

Pupil premium strategy statement 2025-26

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils in the academic year 2025-2026.

It outlines our pupil premium three-year strategy and 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	261
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	40.6%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended – you must still publish an updated statement each academic year)	2025 – 2026 to 2027 – 2028
Date this statement was published	01 December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	01 December 2026
Statement authorised by	
Pupil Premium Lead	Julie E McAllister
Governor / Trustee lead	Ashley Mason

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£109,615
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year <i>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year</i>	£109,615

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Firwood High School, our use of Pupil Premium funding is grounded in our commitment to ensuring that every pupil, regardless of background or barrier is supported to thrive, learn without limits, and achieve meaningful, person-centred outcomes. Although socio-economic disadvantage is not always the primary challenge our learners face, many experience a unique combination of profound and complex learning needs, significant health conditions and restricted access to therapeutic or sensory support. These layers of vulnerability amplify disadvantage and require a specialist, highly responsive approach.

Our strategy is shaped by our trauma-informed ethos and unwavering focus on wellbeing. It prioritises the holistic development of each learner, academically, emotionally, socially and physically, ensuring that pupils are safe, regulated, connected and ready to engage. Through high-quality teaching, specialist interventions and enriched experiences, we aim to remove barriers, strengthen resilience and empower every young person to progress in ways that are meaningful to them.

Our three-year plan focuses on delivering:

- **Consistently high-quality, trauma-informed teaching**, rooted in strong relational practice and expertly adapted for learners with severe, profound and multiple needs.
- **A fully embedded, responsive pathway curriculum**, shaped by specialist assessment, therapeutic insight and a deep understanding of each pupil's long-term outcomes.
- **A coordinated offer of structured therapeutic interventions** – including hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and SALT – ensuring pupils are regulated, supported and ready to engage.
- **Rich, inclusive and carefully curated experiences** that strengthen communication, build confidence and expand cultural capital, both in and beyond school.
- **Targeted preparation for meaningful next steps**, developing independence, communication, social interaction and real-life skills that are personalised to each learner's aspirations, capabilities and future destinations.

We take a whole-school approach that intentionally balances equity and inclusion, ensuring that every pupil receives what they need to flourish. Pupil Premium funding enables us to provide both targeted interventions and wider systemic improvements, including specialist staff training, strengthened therapy and sensory support, and effective multi-agency collaboration. Although our mission is rooted in addressing disadvantage, these enhancements elevate the universal offer so that all pupils benefit from a richer, more responsive provision.

Our practice is driven by robust assessment, close professional partnership and ongoing review of pupil progress and engagement. We prioritise strong, trusting relationships, consistent sensory regulation and a holistic approach to wellbeing. Through this, every pupil at Firwood is nurtured, offered meaningful and enriching experiences, and

empowered to achieve their full potential in ways that are authentic and appropriate to their individual needs.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	All pupils at Firwood have an EHCP and present with Severe, Profound or Multiple Learning Difficulties, often alongside complex sensory, medical and communication needs. These significant and varied needs require highly personalised learning approaches and integrated therapeutic support.
2	Disadvantaged pupils need access to consistently high-quality, expertly adapted teaching. For our learners, this means a personalised curriculum aligned to EHCP outcomes, long-term aspirations and diverse developmental needs. Without strong curriculum sequencing and effective use of assessment tools such as MAPP, learning risks becoming less purposeful, relevant or progression-focused.
3	Many disadvantaged pupils experience fewer opportunities for communication development and social interaction outside school. This can limit expressive language, reduce confidence and restrict the development of independence and social-emotional skills.
4	Access to cultural capital and wider community experiences is more restricted for disadvantaged pupils, reducing exposure to enrichment activities, confidence-building situations and real-life learning opportunities essential for preparation for adulthood.
5	Families of disadvantaged pupils often require additional support with engagement, mental health and practical barriers. There is increasing need for sustained pastoral care, trauma-informed family support and coordinated multi-agency involvement to maintain progress and wellbeing.
6	Many disadvantaged pupils have complex sensory regulation needs which affect their readiness to learn and ability to remain calm, safe and engaged. Disruptions or limitations in therapy pathways, including OT, SALT, EP, hydrotherapy and rebound therapy, continue to impact pupils' learning, behaviour and overall wellbeing.

