Pupil premium strategy statement 2026 – *Thistle Hill Academy*

This statement details Stour school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	352
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	47.6%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers 26-27	2026-2027
Date this statement was published	Sept 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	Feb '26
Statement authorised by	Rebecca Handebeaux
Pupil premium lead	Rebecca Handebeaux
Trustee lead	Simon O'Keefe

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£ 258,850
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*	£258,850

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

You may want to include information on:

- ***Pupil Premium Statement of Intent – Thistle Hill Academy***
- *At Thistle Hill Academy, we recognise the importance of addressing the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, particularly considering our context where **164 pupils (52.1%) are eligible for Free School Meals**, significantly higher than both the Kent average (27.6%) and the national average (24.9%) . Our **IMD score of 31.54 and rank of 59 out of 459** further highlights the high level of deprivation within our community . We are dedicated to removing barriers to learning created by poverty, family circumstances, and background.*
- *Our commitment includes:*
- ***Narrowing the Attainment Gaps:** We strive to close the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged counterparts, both within our school and on a national level. Current data shows gaps across EYFS, Phonics, and KS2 outcomes, including **KS2 R/W/M disadvantaged attainment at 32% compared to 57.7% nationally** .*
- ***Ensuring Reading Proficiency:** We ensure that all pupils can read fluently and with good understanding, enabling them to access the full breadth of the curriculum. Our phonics outcomes show strong potential, with **Year 1 disadvantaged pupils achieving 71.4%**, above emerging national figures .*
- ***Developing Communication Skills:** With **115 pupils (33%) on SEN Support** and **31 pupils (8.9%) with EAL**, developing pupils' confidence and ability to communicate effectively is essential for their academic and social success.*
- ***Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing:** We enable pupils to take care of their social and emotional wellbeing, fostering resilience and improving attendance. Persistent absence remains a challenge, with **22.4% of pupils persistently absent in 2024/25 compared to 13% nationally** .*
- ***Providing Diverse Learning Opportunities:** We offer a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world, preparing them for future success.*
- ***Our Context***
- *Thistle Hill Academy serves a community with high levels of deprivation. Our **IMD Rank of 59** indicates significant socio-economic challenges, and **52.1% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals**, compared to **24.9% nationally** . This context shapes our Pupil Premium strategy and reinforces the need for a robust, evidence-based approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils.*
- ***Achieving Our Objectives***
- ***Tier 1 – High Quality Teaching***

- ***Implementing Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies:*** *Utilise high-quality instructional strategies such as explicit teaching and formative assessment to enhance learning outcomes for all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.* ***Evidence-based teaching***
- ***Adapted Instruction:*** *Tailor lessons to meet the diverse needs of pupils, ensuring that all learners, including those with SEND, receive appropriate support and challenge.* ***Adapted instruction***
- ***Professional Development for Staff:*** *Invest in ongoing professional development focused on inclusive teaching practices and the use of technology to support personalised learning.* ***Professional development***
- ***Regular Feedback Mechanisms:*** *Establish a system for providing regular, constructive feedback to pupils, helping them understand their progress and areas for improvement.* ***Effective feedback***
- ***Tier 2 – Targeted Academic Support***
- ***Small Group Interventions:*** *Implement targeted small group interventions for pupils who are falling behind, focusing on literacy and numeracy skills to help close the attainment gap.* ***Small group interventions***
- ***Speech and Language Support:*** *Integrate speech and language therapy services to support pupils in developing their communication skills, particularly for those with identified needs.* ***Speech and language support***
- ***Parental Engagement Programmes:*** *Develop programmes that engage parents in their children's learning, providing them with strategies to support literacy and numeracy at home.* ***Parental engagement***
- ***Tier 3 – Wider Strategies***
- ***Attendance Monitoring and Support:*** *Establish a robust attendance monitoring system that identifies pupils at risk of poor attendance and provides tailored support, such as mentoring or family outreach.* ***Attendance improvement***
- ***Extracurricular Activities:*** *Offer a diverse range of extracurricular activities that promote social interaction and communication skills, ensuring that all pupils have access regardless of financial barriers.* ***Extracurricular benefits***
- ***Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiatives:*** *Implement programmes focused on mental health and wellbeing to support pupils' social-emotional development, which is essential for academic success.* ***Mental health support***
- ***Community Partnerships:*** *Foster partnerships with local organisations to provide additional resources and opportunities for pupils, such as workshops, mentorship programmes, and career exploration activities.* ***Community partnerships***
- ***Conclusion***
- *By implementing these evidence-based strategies across the three tiers, Thistle Hill Academy can effectively address the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. This comprehensive approach not only aligns with our vision of nurturing and inclusive education but also ensures that every pupil has the opportunity to*

shine brightly. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to high-quality teaching, we can create an environment where all pupils thrive and achieve their full potential.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	*Weak Reading Fluency and Comprehension for a Significant Proportion of Pupils*
2	Significant Attainment Gaps for Disadvantaged Pupils Across All Key Stages
3	High Levels of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
4	Persistent Absence and Social–Emotional Barriers to Learning
5	Limited Access to Enrichment, Cultural Capital and Wider Learning Opportunities

