Pupil Premium Strategy Statement - Holyhead School

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	Y7-13 1278 Y7-11 1041
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	60% (Y7-11)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers **(3 year plans are recommended)**	2024-2025 **2025-2026** 2026-2027
Date this statement was published	Sept 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	June 2026
Statement authorised by	Dave Knox Principal
Pupil premium lead	Jenny Campbell Vice Principal
Governor / Trustee lead	Sajid Hussain Chair of Governors

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£690,515
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	£690,515

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our ambition is that every student, irrespective of their background, starting point or challenges will have the same opportunity to achieve success.

We strongly believe that all students who are part of the Holyhead family should:

- feel safe and happy, knowing how to seek support when required
- work with expert pastoral and teaching staff
- develop a strong sense of independence and self efficacy in life and in learning
- build strong relationships with their peers and staff
- believe in themselves and see their potential to achieve
- have a desire to contribute to the school and wider community of Handsworth
- be strong readers who love reading for pleasure and purpose
- achieve KS4/5 outcomes that highlight their potential and allow them to secure their desired pathway in education, employment or training.

At Holyhead, we are privileged to work in a diverse and vibrant community where we celebrate and learn from the many cultures our students come from. Whilst we are culturally rich in our diversity, Holyhead is one of the most deprived wards within the city. This presents us with challenges and opportunities, namely with children who need care and role models to help shape their future, lift aspirations and keep them safe.

Our underlying principle is that every student has meaningful participation within the same ambitious curriculum, regardless of their prior attainment and experiences. In order to achieve this we understand the importance of prioritising evidence informed CPD for staff alongside ongoing support to implement key strategies and approaches within the classroom. A key aspect of this is ensuring Quality First Teaching which is adaptive to meet the needs of our students of which over 26% have SEND and 74% are EAL. As many of our SEND and EAL learners also experience social and economical disadvantage this contributes to a complex interplay of barriers that we must overcome for learners to thrive.

We use a range of assessments (including close links with feeder schools) to diagnose the barriers that individual students are facing rather than making assumptions, so we know and recognise how each student is different and faces unique challenges.

We recognise the need for short and focused academic interventions which are evidence-informed (particularly in relation to reading) to ensure attainment gaps are closed quickly.

Holyhead is in the highest quintile for deprivation within the UK and as such the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial crisis in recent years have provided an even greater financial and emotional challenge for many of our families. Therefore, through our strategy, we will strive to remove financial barriers to our curriculum and enrichment, wherever possible. We provide additional capacity to strengthen the foundations of our student support team within the areas of attendance, wellbeing and behaviour.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	**Communication and language (SLCN)** Our observations suggest that many of our students (including those who are at a disadvantage but not exclusively) have lower levels of oracy. For some students, this means they can struggle to confidently articulate their thoughts and feelings leading to frustration which can prevent them from participating fully in lessons if left unaddressed. Not being able to confidently articulate themselves could also impact students' life chances, holding them back in interviews or their place of work.
2	**Reading** A significant proportion of our Year 7 cohort arrive with SAS scores below national average. The proportion of disadvantaged students with low SAS scores is 24% compared to 19% for those who aren't eligible for the PP. It is crucial that all students meet or exceed this minimum standard for reading ability.
3	**Independent learning** Our observations suggest that many students (but particularly our lower-attaining students) have lower levels of organisation, motivation and confidence. They can struggle when presented with more challenging tasks and often rely on teacher affirmation rather than being able to utilise metacognitive skills to plan, monitor and evaluate their approach to a task. This can impact class work and in particular home learning, including revision.
4	**Wellbeing** Our observations, discussions with students and assessments (such as PASS) indicate that students with SEMH difficulties experience a variety of social and emotional struggles that can have a big impact on their wellbeing and ability to thrive in school.
5	**Access to the full curriculum** In response to the financial crisis we need to take steps to ensure that no student is prevented from taking part in the full curriculum (including extracurricular activities) and so financial support and resources are provided where needed across the curriculum.