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
A trauma-informed and wellbeing-focused culture is embedded across school life.	Trauma-informed practice enables pupils to regulate their emotional and sensory needs, resulting in improved engagement and fewer incidents linked to dysregulation. Consistent relational approaches create predictable, safe environments where pupils feel secure and able to thrive.
Pupils access a high-quality, personalised curriculum linked to their long-term outcomes.	A personalised curriculum ensures pupils receive learning experiences tailored to their individual needs. Adaptations and MAPP assessment enable sustained progress across communication, cognition, independence and engagement, preparing learners for future pathways and long-term aspirations.
Disadvantaged pupils improve communication and social interaction skills.	A strengthened Total Communication environment provides pupils with clear, accessible means to understand and express meaning. Increased and consistent use of AAC, visuals, signing and SALT-informed strategies results in improved functional communication and greater
Pupils access and benefit from meaningful cultural, social, and enrichment experiences.	Pupils engage confidently in trips, events and community-based experiences that broaden their understanding of the world. Participation enhances social skills, independence and confidence in unfamiliar contexts, with clear evidence of increased engagement beyond the classroom.
Families are engaged as active partners in pupil progress and wellbeing.	Strong home–school partnership is reflected in improved attendance at reviews, Early Help involvement and parent events. Families report increased confidence, better communication and greater involvement in decision-making, contributing to positive wellbeing and progress outcomes.
Pupils receive timely and effective sensory and therapeutic interventions.	Pupils access appropriate sensory and therapeutic input that promotes regulation, reduces barriers to learning and supports engagement. Sensory diets, SALT/OT/Physio strategies and therapy pathways are implemented consistently, enabling pupils to access learning environments safely and effectively.

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: £6.600

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Deliver a personalised and adapted curriculum assessed through MAPP to support progression in communication, cognition, independence, and engagement.	High-quality teaching is the most effective lever for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils (EEF). For learners with SLD and PMLD, progress is non-linear and requires specialist assessment models such as MAPP and the Engagement Model to recognise small but meaningful gains. This ensures pupils access a curriculum tailored to their developmental profile and long-term outcomes.	1, 2
Specialist training for staff in trauma-informed pedagogy and therapy-informed practice.	Effective CPD improves staff confidence and the quality of provision (EEF). Trauma-informed approaches support emotional regulation, reduce barriers to learning and enable pupils—particularly those with SEND, to access learning environments more safely and predictably. This strengthens relational practice across school.	1, 2, 6
Delivery of multisensory and engagement-based curriculum models tailored to individual need	Multisensory teaching increases access to learning for pupils with complex needs, supporting regulation, engagement and meaningful participation. The Engagement Model and Rochford Review highlight the importance of personalised, sensory-rich learning experiences for pupils who rely on alternative pathways to demonstrate understanding.	1, 6

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

Budgeted cost: £12,432

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Intervention groups tailored to EHCP outcomes across communication, sensory, and social domains	Structured, targeted interventions aligned to assessed need produce the strongest gains for pupils with SEND (EEF). Interventions linked directly to EHCP outcomes ensure provision is personalised, measurable, and focused on the skills that most significantly improve long-term progression and independence.	1, 3
Use of Elkan-trained staff and implementation of NHS SALT-informed strategies and total communication approaches across school	Therapy-informed practice delivered by trained school staff increases the reach and consistency of communication support. Evidence shows that communication-rich environments improve expressive, receptive and social communication skills, especially when reinforced throughout the school day.	3
Collaboration with NHS OT, Physio and EP services to inform intervention planning and classroom strategies	EHCP guidance and EEF SEND recommendations highlight the importance of drawing on specialist expertise to design personalised learning pathways. Joint working ensures staff use the most effective sensory, physical and cognitive strategies to support engagement and progress for pupils with complex needs.	1, 6
Home Reach programme to provide continuity of access for pupils with complex Health needs who are unable to attend school	Bespoke off-site provision, ensures pupils maintain engagement, communication skills and progress when medical needs prevent attendance. Continuity of learning supports emotional wellbeing, prevents regression and strengthens the link between home and school.	1, 5