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
1. Narrow the Attainment Gap for Disadvantaged Pupils Across All Key Stages *Disadvantaged pupils will make accelerated progress so that attainment gaps reduce year-on-year in EYFS, Phonics, KS1 and KS2.*	• Disadvantaged attainment in **KS2 R/W/M** increases from **32%** toward national disadvantaged averages (48%+). • □ EYFS disadvantaged GLD rises from **70%** toward national levels (54.7%+). • □ Phonics disadvantaged outcomes remain above national emerging figures (currently **71.4%**). • □ Internal assessment shows diminishing gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils each term. • □ Progress scores for disadvantaged pupils move closer to 0 or above in reading, writing and maths.

Improve Reading Fluency and Comprehension for All Pupils	□ Increased proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving expected standard in reading at KS1 and KS2. □ Fewer pupils scoring below 100 on KS2 reading scaled scores. □ Improved reading ages and fluency scores in internal assessments. □ Higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils achieving secure phonics outcomes in Year 1 and Year 2. □ Pupils demonstrate improved comprehension in guided reading and independent tasks.
Intended Outcome: Strengthen Communication and Language Skills, Particularly for SEND and EAL Pupils	□ Speech and language assessments show measurable improvement for targeted pupils. □ Increased proportions of SEND and EAL pupils meeting expected standards in writing and speaking/listening. □ Teachers report improved oral contributions, vocabulary use, and confidence in class discussions. □ Reduction in pupils requiring intensive speech and language intervention over time. □ Improved outcomes in writing for disadvantaged pupils, particularly those with SLCN.
Reduce Persistent Absence and Improve Social–Emotional Wellbeing	□ Persistent absence reduces from **22.4%** toward national levels (13%). □ Severe absence reduces from **2.3%** toward national levels (0.9%). □ Attendance for disadvantaged pupils improves term-on-term. □ Wellbeing surveys show improved emotional literacy, confidence, and readiness to learn. □ Fewer behaviour incidents and improved engagement in lessons.

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)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
High quality CPDL on explicit instructions, modelling and scaffolding	EEF: High-quality teaching has the strongest impact on disadvantaged pupils; explicit instruction improves outcomes in literacy and maths.	Attainment gaps (1), Reading proficiency (2)
Training staff in early	EEF Phonics & Reading Comprehension guidance: Systematic phonics and structured comprehension teaching improve reading outcomes.	(2), (1) Small-group tutoring in reading, writing and maths

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

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Small-group tutoring in reading, writing and maths	EEF Small Group Tuition: +4 months progress; highly effective for disadvantaged pupils.	1, 2
1:1 reading fluency and comprehension intervention	EEF Reading Comprehension Strategies: Strong impact on reading outcomes.	2
Speech and Language Therapy programmes for identified pupils	Bercow Review (2018): Early SLCN intervention improves long-term attainment and communication.	3
Targeted vocabulary and writing interventions (e.g., Talk Boost, NELI)	EEF Oral Language Interventions: Improve vocabulary, communication and writing outcomes.	3, 1

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

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed

Attendance monitoring system with early intervention, mentoring and family outreach	DfE & Ofsted: Early attendance intervention reduces persistent absence; mentoring improves engagement.	Attendance Improvement
Therapeutic classroom, targeted SEMH support and resilience work	Public Health England (2020): Wellbeing programmes improve emotional regulation and readiness to learn.	4
Inclusion bases to support behaviour support	EEF Behaviour Interventions: Improve engagement, reduce exclusions, and support SEMH needs.	(4), (1)

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils remained a key priority throughout 2025-2026. Despite a high level of social and economic disadvantage within the school community, disadvantaged pupils demonstrated positive outcomes across several measures, reflecting the impact of targeted academic intervention, high-quality teaching, and wider pastoral support.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, disadvantaged children achieved highly positive outcomes. Seventy-eight per cent achieved a Good Level of Development, significantly above both national disadvantaged outcomes (54.7%) and the Kent disadvantaged average (44.8%). Similarly, 81.8% achieved the expected standard in literacy and mathematics compared with national disadvantaged figures of 56.6% and 64.5% respectively. These outcomes indicate that children enter Key Stage 1 with secure foundations for future learning.