It should be noted that we aim to improve both behaviour and attendance as part of our Pupil Premium Strategy but we view these as symptoms of the challenges listed above and not the root causes.

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
To improve attainment for disadvantaged students across the curriculum at the end of KS4.	By the end of our current plan in 2026/27 we aim to: ● close the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students' attainment. ● ensure no subjects have more than a 1 ALPS grade difference for students at a disadvantage and those who aren't.
To improve reading ability for all students (including disadvantaged) across KS3.	● NGRT reading data shows improved reading scores for all students (including disadvantaged students as a group). ● Lesson observations, teacher observations and work scrutinies should also demonstrate improved engagement with learning.
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, including disadvantaged students with a particular focus on reducing persistent absenteeism.	Sustained high attendance by 2026/27 is demonstrated through: ● average attendance for students who qualify for PP is in line with that of national non-disadvantaged students. ● persistent absenteeism for students who qualify for PP is in line with that of national non-disadvantaged students.
To improve the learning behaviours of all students, including those who are eligible for PP.	Reduction in behaviours requiring the use of suspensions by 2026/27 will be demonstrated by: ● Suspension rates for students eligible for PP each term is proportionate to that of non-disadvantaged students.
Improve all students, but particularly disadvantaged students' cultural capital and ensure disadvantaged students are fully engaged and participating in the school's extracurricular offer.	Reduce gaps in cultural capital by 2026/27 will be demonstrated by: ● reduced gaps in all students (and students at a disadvantage as a subgroup) enrichment Personal Learning Checklist responses; ● monitoring of extracurricular activity attendance showing that students at a disadvantage are at least proportionally represented for all opportunities
Improved metacognition and self-regulatory skills amongst disadvantaged students across all subjects.	● Class observations and student and teacher voice indicate that all students (including those at a disadvantage) are able to monitor and regulate their learning. ● The ratio of myPoints for high quality class and homework to those given for poor quality classwork or no homework will be 5:1.
Improved and sustained wellbeing for all students, including those who are disadvantaged.	● Sustained high levels of well-being from 2026/27 will be demonstrated by qualitative data from student voice, parent surveys and teacher observations, alongside quantitative data from PASS surveys.

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: £415,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Developing high quality teaching, assessment and curriculum: To ensure all learners' needs are addressed. Internal CPD programme led by a Lead Teacher Educator and supported by a team of Lead Practitioners across a range of subjects. As part of the SSAT Embedding Formative Assessment Programme, staff will join cross-subject Teacher Learning Communities led by trained facilitators, including Lead Practitioners. These monthly CPD sessions will focus on research engagement, reflective practice, and peer observations to support ongoing professional development.	The quality of teaching matters a great deal: having a one-standard deviation better teacher has been shown to raise test scores by (at least) 25% of a standard deviation. Therefore raising teaching quality is central to our disadvantaged strategy. Slater, Davies, and Burgess (2012), Do Teachers Matter? Measuring the Variation in Teacher Effectiveness in England. Evidence indicates that schools should focus on building teachers' knowledge and pedagogical expertise, curriculum development, and the purposeful use of assessment. The EEF 'Cognitive Science Approaches in the Classroom: A review of the evidence' makes the evidence easily accessible and along with the EEF guidance reports which make clear the best bets to focus on in relation to improving literacy, maths, science and teacher feedback. The EEF guidance report on Professional Development tells us we need to ensure that our CPD is evidence-based, has content that is drawn from trusted sources and incorporates the mechanisms of; building on prior knowledge, motivating staff as well as developing and embedding techniques in practice. Embedding Formative Assessment is a professional development programme designed to enhance student outcomes by integrating formative assessment strategies throughout schools. It includes monthly workshops and peer observations. An independent evaluation by the EEF found that students in participating schools made the equivalent of two months' additional progress, with strong evidence supporting the programme's effectiveness and scalability.	1 & 3

