

St Nicolas' CE Combined School



Living and learning
together with God

Pupil premium strategy statement 2025 (running 2023-2026)

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 and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	217
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	12%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	Year 3 of 3 years 2023-2026
Date this statement was first published	10.11.2023
Date of last review	19.12.2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	10.11.2025
Statement authorised by	Governing Board
Pupil premium lead	R Holmes (HT)
Governor / Trustee lead	D Godbee

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£38,414
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (<i>enter £0 if not applicable</i>)	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£38,414

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan Statement of intent

St Nicolas' is a happy and nurturing school with an enthusiastic, committed and hardworking staff team. We have a well-established and experienced senior leadership team and a school ethos of the highest expectations, urgency, and children and staff at the heart of everything we do.

We are ambitious for all our children and are proud of our success in supporting children eligible for pupil premium funding, as well as others who are disadvantaged. Our data and research show us that whole school initiatives that support high quality first teaching as well as personalised pastoral support have had the biggest impact on outcomes, and this underpins our pupil premium strategy. Early intervention in the form of strong relationships and quality interactions is key, so that children are enabled to thrive every day in school. Learning to read is an important factor: the earlier that children can 'read to learn', the better. We strongly believe our curriculum **is** our children's opportunity and we aim to provide the knowledge, skills and opportunities to create a level playing field and improve life chances for **all** our educationally disadvantaged pupils.

We have a strong ethos of inclusion and a compassionate approach towards engaging and supporting our children and parents. We understand the impact of disadvantage on pupils' learning and all staff share our ambition for all our pupils and fully understand the part they play in addressing educational disadvantage.

Our leadership team focus on the quality of pupils' learning and social experiences, playing a significant role in evaluating progress through ongoing, supportive monitoring, collaborative work with teachers and support staff. We work hard to provide opportunities for children to talk and to be heard and are developing 'pupil voice' to find out about their day-to-day experience in school, whether they feel included, whether they know what to do when they find things more difficult, and to make sure that they are experiencing meaningful success every day. Senior leaders work with teachers to enable disadvantaged children to experience opportunities in leadership, sport, music and the arts.

A clear, shared understanding of strategy and outcomes enable constructive conversations between staff members and governors. This is supported by the school's work within the Bucks Challenge and as a Disadvantaged Champion School. It means school improvement is purposeful, transparent and focussed on improving teaching and learning and targeted pastoral support for disadvantaged children and all children.

Challenges

This details the key challenges to achievement that we have identified among our disadvantaged pupils through observation and assessment. We have used data to exemplify the challenges faced, however fluctuations occur in our year-on-year data which are cohort specific due to the single-form nature of our school.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p>On entry to reception class in 2022, 40% of our disadvantaged pupils were at age-related expectations in speaking when they entered reception, compared with the cohort figure of 70%. On entry to reception in 2023, none of our disadvantaged pupils were at age-related expectations in speaking when they entered reception, compared with the cohort figure of 83%. Assessments, observations and discussions with pupils indicate under-developed oral language skills and vocabulary gaps among many disadvantaged pupils from EYFS through to KS2 and in general are more prevalent among our disadvantaged pupils than their peers in the Early Years and KS1.</p>
2	<p>Our assessments and observations indicate that the education and well-being of many of our disadvantaged pupils have been impacted by partial closures to a greater extent than for other pupils. This has resulted in significant knowledge gaps leading to more of our disadvantaged pupils falling behind age-related expectations in reading, writing and maths. These findings are supported by national studies.</p> <p>In 2020-21 and 2021-22, many of our disadvantaged pupils did not attain as well as their peers at the end of KS2. In 2022-23 100% of our disadvantaged children in Y6 reached at least the expected standard in reading and maths, and 75% reached the expected standard in writing. The gap in attainment is reducing but remains to varying extents in each year group cohort and in all statutory assessments except the Y1 phonics screening check.</p>
3	<p>Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and families have identified social and emotional issues for many pupils, including difficulties with self-regulation. These challenges particularly affect disadvantaged pupils, including their attainment. Teacher referrals for support have markedly increased since 2020. Approx 15% of our pupils currently require additional support with their social and emotional needs. Some of these attend play therapy or our ELSA. Others have additional support from senior leaders, their teacher, a TA or time with the school therapy dog. A few children require targeted support/mentoring throughout the day to keep them in lessons. 54% of the pupils currently requiring additional support are disadvantaged.</p>
4	<p>Our overall attendance in 2022-23 at 95.8% was higher than the national average, however there was a gap between pupil premium (91.8%) and non-pupil premium (96.4%) In 2023-24 the gap worsened with attendance by pupil premium children at 90.5% and non-pupil premium at 96.3%.</p> <p>In 2022-23, 22% of our disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent, compared with the cohort figure of 8%.</p> <p>In 2023-24, 26% of our disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent, compared with the cohort figure of 11%.</p> <p>In 2024-25, 23% of our disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent, compared with the cohort figure of 7%.</p>

