



# Merley First School Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our 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	291
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	10.3%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-27
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2026
Statement authorised by	Head Teacher Rebecca Baldwin
Pupil premium lead	Deputy Head Teacher Carolyn Waldron
Governor / Trustee lead	Academy Committee Chair James Tyler

## Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£42,222
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years <i>(enter £0 if not applicable)</i>	£0
<b>Total budget for this academic year</b> <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>	£42,222



# Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

## Statement of intent

Our intention is that all pupils, irrespective of their background or the challenges they face, make good progress, improve their attainment and leave our school at ARE (age related expectation) or beyond. The focus of this strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve that goal and to possess the essential skills and knowledge to be lifelong learners. We will ensure that our pupils are not disadvantaged in any way as a result of their socioeconomic context, whether they are in care or are young carers. We believe that, with the correct support and encouragement, all pupils can achieve their full potential.

### **Our ultimate objectives are to:**

- Ensure all teaching and learning meets the needs of all pupils and that all staff have high expectations of all children
- Narrow the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers
- Remove barriers to learning created by poverty, family circumstance and background
- Ensure ALL pupils are able to read fluently and with good understanding to enable them to access the breadth of the curriculum
- Enable pupils to look after their social and emotional wellbeing and to develop character and resilience
- Access a wide range of opportunities, including for Personal Development, to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world
- Create a sense of belonging and feeling of connectedness so that all adults and children flourish
- Ensure relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture where pupils feel safe and are safe.

### **Our Context:**

Merley First School is a two form entry first school and is part of Initio Learning Trust consisting of 18 schools across Dorset covering children from 3-19 years of age. We are a BCP school (Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch). Merley is predominantly an area of low deprivation and currently 10.3% (30) of pupils are disadvantaged which includes 3 AFC. We also have 3 service children. Currently 8 PP children are also SEND.

### **Achieving our objectives:**

In order to achieve our objectives and overcome barriers to learning we will:

- Deliver a well-sequenced and progressive curriculum for all pupils
- Provide all teachers and TAs with high quality, evidenced based CPD to ensure that pupils access effective quality first teaching and additional support (through the use of EEF guidance, Walk-Thrus, UL&S, coaching and reflective dialogue)
- Provide targeted, evidence based intervention and support to quickly address identified gaps in learning including the use of small group work and 1:1 tuition
- Use diagnostic tools such as Star Reader to provide personalised targets
- Target funding to ensure that all pupils have access to trips, extra-curricular clubs and online learning facilities
- Provide appropriate pastoral support to help pupils with their emotional and social development
- Ensure children from all Inclusion groups have opportunities to contribute to the wider life of the school (through becoming Eco Warriors, Pupil Voice Champions etc.)
- Engage all pupils in extra-curricular opportunities for personal development.
- Improve the attendance of our disadvantaged cohort.



**Key Principles:**  
 We will ensure that high quality teaching, learning and assessment meets the needs of all pupils through a carefully sequenced curriculum alongside the use of assessments and analysis of data. This will also include the development of the small steps curriculum for those children who are working below key stage expectations. Class teachers will identify barriers and provide appropriate provision through individual pupil premium plans which identify small step targets in the core subjects alongside specific interventions and support for individual pupils which will be reviewed at least half-termly. As well as academic support, we will ensure that pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs will access high quality provision from appropriately trained adults and will develop a strong sense of belonging within our school community.

## Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Children entering Reception and moving through the school, have poor oral language and communication skills which impacts their social communication interactions and developing reciprocal friendships.
2	Some children have poor retention and slow development of phonemic knowledge.
3	Some children’s reading is below ARE (age related expectation) and they struggle to close the gaps between themselves and their peers. This then impacts the development of writing skills. Some children’s reading age is below their chronological age and their writing attainment is below ARE.
4	Poor handwriting which lacks fluency and requires much cognitive effort impacts the quality of writing and spelling.
5	Social, emotional and mental health needs cause pupils to feel negative emotions such as stress, anxiety or low self-esteem and this can limit academic progress.
6	Attendance of pupils with pupil premium is below that of their non-disadvantaged peers.
7	A few children ( Y2 and KS2) have significant gaps in their learning which puts their attainment at PKS
8	Although Y4 children are now performing more consistently in the times table check, the percentage scoring 100% remains stubbornly static.