	2025						2026					
	School		Kent		National*		School		Kent		National**	
	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.
% Good Level of Development	77.8	70.0	68.9	50.9	68.3	51.2	75.0	81.8	74.0	54.8	72.4	54.7
% Expected Standard Literacy Goals	77.8	70.0	71.1	53.0	70.5	53.2	75.0	81.8	75.7	56.6	74.3	56.6
% Expected Standard Mathematics Goals	77.8	70.0	78.9	63.1	77.6	62.4	79.2	81.8	81.5	63.9	80.1	64.5

Phonics outcomes also remained strong. In Year 1, 81.5% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, exceeding both Kent disadvantaged outcomes (65.4%) and national disadvantaged outcomes (68.3%). By the end of Year 2, 79.4% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard, which was also above comparative disadvantaged averages. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of our systematic synthetic phonics programme and early reading support.

Phonics Trends - All Pupils and Disadvantaged Attainment

*DfE published ** Emerging National

A blank field denotes there is no National data available for that indicator.

	2025						2026					
	School		Kent		National*		School		Kent		National**	
	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.
% Expected Standard - Year 1	79.6	81.5	78	62	80	67	76.5	71.4	81.1	65.4	81.8	68.3
% Expected Standard - End of Year 2	90.2	82.6	88	78	89	81	87.7	79.4	88.5	77.6		

At Key Stage 2, disadvantaged pupils achieved outcomes which compare favourably with disadvantaged pupils nationally. In reading, 61.5% achieved the expected standard compared with 59.8% nationally. In writing, 57.7% achieved the expected standard against a national disadvantaged figure of 60.2%, while in mathematics, 61.5% achieved

the expected standard compared with 61.5% nationally. Disadvantaged pupils also attained average scaled scores of 104 in reading, 100.5 in GPS and 103 in mathematics, reflecting secure attainment across the curriculum.

Progress outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain an area for continued development. While pupils made gains from their starting points, progress scores in reading (-1.19), writing (-1.66) and mathematics (-1.29) indicate that disadvantaged pupils did not make progress in line with non-disadvantaged peers nationally. The school recognises the ongoing impact of SEND needs, attendance challenges and mobility within some disadvantaged cohorts and will continue to prioritise effective classroom adaptation, attendance improvement, targeted academic support and early intervention to accelerate progress.

National data available for that indicator.		**School**		**Kent**		**National***		**School**		**Kent**		**National****	
		All	Disadv	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.	All	Disadv.
R/W/M	**% Expected Standard+**	49	32	62	43	63	48	77.6	57.7	62.9	43.9	63.2	48.2
R/W/M	**% Higher Standard**	0	0	10	3	8	4	4.1	0.0	9.6	3.0	8.6	3.6
Reading	Progress Score							-0.92	-1.19	-0.19	-1.35	0.00	-0.68
Writing	Progress Score							-0.16	-1.66	0.27	-0.70	0.00	-0.48
Maths	Progress Score							0.12	-1.29	-0.78	-2.15	0.00	-0.87
Reading	% Expected Standard+	59	43	75	60	76	64	79.6	61.5	75.1	59.8	75.0	62.6
Reading	% High Score (110+)	31	25	35	20	34	22	14.3	7.7	31.3	17.3	31.0	19.2
Writing	% Expected Standard+	76	68	74	57	73	59	77.6	57.7	74.6	58.4	73.1	60.2
Writing	% Greater Depth	3	0	15	6	13	7	10.2	3.8	15.4	6.3	13.2	6.8
GPS	% Expected Standard+	42	29	69	51	73	60	65.3	38.5	70.7	53.7	73.7	60.7
GPS	% High Score (110+)	5	0	25	13	30	19	14.3	7.7	26.6	13.1	30.2	19.0
Maths	% Expected Standard+	59	46	71	54	75	61	79.6	61.5	72.4	55.6	75.0	61.5
Maths	% High Score (110+)	7	0	25	12	27	15	20.4	15.4	25.5	11.8	27.0	15.1

Attendance for disadvantaged pupils also remains a focus. While whole-school absence and persistent absence reduced during the year, disadvantaged pupils continue to be disproportionately represented within attendance concerns. The school has strengthened its attendance strategy through enhanced family support, early help intervention and robust monitoring procedures.

Overall, the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils during 2025-2026 demonstrate that the school's pupil premium strategy is having a positive impact, particularly in securing strong foundations in Early Years, early reading and core subject attainment. The remaining challenge is to further accelerate progress and diminish attainment gaps as pupils move through the school. During 2026-2027, the school will continue to focus on high-quality teaching, targeted intervention, attendance improvement and wider pastoral support to ensure disadvantaged pupils achieve consistently strong outcomes across all year groups

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you used your pupil premium to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider
Challenger Troops	Challenger Troops