Instructional coaching: To ensure all staff continue to improve with a sharp focus on ECTs and RQTs. Release time for a team of Instructional Coaches to carry out faculty and individual coaching.	In terms of impact on student outcomes, instructional coaching has a better evidence base than any other form of CPD. Trained coaches observe lessons, identify small actionable steps for improvement and then coach staff on its implementation. Four reasons instructional coaching is currently the best-evidenced form of CPD. Sam Sims (Quantitative Education Research) 2019 An instructional coaching approach will help support teachers who struggle to overcome existing ingrained habits and adopt new, more effective techniques which will benefit both teaching and learning and behaviour for learning. As recognised by the EEF's Effective Professional Development Guidance Report, a key mechanism is embedding practice to avoid the 'get it, do it' gap which can exist in teachers' practice.	1 & 3
Literacy across the curriculum: Developing disciplinary literacy, vocabulary development, oracy and reading in line with the EEF's guidance.	The EEF's Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools report states that prioritising disciplinary literacy across the curriculum is key to learning across all subjects in secondary school, and is a strong predictor of outcomes in later life. This is, therefore, particularly relevant for our disadvantaged students.	1 & 2
Building resilience as learners: Helping students to become more independent in their learning through scaffolding and teacher modelling. The SSAT Embedding Formative Assessment will include a focus on activating students as resources in their own learning which will aid their independence in learning.	Teaching metacognitive strategies to students can be a useful method to help students become more independent learners, and teachers can demonstrate effective use of metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies by modelling their own thought processes. The EEFs toolkit strand on metacognitive and self-regulation strategies have been effective across the curriculum, with approaches in mathematics and science particularly successful. It has been shown to have up to 7 months additional impact.	3
Recruitment and retention of teaching staff: Through developing a team of lead practitioners to support subject specific implementation of curriculum and	We need to ensure a career in teaching is attractive and through managing workload by engaging with the DfE's 'Reducing School Workload Collection' to ensure teachers can focus time and energy on things that make a difference for students by prioritising planning and assessment.	1, 3 & 4

pedagogical developments.	The delivery of effective professional development is also key to retaining great teachers as stated in the EEFs Professional Development guide. Through recruiting Lead Practitioners in key curriculum areas we can support the development of subject specific pedagogy as set out in the EEFs guidance reports for literacy, maths and science as well as the findings of Ofsted's research reviews.	
Technology: To support high quality teaching and learning including independent work via SENECA and MathsWatch that can be monitored by teachers and parents.	The EEF's Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning is clear that to improve learning, technology must be used in a way that is informed by effective pedagogy. In particular we use it to retrieve key concepts from the curriculum and support independent learning outside of the classroom. Innerdrive have reviewed SENECA and their report can be found here, in summary Seneca has placed a strong emphasis on strategies that enhance students' long-term learning, including Retrieval Practice, Spacing, Interleaving and Dual Coding. These are great to increase engagement, boost memory and strengthen links with concepts they already know. Seneca implements these strategies through short topic summaries, retesting and using images, diagrams, mind maps and videos.	3 & 5

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

Budgeted cost: £107,500

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Interventions to support students with low reading age: NGRT tests are used to ensure any students' underlying reading barriers are identified (using further diagnostic assessments where necessary). Across KS3 students have one 75 minute literacy lesson weekly where they will be	The EEF's toolkit strand on reading comprehension strategies states they have been found to have a positive impact (+7 months) on outcomes in secondary-aged students. Studies in England have shown that pupils eligible for free school meals may receive additional benefits from being taught how to use reading comprehension strategies. The EEF evaluation of Lexia as an online literacy support programme concluded that the programme had a positive effect on skills that are important for further literacy development. Children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) who were offered Lexia made, on average, the equivalent of two additional months' progress in reading compared to other children eligible for FSM.	2