## 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 speaking, listening and social interaction skills	<p>Children leave the EYFS with significantly improved language skills and attention spans.</p> <p>They can understand and use a broad vocabulary.</p> <p>Children are able to develop and sustain reciprocal friendships.</p>
Children in Reception and Year 1 will have improved retention of phonics and will make at least expected progress or accelerated progress if there are gaps in their knowledge	By the end of KS1, the majority of children, who do not have identified additional needs, will pass the Phonic Screening.
The majority of children will have a reading age at least in line with their chronological age	By the end of KS1, the majority of children, who do not have identified additional needs, will have made expected or better progress in reading from their start point in Year 1.
Improved fluency in handwriting and children will have increased stamina for writing	<p>The majority of children have the correct pencil grip and are able to form all letters correctly and automatically.</p> <p>They will have developed the physical strength in their core body, arms and fingers needed for improved handwriting and concentration.</p> <p>Across all year groups, improved stamina for writing will be evident.</p> <p>In KS2 in writing, disadvantaged children will begin to close the attainment gap with their non-disadvantaged peers.</p>
Improved mental health, wellbeing and self-esteem	<p>Children will understand and are able to use a range of strategies to support self-regulation and their mental well-being leading to fewer episodes of dysregulation.</p> <p>Improved attendance and academic progress of identified children.</p> <p>All staff prioritise building relationships with all children and a sense of belonging is enhanced.</p>
Attendance data for children with pupil premium shows improvement	Attendance data for children with pupil premium is at least 95% and the number of persistent absentees is reduced from the previous year. Staff prioritise building relationships with all parents.
Gaps in early learning will be closed and children will have a stable foundation upon which to build	Identified children will close gaps in early learning and will begin to make sustained progress on the KS1 curriculum.
Y4 children will confidently access and perform well in the statutory Multiplication Tables check.	The percentage of children achieving 100% will show an increase from its current level.



## 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: £9,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
All staff engage in developmental dialogue and coaching	The use of Walkthrus is identified as a particularly effective element of professional development that enables teaching staff and TAs to review their own and reflect on others' actions in the classroom. <a href="#">New EEF rapid evidence assessment on remote professional development</a>	1, 2, 3, 4
Maintain <b>Drawing Club</b> in Reception and introduce into Year 1	Anecdotal evidence from several schools and initial feedback from Reception staff shows that 'Drawing Club' has a positive impact on children in reception in several ways, including supporting the development of imagination, language through vocabulary development, fine motor skills, writing and engagement. The Early Years Toolkit outlines the benefits of communication and language approaches: <a href="#">Communication and language approaches   EEF</a>	1, 4
Whole school implementation of <b>Kinetic Letters</b> to improve transcription	' <i>Kinetic Letters is an evidence-informed programme that builds the cognitive and physical skills for handwriting.</i> ' (Kinetic Letters Programme 2024) The key principle of the Kinetic Letters program is that building physical strength underpins handwriting and concentration. The Early Years Toolkit outlines the benefits of approaches which develop physical development: <a href="#">Physical development approaches   EEF</a>	3, 4
<b>Walk-thrus:</b> Teachers are explicit about the prior knowledge upon which they are building when teaching new content.	A professional development programme built using WalkThrus is supported by evidence from cognitive science which provides a clear model for learning and evidence from the study of effective professional development. WalkThrus are based on the work of prominent researchers and cognitive scientists including Dylan Wiliam, Barak Rosenshine, Dan Willingham, Graham Nuthall and Efrat Furst. Their ideas and the simplified model of learning informs all WalkThrus key teaching techniques.	2
Whole school speaking, listening and vocabulary	Continue to develop and embed oral rehearsal techniques including <i>my turn/your turn</i> ,	1



development - Implementation of whole school Oracy	<p><i>say it again/say it better, mathematics sentence stems</i></p> <p>Implementation of whole school Oracy Curriculum</p> <p><a href="#">Why Oracy Matters - Voice 21</a></p> <p><a href="#">Oral language interventions   EEF</a></p>	
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## Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support, structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £8,222