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

Budgeted cost: £90,583

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Support through trauma-informed and wellbeing-focused provision (e.g. Outdoor Learning, DofE, Craig, therapy dog, pastoral care)	Whole-school wellbeing approaches help pupils to regulate, improve attendance and reduce stress-related behaviours (EEF). Trauma-informed relational practice strengthens trust, emotional safety and readiness to learn, particularly for pupils with high levels of vulnerability.	1, 5, 6
Use of external and internal sensory regulation programmes (e.g. rebound, hydro, therapy staff) to reduce anxiety, build engagement and improve postural management	Sensory integration approaches from OT research and EEF guidance highlight that regulation underpins engagement, behaviour and access to learning. Consistent sensory input supports emotional wellbeing, motor development and postural management for complex learners.	1, 6
Wow Days, trips, and celebrations to enrich the curriculum and support belonging and engagement	Enrichment activities increase confidence, motivation and school connectedness for disadvantaged pupils (EEF). Meaningful cultural and social experiences broaden pupils' understanding and support personal development beyond academic learning.	3, 4
Parent engagement initiatives (e.g. parent group, EHCP reviews, Early Help) to increase trust and co-regulation across home and school	Family engagement improves pupil outcomes when parents feel supported and able to contribute to decision-making (EEF). Strong relationships enable co-regulation, better attendance at meetings and more consistent support for pupils across home and school.	5
Preparation for transitions and future destinations, supported through Leavers' events, Afternoon Tea, Prom, and college links	EHCP Preparation for Adulthood guidance highlights the need for structured, supported transitions. Planned experiences help pupils develop confidence, independence and readiness for next steps in education and community life.	4, 5

PSHE workshops with a focus on healthy relationships, consent, and emotional wellbeing	PSHE Association and EEF social-emotional learning evidence show that targeted PSHE improves emotional literacy, resilience, and the ability to navigate social situations safely. These skills are especially important for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.	3, 5
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Total budgeted cost: £109,615

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Across the academic year 2024–25, disadvantaged pupils continued to make good progress at Firwood. Progress was assessed using the MAPP ALP system across all curriculum strands, alongside teacher observations, behaviour data, attendance information and multi-agency input.

Assessment data shows that the majority of disadvantaged pupils made expected or better progress across KS3, KS4 and Sixth Form. In KS3/4, 76% of pupils achieved Expected or Exceeded progress by the end of the year, and disadvantaged pupils performed slightly above non-disadvantaged pupils (+2%). Autumn term data was particularly strong, with 93% of learners meeting expectations following curriculum redevelopment and strengthened target-setting processes. CLA pupils also made strong progress, performing 3–4% higher than non-CLA peers.

In Sixth Form, 84% of students met or exceeded progress expectations, with PPG pupils achieving in line with their peers (85% vs 83%). Strongest progress was seen in World of Work and Life & Living Skills, reflecting the impact of an extended work experience offer and improvements to the enterprise curriculum. Curriculum areas with more developing outcomes, such as My Community and Functional Skills, were affected by limited community access and the transition to NOCN accreditation, with actions already underway to address this.

Wider evidence shows improved communication, regulation, engagement and wellbeing for disadvantaged pupils. Targeted interventions, such as sensory profiling, hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, tailored communication strategies, parent groups, interpreting services, breakfast provision and therapeutic support helped reduce barriers linked to sensory need, food insecurity, behaviour, attendance and emotional wellbeing.

Overall, the school successfully met the intended outcomes of the three-year Pupil Premium strategy. Disadvantaged pupils benefitted from high-quality teaching, specialist therapies, enriched curriculum experiences and targeted interventions, resulting in progress that was consistently in line with, or above, that of their peers. As this strategy cycle comes to an end, the school has a strong foundation of effective practice, with further developments already underway in curriculum sequencing, assessment accuracy, functional skills pathways and sensory regulation to drive continued improvement into the next strategic period.

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
Duke of Edinburgh	DofE Award Scheme
Magic Breakfast	Magic Breakfast Charity

Rebound Therapy	??
Hydrotherapy Support / Training	??
Singalong	Singalong Charity
Elkan Communication Training	Elkan Communication Training
AQA Unit Awards (KS4 & KS5)	AQA
ASDAN Short Courses	ASDAN
NOCN Functional Skills (Sixth Form)	NOCN

Further information (optional)

Our Pupil Premium strategy sits within a wider whole-school commitment to removing barriers for pupils with complex needs. Many of the improvements we make are not solely funded by PPG but are strengthened through it, including curriculum development work, trauma-informed approaches, and our therapy-aligned practice. Ongoing collaboration with families, external agencies and trust partners ensures that provision remains adaptive, responsive and rooted in the long-term outcomes set out in pupils' EHCPs.