*Lateness follows a similar pattern, meaning children miss early learning and socialising activities. Observation and evidence show children who have been absent or arrive late struggle to settle into the day and find self-regulation more difficult. Our assessments indicate **absenteeism is negatively impacting disadvantaged pupils' progress.***

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 and language skills and vocabulary among disadvantaged pupils	Assessments and observations indicate significantly improved language among disadvantaged pupils. This is evident when triangulated with other sources of evidence including oral language assessments, engagement in lessons, book scrutiny and ongoing formative assessment.
Improved reading and writing attainment for disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS1 & KS2.	KS2 reading and writing outcomes in 2024/25 and 2025/26 show that more than 80% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard. KS2 outcomes 2024/25: R 78% exp+ W 89% exp+
Improved maths attainment for disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS1 & KS2.	KS2 maths outcomes in 2024/25 and 2025/26 show that more than 85% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard KS2 outcomes 2024/25: M 78% exp+
To achieve and sustain improved wellbeing for all pupils in our school, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high levels of wellbeing from 2024/25 demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative data from student voice, student and parent surveys and teacher observations • Children will have at least one good friend, and a circle of other friendships. They can talk about how they can nurture good friendships (pupil voice) • Increased participation in enrichment activities, particularly among disadvantaged pupils
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high attendance from 2024/25 demonstrated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall absence rate for all pupils being no more than 4% and there will be no gap in attendance for our disadvantaged pupils. • The percentage of all pupils who are persistently absent being below 5% and the figure among disadvantaged pupils being no lower than their peers.

Activity in this academic year

This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium funding **this academic year** to address the challenges listed above.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £0

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number addressed
<p>Embed high quality adult/child interactions in the early years and across the school</p> <p>Continue to enhance our language rich learning environments</p> <p>Continue to share best practice</p>	<p>There is strong evidence that the rate at which children develop language is sensitive to the amount of input they receive from the adults and peers around them. The number and quality of conversations children have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language rich environment is crucial.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/the-shrec-approach-four-evidence-informed-strategies-to-promote-high-quality-interactions-with-young-children?utm_source=/news/the-shrec-approach-four-evidence-informed-strategies-to-promote-high-quality-interactions-with-young-children&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=shrec</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/early-language?utm_source=/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/early-language&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=Early%20language%20development</p> <p>Teaching by Listening: The Importance of Adult-Child Conversations to Language Development Frederick J. Zimmerman, Jill Gilkerson, Jeffrey A. Richards, Dimitri A. Christakis, Dongxin Xu, Sharmistha Gray and Umit Yapanel</p> <p>Early Excellence – ‘Navigating a sea of Talk’ https://earlyexcellence.com/latest-news/pressarticles/navigating-the-sea-of-talk/</p>	<p>1</p>

<p>through professional dialogue and CPD for teachers and teaching assistants</p> <p>Visit other excellent schools to look at best practice</p> <p>Keep up to date with all relevant research</p>	<p>Professor Julie Fisher – ‘interacting or interfering’ 18 inclusive practice and participation for all in lessons – cold calling, questioning, vocabulary https://www.mheducation.co.uk/interacting-or-interfering-improving-interactions-in-the-earlyyears-9780335262564-emea-group Changing educational practice in the early years through practitioner-led action research: an Adult-Child Interaction Project</p> <p>IMPROVING LITERACY. Supporting oral language development. EEF 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: Oral language interventions Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/oral-language-interventions?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/oral-language-interventions&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=oral</p> <p>Deepening knowledge through vocabulary training: https://impact.chartered.college/article/beck-deepening-knowledge-through-vocabulary-learning/</p> <p>Language for behaviour and emotions (Word Aware): https://www.routledge.com/Language-for-Behaviour-and-Emotions-A-Practical-Guide-toWorking-with-Children/Branagan-Cross-Parsons/p/book/9780367331832</p> <p>Accountable talk (Resnick) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324830361_Accountable_Talk_Instructional_dialogue_that_builds_the_mind</p> <p>Collaborative learning https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/collaborative-learning-approaches?utm_source=/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/collaborative-learning-approaches&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=collaborative</p>	
---	--	--