streamed based on NGRT data along with CATS and reading ages. Achievement Assistants and HLTAs will support those groups with the weakest readers. These groups will follow a programme comprised of Lexia, Reading Aloud and Reading Buddies to address EAL, phonics, comprehension and fluency. Those groups where students are close to their reading age will follow The Faster Read project from Sussex University.	A small study in UK schools has found that reading challenging, complex novels aloud, and at a fast pace has been shown to increase students reading comprehension by 8.5 months on standardised tests of reading comprehension, but the poorer readers made a surprising 16 months progress. 'Just reading': the impact of a faster pace of reading narratives on the comprehension of poorer adolescent readers in English classrooms Jo Westbrook, Julia Sutherland, Jane Oakhill and Susan Sullivan. 2018 The Faster Read aims to develop the reading comprehension, interpretation and engagement of students, including 'struggling readers'. In the Sussex University research project students of 12-13 years across diverse schools, including areas of poverty. Students with a reading age 1+ year lower than their chronological age made, on average, 16 months' progress in reading comprehension in 12 weeks, measured by standardised tests. Qualitative data showed that students' reading engagement, use of reading strategies and quality of dialogic peer discussion of texts greatly improved, with some reported impacts on writing, school engagement and attendance	
Subject-based interventions: Close monitoring and intervention of students who are not yet fulfilling their potential on a faculty level. EDclass is used to support a small number of students as required. The Axiom pilot in mathematics to support disadvantaged learners.	The EEF toolkit strand on one-to-one tuition states it is very effective at improving student outcomes if targeted at knowledge gaps and specific needs. It provides greater levels of interaction and feedback compared to whole-class teaching and can support students to overcome barriers to learning and increase their progress through the curriculum. Similarly the EEF toolkit strand on small group tuition states it is most likely to be effective if it is targeted at students' specific needs. Diagnostic assessment can be used to assess the best way to target support. The toolkit also states that 'Studies involving digital technology show broadly similar effects. One-to-one tuition and small-group tuition are both effective interventions. However, the cost-effectiveness of teaching in small groups indicates that greater use of this approach may be worthwhile. Axiom Maths is aimed at addressing the issue of half of top performers in maths at primary school who were on free school meals aged eleven are no longer top performers by sixteen. It is run by some of the leading figures in mathematics education and social mobility. The long-term sequencing of the Axiom Maths curriculum and the specific	2 & 3

	task design in each session enable mentors to apply the research-validated principles of effective pedagogy that can also be seen in the best teaching in UK classrooms.	
The Maths Progression Programme	The Maths Progression Programme is a 5 year programme targeted to support disadvantaged HPA students with a KS2 Maths score of 110+. The programme starts with Y7 students and aims to help facilitate progression into STEM related courses and careers post-16 and beyond.	
Targeted interventions and resources to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged students with **SEND** through our waves of intervention**.** Wave 1 includes high quality T&L via Quality First Teaching with additional support for SEND students as identified by the SENDCO and the use of reasonable adjustments and assistive technology as required. Wave 2 is delivered via small group support to improve the area of need identified (Cognition & Learning, Social, Emotional and Mental Health, Communication & Interactions and/or Sensory and Physical difficulties) Wave 3 is delivered through 1:1 support by class teachers as outlined by students personal SLIPs, The Link and via the dyslexia pathway, access	The EEF acknowledges that Disadvantaged students with SEND have the greatest need for excellent teaching and we aim to embed the recommendations from the 'High quality teaching benefits pupils with SEND The 'Five-a-day' principle' and the findings from the EEF guidance report 'Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools' which recommends high quality teaching supported by small group interventions and the use of Teaching Assistants to supplement the support we provide for SEND students. The EEFs guidance report on 'Making best use of Teaching Assistants' tells us that 'The area of research showing the strongest evidence for TAs having a positive impact on pupil attainment focuses on their role in delivering structured interventions in one to-one or small group settings.'	2 & 5

arrangements, Pupil and School Support, Educational Psychologists, the Communication and Autism Team and Speech and Language Therapist involvement where necessary.		