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Unlocking Letters and Sounds phonics intervention	<p>Phonics approaches have a strong evidence base that indicates a positive impact on the accuracy of word reading, particularly for disadvantaged pupils:</p> <p><a href="#">Phonics   EEF</a></p> <p>The EEF toolkit states: <i>Phonics has a positive impact overall (+5 months) with very extensive evidence and is an important component in the development of early reading skills, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.</i></p> <p>'Keep-up not catch-up' strategies aimed at ensuring all children can access current learning in phonics. Backed up by <i>Ambitious Expectations</i> - a set of six focused intervention strategies that support children with reading.</p>	2, 3
Reading intervention	<p>Reading comprehension approaches have a strong evidence base that indicates a positive impact on pupils' reading capabilities and, coupled with phonic interventions, help pupils to develop their reading skills:</p> <p><a href="#">Reading comprehension strategies   EEF</a></p> <p>The EEF toolkit states: <i>The average impact of reading comprehension strategies is an additional six months progress over the course of a year. Successful reading comprehension approaches allow activities to be carefully tailored to pupils' reading capabilities, and involve activities and texts that provide an effective, but not overwhelming, challenge.</i></p>	2, 3
Kinetic Letters intervention and grouping in KS2	<p><i>'Kinetic Letters is an evidence-informed programme that builds the cognitive and physical skills for handwriting.'</i> (Kinetic Letters Programme 2024) The key principle of the Kinetic Letters program is that building physical strength underpins handwriting and concentration. The Early Years Toolkit outlines the benefits of approaches which develop physical development:</p>	3, 4



	<a href="#">Physical development approaches   EEF</a> <a href="#">Small group tuition   EEF</a>	
Develop and implement the Building Blocks curriculum for those children whose attainment is identified as PKS	<p>Individualised and small group learning can be effective approaches in increasing pupil attainment. Both small group and individualised tuition, which is specifically targeted to meet individual needs, has an average impact of four months' additional progress over the course of a year.</p> <p><a href="#">Individualised instruction   EEF</a>  <a href="#">Small group tuition   EEF</a></p>	7
Provide regular opportunities to practise times tables in KS2 (and end of KS1) and secure access to the check for all pupils.	<p>Opportunities to recall and practise times-tables on a regular basis in Year 3 and 4 help children to develop fluency and automaticity.</p> <p><a href="#">Mastery learning   EEF</a>  <b>Times Table Rock Stars</b> will adjust the level of challenge based on the children's performance and this can be accessed and practised at home as well as at school.</p> <p><a href="#">Homework   EEF</a>  Application of the access arrangements can also support children with SEN and 'behavioural, emotional or social difficulties'. Engagement of parents through a targeted workshop and information on the school website will also support the children's development.</p> <p><a href="#">Parental engagement   EEF</a></p>	8

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

Budgeted cost: £25,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Access to Nurture group, 'emotions curriculum', Zones of Regulation and Hamish and Milo interventions.	<p>Research published by the <a href="#">Education Endowment Foundation</a> in their Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides evidence to indicate the positive impact of Metacognition and Self-Regulation as being +7 months. This indicates that it has a positive impact on children's learning. Evidence can be found here: <a href="#">Metacognition and self-regulation   EEF</a></p> <p>In addition, further research by the EEF also indicates the positive impact of social and emotional learning of +4 months and can be found here: <a href="#">Social and emotional learning   EEF</a></p> <p>An evidence summary about the effectiveness of teaching awareness of emotions and feelings can also be found here: <a href="#">Teaching awareness of emotions and feelings</a></p>	5



