 interventions extend beyond reading and include targeted support in small groups or one-to-one sessions led by academic progress leaders in English, Maths, and EBacc subjects. Notably, over 80% of students receiving these interventions are pupil premium.

The impact of these efforts is reflected in the 2023–2024 outcomes: disadvantaged students achieved a positive Progress 8 score of **0.12**, broadly in line with the national average for non-disadvantaged students—significantly narrowing the gap between these groups.

For the 2024–2025 outcomes, disadvantaged students achieved an Attainment 8 score of **36.84**, very similar to the previous cohort and again in line with national averages. There is no progress data due to COVID-19 and the cohort not completing SATs.

Careers Support and Post-16 Progression

Dene Academy delivers a comprehensive and tailored careers programme for all students, with a specific focus on pupil premium students. Support during Key Stage 4 ensures students transition successfully into appropriate qualifications and providers. This provision includes a bespoke transition programme for SEN students requiring additional support.

The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figure for the 2024 cohort was exceptionally low, with only one pupil—who is pupil premium—falling into this category.

Attendance and Behaviour

Attendance rates for disadvantaged students have improved, with the overall attendance gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students narrowing to **2.5%**, below the national average.

The 2024–2025 overall attendance rate for disadvantaged students was **88.7%**, which is below the national average for non-disadvantaged students; however, the similar schools attendance report shows that overall attendance at Dene Academy is **2.5% higher** than that of similar schools nationally.

A robust system for tracking and improving attendance, aligned with DfE guidance, ensures a collaborative approach. Pupil premium students receive more than 80% of targeted attendance interventions.

The school's structured behaviour and pastoral system—managed by senior leadership, pastoral leaders, and year leaders—ensures that suspension rates remain below the national average.

Emotional Wellbeing and Counselling Services

The counselling service at Dene Academy continues to meet a critical need, with 83 students accessing a total of 624 sessions during 2024–2025. Of these students, 64 were pupil premium, demonstrating the service's essential role in supporting disadvantaged students. Common themes for referrals included low mood, exam stress, anxiety and family issues.

The service achieved a 53% clinical reduction in psychological distress among pupil premium students post-counselling. Additionally, 26% of one-on-one counselling participants were referred to external services, ensuring continued support for more complex needs. Student feedback highlights the value of the service, with 100% of participants rating it as extremely helpful.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a cornerstone of Dene Academy's ethos.

Staff vigilance is reflected in the 6056 reported safeguarding cases logged since September 2024, an increase from 5647 the previous year. This increase underscores the proactive culture of vigilance and the effectiveness of staff training.

Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures ensure that every child feels secure and supported.

Equality and Diversity

Dene Academy upholds the principles of the Equality Act 2010, ensuring no student is disadvantaged based on any protected characteristic. This commitment is integrated across all policies and practices, fostering a fair and inclusive environment for all.

Complaints

The school encourages open dialogue to address concerns. For formal complaints, the process is outlined in the School Complaints Policy.