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

Budgeted cost: £168,015

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Wellbeing: Providing waves of intervention to support students with SEMH to help them regulate their behaviour and emotions so they do not become a barrier to their achievements and that wellbeing is improved. PASS data, myPoints, CPOMs and suspension data along with pastoral team and tutors' observations and recommendations, are used to identify students who may require additional support beyond what can be provided within a lesson. This includes Wellbeing Ambassadors, our Refocus and Link provision and 1:1	Effectiveness with SEMH means it is intrinsic to every aspect of school life, rather than something done in isolation. It is a set of behaviours, interactions and values. ***Addressing Educational Disadvantage In Schools and Colleges The Essex Way*** edited by Marc Rowland - 2021 The EEFs guidance report on Improving Behaviour in Schools provides key recommendations alongside the EEF toolkit strand of Behaviour implementation. DfE figures report that students eligible for Free School Meals are more likely to receive a permanent or fixed term exclusion compared to those who do not. The most common reason for exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. Student behaviour will have multiple influences, some of which teachers can directly manage through universal or classroom management approaches. Some pupils will require more specialist support to help manage their self-regulation or social and emotional skills. The EEF toolkit strand on Social and Emotional Learning states that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have weaker Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills. SEL interventions in education are shown to improve relevant skills and are therefore likely to support disadvantaged students to understand and engage in healthy relationships with peers and emotional self-regulation, both of which may subsequently increase academic attainment by 5 months if planned and monitored carefully.	3, 4 & 6

support from a school counsellor as necessary.		
Attendance: Continue to work alongside an attendance consultant to review and fine tune our attendance procedures including the addition of a 'Power Hour' where staff target key students to secure their attendance to school. This will ensure the principles of the DfEs Working together to improve school attendance are embedded within school routines, and that capacity within the attendance team is increased to support students who are persistently absent and their families.	Poor school attendance is a significant problem in the UK and many other countries across the world. Research has found that poor attendance at school is linked to poor academic attainment across all stages (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; London et al., 2016) amongst other problems. However, evidence suggests that small improvements in attendance can lead to meaningful impacts on these outcomes. The EEFs 2022 Attendance Interventions, Rapid Evidence Assessment acknowledges that the evidence base isn't as strong as it needs to be but does state that 'there is some evidence of promise for several strategies including parental engagement approaches and responsive interventions that target the individual causes of low attendance'. The DFEs Working together to improve school attendance makes clear that 'good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.' as well as 'schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.'	1, 2, 3 & 4
Enrichment: Extracurricular activities are planned, sequenced and built into the subject curriculum offer, ensuring they are targeted meaningfully at students (in particular those at a disadvantage) in order to meet their 'Enrichment guarantee' as a minimum.	The EEF toolkit strand on arts participation tells us that 'there is intrinsic value in teaching pupils creative and performance skills and ensuring disadvantaged pupils access a rich and stimulating arts education. Arts participation may be delivered within the core curriculum, or through extra-curricular or cultural trips which can be subject to financial barriers for pupils from deprived backgrounds.' The access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes report by the Education Policy Institute in 2024 found that **'Attending extra-curricular clubs during secondary school is associated with a range of positive outcomes** when young people are in their early twenties. Students who attend clubs have a higher probability of progressing to higher education and being in employment, as well as higher levels of participation in sports. The research also finds an association between attending some kinds of clubs and self-reported poorer health as a young adult.'	4, 5 & 6
Parental engagement:	The EEFs Toolkit has a strand on parental engagement which states that levels of parental engagement are	3 & 4