<p>Outdoor Adventurers - every child has access to a block of OA sessions. There is also an after school/holiday club. Outdoor Adventurers offered as an IAP to support specific, identified needs.</p>	<p>Though there is little evidence of outdoor learning impacting directly on academic achievement, the EEF toolkit does acknowledge its positive impact on self-efficacy, resilience, motivation, self-confidence and teamwork; all essential life-skills that, in turn, can impact learning. We also offer Outdoor Adventurers as an Internal Alternative Provision and each block has a specific focus on an area of need (developing gross and fine motor skills, positive play etc.)  <a href="#">Outdoor adventure learning   EEF</a></p>	<p>4, 5</p>
<p>Ensure disadvantaged children are represented in school roles and take part in extra- curricular and enrichment activities linked to Personal Development.</p>	<p>There are a number of whole school roles available including Voice Champions, Eco Warriors and Peer Mediators. Taking on leadership roles helps to instil confidence, and helps children solve problems creatively, work in a team, and work collaboratively with others. Having access to and being involved in extracurricular activities is known to be linked with social mobility:  <a href="#">Extra-Curricular Activities, Soft Skills and Social Mobility</a></p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Personal Development</p>	<p>OFSTED defines personal development as <i>the development of a pupil's individual skills, attitudes, and understanding. This includes the development of self-awareness, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence, as well as the development of skills related to communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.</i>  <a href="#">SMSC in Education: Everything you need to know</a>          Through our focus on personal development and wellbeing, we will develop a sense of belonging in every child to contribute to flourishing childhoods.</p>	<p>1, 5</p>
<p>EPIC - Developing outdoor play (EPIC - Explore, Play, Imagine, Create)</p>	<p>At Merely, we believe that quality play provision for all children has benefits for their health, wellbeing, self-esteem and social interactions. Our Play Policy rationale states that:  <i>'Our school believes that <b>all</b> children need opportunities to explore, play, imagine and create within the environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of differences enhancing their sense of belonging within the school and promotes our school values of Respectful, Engaged and Ready.'</i>          Though there is little evidence of its benefits <a href="#">Play-based learning   EEF</a>, feedback from colleagues in other Trust schools and our own experiences of Outdoor Adventurers, lead us to believe in its benefits for our children. The EEF document does however state: <i>The evidence base for play-based learning is not strong or consistent, but does indicate a clear relationship between play and early learning outcomes.</i></p>	<p>1, 5</p>



Maintain Early Bird Club and offer reduced rate places to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.	School breakfasts are more nutritious for some pupils and attending the club effectively prepares pupils for learning. Evidence shows that breakfast club schools often see an improvement in pupil behaviour <a href="#">Magic Breakfast - trial   EEF</a>	6
Improve engagement of parents of PP children and work with them to help improve attendance.	Parental engagement has a positive impact on average of approximately four months additional progress. Considering how to engage parents is crucial in improving attendance for children. We intend to increase parental awareness of disadvantage through individual contact and regular check-ins. <a href="#">Parental engagement   EEF</a> <a href="#">Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance - GOV.UK</a>	6

**Total budgeted cost: £42,222**



## Part B: Review of the previous academic year

### Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils 2024-2025

2024-25 Aims	2024-25 Targets	2024-25 Outcomes
Improve speaking, listening and social interaction skills	Children leave the EYFS with significantly improved language skills and attention spans. They can understand and use a broad vocabulary. Children are able to develop and sustain reciprocal friendships.	
Children in Reception and Year 1 will have improved retention of phonics and will make at least expected progress or accelerated progress if there are gaps in their knowledge	By the end of Year 1, the majority of children will pass the Phonic Screening and 100% by the end of Year 2.	Phonic Screening 2024-25: 94.3% of children passed. This shows an increase of 1.1% on the previous year. 80% (4 out of 5) of PP eligible pupils passed. This shows an increase of 5% on the previous year.
All children will have a reading age at least in line with their chronological age	By the end of Year 2, the majority of children will have a reading age in line with their chronological age.	The majority of children (with no significant SEN), made expected or better progress in reading
Improved fluency in handwriting and children will have increased stamina for writing	The majority of children have the correct pencil grip and are able to form all letters correctly and automatically. They will have developed the physical strength in their core body, arms and fingers needed for improved handwriting and concentration. Across all year groups, improved stamina for writing will be evident. In KS2 in writing, disadvantaged children will achieve at least as well as their non-disadvantaged peers.	Across all year groups, improved stamina for writing is evident. In KS2 in writing, only 35.3% of disadvantaged children achieved as well as their peers.
Improved mental health, wellbeing and self-esteem	Children will understand and are able to use a range of strategies to support self-regulation and their mental well-being leading to fewer episodes of dysregulation.	



	Improved attendance and academic progress of identified children. All staff prioritise building relationships with all children and a sense of belonging is enhanced.	
Attendance data for children with pupil premium shows improvement	Attendance data for children with pupil premium is at least 95% and the number of persistent absentees is reduced from the previous year. Staff prioritise building relationships with all parents.	2024-25 Attendance all: 96.6% (1.8% > national) Attendance FSM: 94.4% (2.2% > national) 2023-24 Attendance all: 96.1% Attendance FSM: 92.7%

## 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
Forest Schools	Outdoor Adventurers
Sports	360