<p>Continue to drive maths teaching and learning using the mastery approach</p> <p>Run parent support maths mastery workshops</p>	<p>The EEF guidance is based on a range of the best available evidence:</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mastery-learning</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/early-maths</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/maths-ks-2-3</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Embed whole class reading</p> <p>Pre-teach background knowledge and vocabulary.</p>	<p>Whole class reading</p> <p>'Closing the reading gap' and 'Closing the vocabulary gap' by Alex Quigley</p> <p>https://primaryenglished.co.uk/blog/whole-class-reading-support-for-all</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/reading-comprehension-strategies</p> <p>https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eef-guidance-reports/literacy-ks2/EEF-Improving-literacy-in-key-stage-2-report-Second-edition.pdf</p> <p>-Recommendation 1, 2 and 3</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Improve the quality of social and emotional learning.</p> <p>Approaches will be embedded:</p> <p>Zones of Regulation;</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/prioritise-social-and-emotional-learning</p>	<p>3</p>

<p>Growth Mindset; Reflect and Reset restorative conversation and supported with CPD</p>		
--	--	--

Targeted academic support (for example in-class support, small group support, one-to-one support, structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £29,239

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Structured interventions: e.g. RWI fast-track tutoring for identified pupils</p>	<p>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: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/phonics Fast track tutoring https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eef-guidance-reports/literacy-ks2/EEF-Improving-literacy-in-key-stage-2-report-Second-edition.pdf -Recommendation 7</p>	<p>2</p>

Small group tuition	Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both in small groups: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition	2
Targeted support incl 1:1	And one-to-one: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition	2

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

Budgeted cost: £9,175

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Play therapy ELSA High quality pastoral support and mentoring School therapy dog in-training (PAWS)	There is evidence to suggest that targeted school-based interventions have led to improvements in wellbeing and mental health, yielding reduced levels of school exclusion by 31% and improved pupil attainment (Banerjee et al., 2014) Research indicates that school-based counselling is perceived by children and pastoral care staff as a highly accessible, non-stigmatising and effective form of early intervention for reducing psychological distress (Cooper, 2009)	3, 4
Embed the Trauma Informed Practice approach in school - focusing on a key school principle – building and maintaining	Behaviour interventions EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)	

<p>positive, trusting and beneficial relationships with all our children and families – understanding where both targeted interventions and universal approaches can have positive overall effects and that all behaviour is communication.</p> <p>Provide ongoing CPD for staff by the Virtual School team and our mental health lead</p>		
<p>Support with the cost of enrichment activities including trips and residential visits for disadvantaged pupils</p>	<p>https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSJ-A_Level_Playing_Field.pdf</p>	<p>3, 4</p>
<p>Embed the principles of good practice set out in the DfE’s Working Together to Improve School Attendance advice. This involves training and release time for staff to develop and implement new procedures. Continue to make the best use of the Virtual School, Family Support Service and LA attendance team, to work with our vulnerable families to improve attendance.</p>	<p>The DfE guidance has been informed by engagement with schools that have significantly reduced levels of absence and persistent absence.</p> <p>Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p>	<p>3, 4</p>

Total budgeted cost: £38,414

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

EYFS DATA 2025								
	Pupils eligible for pupil premium 4 pupils	All pupils	National average all pupils	Data over time				
				2018-19 4 pupils	2021-22 1 pupil	2022-23 5 pupils	2023-2024 2 pupils	2024-25 4 pupils
Good level of development (GLD)	50%	90%	68%	50%	100%	40%	50%	50%

YEAR 1 PHONICS SCREENING CHECK 2025								
Pass rate for pupils eligible for pupil premium 3 pupils Jun 2025	All pupils	National average all pupils	Data over time					
			2018-19 3 pupils	2021-22 (Y2 Nov) 2 pupils	2021-22 4 pupils	2022-23 5 pupils	2023-24 7 pupils	2024-25 3 pupils
67%	93%	80%	66%	50%	50%	100%	57%	67%

END OF KS2 2025								
	Pupils eligible for pupil premium 9 pupils	All pupils	National average all pupils	Data over time				
				2018-19 3 pupils	2021-22 3 pupils	2022-23 4 pupils	2023-24 6 pupils	2024-25 9 pupils
% achieving expected standard or above in reading, writing and maths	67%	77%	62%	100%	0%	75%	50%	67%
% achieving expected standard in reading	78%	84%	75%	100%	33%	100%	67%	78%

% achieving expected standard in writing	89%	94%	72%	100%	33%	75%	67%	89%
% achieving expected standard in maths	78%	87%	74%	100%	0%	100%	50%	78%

Statistics (esp percentages) for disadvantaged chn in our school should be read bearing in mind the small group sizes and variation in cohorts from year to year.

Caution is advised when comparing 2022 performance data with data from previous years. The impact of COVID-19 makes it difficult to interpret why the results are as they are. You can compare your school's disadvantaged pupils' performance data to local and national averages, with caution.

Externally provided programmes

Non-DfE programmes that we used our pupil premium to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider
-	-

Further information (optional)

We are a Bucks Challenge school and are running a project with our liaison group of schools to address disadvantage by sharing resources and expertise in an extended project.