Communicate positively with parents and carers around support and learning throughout the year to provide them with timely, appropriate and well-pitched information that can be easily understood.	consistently associated with improved academic outcomes. This applies heavily to our context and practical strategies with tips, support and resources may be more beneficial to pupil outcomes. Considering how to tailor school communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning can be key, with some evidence suggesting personalised messages linked to learning can promote positive interactions is a key recommendation of the EEFs guidance report on 'Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning'	
Extended school time: To ensure access to homework support and a quiet study space are available alongside revision sessions for exam groups.	The EEFs toolkit strand on extending school time states that There is some evidence to suggest that disadvantaged pupils might benefit more from additional school time. It warns that this time must be focussed to increase its effectiveness and be run by well trained staff.	3, 5 & 6
Access to food: **Breakfast club:** To ensure that all students who would like one have access to a free breakfast before school to increase uptake. **Fairshare Pantry**: Setting up and running of a pantry to enable access to reduced cost food for our local community.	The independent evaluation of EEF-funded project, Magic Breakfast programme found that its model of a free, universal, before-school breakfast club delivered an average of +2 months' additional progress for pupils in reading, writing and maths. Food insecurity disproportionately affects young people and families with children. Young people (16-24) are much more likely to report low food security than older adults. Children are more likely to live in food-insecure households than any other age-group. By setting up a Fair Share Pantry operated from the school and run by members of staff on a voluntary basis after school. This will allow the families of our school and wider community to buy heavily reduced priced food items on a regular basis and help to alleviate some of the associated pressures. House of Commons Library, 2024. Who is experiencing food insecurity in the UK?	4 & 6
Contingency fund for acute issues: To ensure that we are able to support students and families going through hardship to, where possible, mitigate the effects of this impacting on their access to the full curriculum.	Due to the recent cost of living crisis, we are aware that we cannot anticipate every need that may require us to respond and so feel it is necessary to set aside a small amount of money to allow us to support students in difficult times.	5

Total budgeted cost: £690,515

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 previous academic year, drawing on national assessment data and our own internal summative and formative assessments. We were pleased that our Ofsted inspection in May 2025 recognised that 'Holyhead School is a place where everyone is valued and included. The school's work to support all pupils' development, especially disadvantaged pupils, is a strength.'

2025 outcomes

	Attainment 8		%5+ E&M	
	Holyhead	National (2024)	Holyhead	National (2024)
All	42.8	45.9	32.7	45.9
DA	38.7	34.5	23.9	25.8
Non-DA	47.1	50.0	42.6	53.1

*NA figures are 2024 until 2025 figures released.

Trends in outcomes over time

DA 2019-2024	2019	2023	2024	2025
DA Cohort	127	109	116	117
DA A8 score	38.43	38.16	38.6	38.7
Non-DA A8 score	46.4	45.84	43.4	47.1
A8 Gap	7.97	7.68	4.8	8.4
DA P8 score	-0.04	-0.34	-0.09	n/a
Non-DA P8 score	0.23	-0.03	0.02	n/a
P8 Gap	-0.27	-0.31	-0.11	n/a

Disadvantaged students at Holyhead continue to perform above the national average for their peers, reflected in strong Attainment 8 outcomes consistent with 2024. This reflects the sustained commitment to supporting these learners and highlights the positive impact of our ongoing efforts.

While the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students widened in 2025 after narrowing in 2024, this shift reinforces the importance of our ambitious goal: to

ensure disadvantaged students at Holyhead achieve outcomes comparable with all students nationally, not just their disadvantaged peers.

In English and Maths, 46% of disadvantaged students achieved grades 9–4, aligning with 2023 figures, and 23.9% reached grades 9–5. Although these numbers represent a step back from 2024, they provide a clear focus for targeted improvement. The current 18.7% gap at Grade 5+ between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students will be a central priority for 2026, as we continue to enhance support and opportunities that shape students' next steps and future success.

Female disadvantaged students performed well with an A8 score of 42.71 above the cohort as a whole. Our work to close the gap is continuing to have a positive impact, although a renewed focus on this in identified subjects and in particular with male disadvantaged students will be key to closing the gap again in 2026.

Our community is still feeling the effects of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. These are well known not to have impacted all students and areas equally and as Holyhead is in the most deprived quintile of schools nationally we have seen significantly more students impacted in terms of well-being, mental health issues and attendance.

2025 attendance

	HH all students	HH FSM6	NA FSM6	NA non-FSM6
Attendance	93.4%	92.7%	86.2%	93.3%
Persistent absence	17.2%	19.9%	41.9%	18.0%

Our strategy continues to deliver consistently strong results in improving attendance among disadvantaged students, rising from 91.8% in 2023–24 to 92.7% in 2024–25. We're encouraged to see that our disadvantaged students now attend school at significantly higher rates than their peers nationally (92.7% vs 86.2%), with the attendance gap widening slightly from 6.4% in 2023–24 to 6.5% in 2024–25.

Importantly, our disadvantaged students are now just 0.6% below the national average for non-FSM6 students (92.7% compared to 93.3%), reflecting our commitment to closing the gap and ensuring equitable access to education.

Persistent absence among disadvantaged students has also seen a marked improvement, dropping to 19.9% (a reduction from 24% in 2023–24 and 33% in 2022–23). This figure remains well below the national average for disadvantaged students (41.9%), highlighting the impact of our targeted interventions. While it is still 2.7% above the whole-school rate of 17.2%, we remain focused on further reducing persistent absenteeism, recognising its critical influence on students' well-being, academic attainment, and life chances.

Teaching and Learning

Our quality assurance indicates that students are successful in their learning when our Teaching and Learning policy 'The Holyhead 8' is implemented well, therefore ensuring whole school consistency is a key feature of our School Improvement Plan for 2025-26. We were pleased that our Ofsted inspection in May 2025 recognised 'The school has developed a highly ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. It has also revised its approaches to curriculum implementation to bring further improvements in how pupils learn.' We are aware, however, that disadvantaged students too often display underdeveloped self-regulation skills and oracy skills, often lacking the confidence and/or ability to articulate themselves fully, and at times

appearing unsure when asked to explain their thoughts and opinions. PASS data (GL assessments) indicates disadvantaged students have high satisfaction with their school experience when tested at the start and mid point of the year. The 2 lowest scoring areas by disadvantaged students in Sept 2024 saw improvements of 13.7% (learner self-regard) and 16.0% (response to the curriculum) indicating our work to engage and build confidence in these students was effective. Through our participation in the SSAT Embedding Formative Assessment Programme for 2025–26, we aim to enhance staff expertise in accurately assessing students' understanding and responding effectively. This initiative is designed to ensure that every student is supported to achieve the progress they are capable of.

Suspensions

Our exclusion rate for FSM students for 2024-25 was 15.5, this is down from 21.4 in 2023-24 and below national average figures of 27.6. Our permanent exclusion rate for FSM students was 0.13 down from 0.18 in 2023-4 and lower than national average figures of 0.33. ***(National averages here are taken from 2023/24 as this is the most recent data released by the DfE)***

We have seen a 32% reduction in the number of suspensions issued to Pupil Premium students, as well as a decrease in the overall number of students receiving suspensions. The continued implementation of our Refocus initiative has helped minimise the number of learning days lost to suspensions among disadvantaged students. It also enables us to carry out restorative work, which has contributed to a modest 3% drop in repeat suspensions.

Currently, 76% of all suspensions involve disadvantaged students, a figure that remains disproportionately high compared to their representation in the school population (57%). We remain acutely aware of the impact that any suspension has on students' learning and social development. As such, we are firmly committed to further reducing these figures to ensure all students have consistent access to education and the wider school experience.

Reading Interventions

Being able to read fluently and for comprehension is vital to students' success and confidence, as of June 2025 NGRT data showed that out of 730 students retested, 182 made higher or much higher than expected progress (25%). Significantly, 108 of these were FSM students, highlighting that our intervention strategy is working and having real impact on disadvantaged learners. From the 115 students who received targeted interventions through form time and additional reading, 81% made expected progress or beyond, demonstrating that carefully planned small-group and personalised approaches are effective. From those involved in Lexia intervention 66% had made expected or beyond progress. Our evaluations show us that our targeted strategies are working, particularly for FSM students and those receiving structured reading support. The next step is to ensure testing conditions better reflect students' true ability so that progress is captured more accurately.

Enrichment

We offer a wide variety of clubs and activities for students, and enrichment opportunities are particularly well attended by disadvantaged students at Holyhead. Last year, 89% of our disadvantaged students participated in enrichment activities, slightly more than the overall student participation rate. Disadvantaged students are also actively represented in all areas of school leadership, including roles such as sports leaders, prefects and members of the school council. This reflects our strong commitment to ensuring that disadvantaged students fully engage in every aspect of school life and are able to benefit from the experiences these roles provide them. Enrichment and experiences week at the end of July again allowed all students

to take part in a range of opportunities to develop their cultural and social capital. For the second year in a row we have students completing all levels of the Duke of Edinburgh Award (bronze, silver and gold), of the students taking part, 70% are disadvantaged. We continue to refine our tracking of those regularly attending enrichment to ensure that opportunities are closely matched to students' needs and the curriculum.

Destinations

Almost half of our Year 11 students (48%) elected to stay on at our 6th form and 60% of our current Year 12 cohort are in receipt of the Pupil Premium. The remainder of the Y11 cohort in 2024-25 are attending colleges and alternative sixth forms with no NEET students.

The vast majority of our Year 13 students have moved on to higher education with most opting for providers in the West Midlands (with Aston University and Birmingham City University being the most popular choices). This includes disadvantaged students reading Medicine and Optometry at Aston University after securing 4 grade A's and 3 grade A's and 1 grade B respectively. The most popular courses taken include Psychology and Law with others pursuing degrees in Computer Science, Accountancy, Biomedical Science and other STEM related degree courses.

We believe that our strategy contains the necessary elements to ensure improved outcomes for our disadvantaged students but recognise there is still room for improvement. We continue to have high expectations but with a heightened focus on the consistency of their application across all subjects and teachers, both in relation to behaviour and standards of work.

Our evaluation of the strategies implemented last academic year shows that we have been particularly effective in improving attendance and securing high-quality post-16 and post-18 destinations for our students. While we are pleased that attainment among disadvantaged students continues to improve, we recognise the need to intensify our efforts to raise outcomes in some subject areas.

We have reviewed our strategy plan and made changes to how we intend to use some of our budget this academic year. The Further Information section below provides more details about our planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

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
Cognitive Science Network Teacher CPD academy	Inner Drive
White Rose Maths	White Rose Hub
Lexia	Lexia Learning Solutions
Talk The Talk Teacher CPD	Talk the Talk

Further information (optional)

Additional activity

Our pupil premium strategy will be supplemented by additional activity that is not being funded by pupil premium or recovery premium. That will include:

- embedding more effective practice around feedback. EEF evidence on feedback demonstrates it has significant benefits, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

- the continued use of Class Stats so that class teachers and form tutors have all the available information on their students that they need in an easily accessible format.
- Faculties have enhanced budgets which allow them to resource their curriculums in a way that removes the burden of financial difficulties for students such as providing specialised equipment for students where needed.

Planning, implementation, and evaluation

Gaining the external perspective from Marc Rowland, a leading expert in this field in September 2023 and being part of a working group made up of senior leaders across the CRST Trust looking specifically at how we can support disadvantaged students within our schools have helped shape our strategy. In particular this has helped us to streamline our approach and strengthen the implementation of our strategies, ensuring they are consistently embedded across the school which will help support improved attainment in the coming years.

We triangulated evidence from multiple sources of data including exams and assessments, engagement in class work scrutiny, and conversations with parents, students and teachers in order to identify the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils. We have also met with a school local to us with high-performing disadvantaged pupils to learn from their approach.

We have looked closely at the EEF guide to the Pupil Premium, 2023 alongside two key books; *An Updated Practical Guide to the Pupil Premium* by Marc Rowland and *Addressing Educational Disadvantage the Essex Way* by Marc Rowland. These have helped to shape our strategy and coupled with reading blogs and studies about the 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 and will continue to use it through the implementation of our activities.

We are increasingly implementing a robust evaluation framework for the duration of our three-year strategy and will adjust our plan over time to secure better outcomes for pupils.