

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.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the effect that last year's spending of pupil premium had within our school.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Holy Cross Catholic High School
Number of pupils in school	977
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	14.64%
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	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	November 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr G Lindley Headteacher
Pupil premium lead	Mrs M Hardman Assistant Headteacher
Governor / Trustee lead	Mrs C Coyle

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year (April 25-April 26) (estimated)	£155 690 (inc PP+)
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£401.37
Total budget for this academic year	£156 091.37

Part A: Pupil Premium Strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Holy Cross, our intention is that all pupils, irrespective of background and challenges, make good progress, achieve well, feel safe and loved, and live out our mission statement, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full".

Our pupil premium strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve that goal, by considering the challenges they face and supporting them to overcome barriers, academically, socially or emotionally. This statement outlines how we will achieve this.

High-quality teaching underpins our whole approach, with a focus on areas in which disadvantaged pupils require the most support. This is proven to have the greatest impact on closing the disadvantage attainment gap, and at the same time will benefit the non-disadvantaged pupils in our school. Our intended outcomes are that non-disadvantaged pupils' attainment will be sustained and improved, alongside improved progress for their disadvantaged peers.

Our approach is responsive to need, based on assessment of disadvantage specific to our school, and to ensure this approach is effective, we will:

- ensure disadvantaged pupils are challenged
- act early to intervene when a need is identified
- ensure teaching is high quality for disadvantaged pupils, by robust quality assurance of teaching and learning
- adopt a whole school approach in which all staff take responsibility for disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and raise expectations of what they can achieve
- ensure that the well-being of every child is considered and supported

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	A significant barrier for our disadvantaged pupils is their reading ability (fluency, decoding and comprehension) and basic levels of literacy, which then impacts on their ability to access the full curriculum. Even though Holy Cross' reading intervention programme is increasingly successful in identifying and improving pupils' low reading ability, there

	<p>is an increase of pupils with very low reading ages or unable to read, transferring to high school annually.</p> <p>In 2024-25, in Year 7, the mean SAS score for disadvantaged pupils who were “red” readers (based on our baseline tests), was 101.1 but this increased to 108 in summer of 2025 (an increase of 6.9 SAS). In Year 8 the averages increased from 105.4 to 110.4, (an increase of 5 SAS), and in Year 9 from 109 to 112 SAS (an increase of 3 SAS). These pupils require intensive reading intervention, and after one year of intervention with the reading intervention teacher, their reading ages are significantly increasing. This data clearly indicates that our reading intervention is effective in improving disadvantaged pupils’ reading skills, therefore, it is essential that this continues to be a focus of our pupil premium strategy.</p>
2	<p>Our attendance figures remain consistently above national average, by between 1-2% for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Our disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged attendance has improved since 2024, and our in-school gap between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged attendance is 6.87% on average, and has slightly decreased. In 2024-25, non-disadvantaged was 94.43%, compared to 87.56% for disadvantaged. Also, there are some key pupils who are PA, which impacts significantly on attendance. Therefore, attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains a key focus because our assessments and observations indicate that persistent absence is now negatively affecting disadvantaged pupils’ progress, and only 25% of disadvantaged pupils with less than 80% attendance achieved 5 standard GCSE passes.</p>
3	<p>Our observations and discussions show us that some of our disadvantaged pupils need support to widen their aspirations in school and beyond. We need to offer them wider enrichment opportunities that enable them to aim high and at the same time, be motivated to succeed academically. Disadvantaged pupils’ progress in 2025 was an unofficial P8 of -0.13 compared to +0.22 in 2024. The challenge for our disadvantaged pupils is to improve attainment to match the excellent results of 2024, and to achieve more standard and strong passes in maths and maintain their improvements in English.</p>
4	<p>The emotional regulation and resilience of many of our pupils, especially our most disadvantaged, needs strengthening and supporting. Not all of our disadvantaged pupils have a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to use when they are dealing with challenging academic work, or in other social situations. Some families have been affected by unemployment, crime, health, home and family issues and are requiring increased support from school and external agencies, although access to external support often requires a significant wait time. We have had an increase in Operation Encompass referrals regarding issues within households, particularly affecting disadvantaged families. This has a social and emotional impact on the pupils. There has been an increase in the number of pupils requiring SEMH support.</p>

5	We recognise that some of our more disadvantaged pupils have felt less connected to the wider school community, with a greater pull from external social groups, leading, in some cases, to anti-social behaviour. We want to reinvigorate a greater sense of belonging and inclusion for every child, with no child feeling marginalised due to the challenges they face.
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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
Attainment among disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum at the end of KS4 will be a positive P8, with a particular focus on strong passes in English and Maths, and a focus on middle and higher attaining disadvantaged pupils' attainment in the Ebacc subjects.	A reduction in the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Attainment in line with target A8. Higher and middle attaining disadvantaged pupils make expected progress. More middle and higher attaining disadvantaged pupils opt for, and are entered for, Ebacc subjects.
Improved literacy skills among disadvantaged pupils across KS3.	Better comprehension and word recognition. More disadvantaged pupils with age-related reading scores. Improved access to the curriculum, measured through better attainment, engagement, progress and motivation. Improvement in writing skills.
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for disadvantaged pupils, and reduce the level of persistent absence.	The overall absence rate for all pupils to remain above national figures. The attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers to reduce. Persistent absenteeism of disadvantaged pupils to reduce.
To provide appropriate support for pupils' wellbeing and mental health, so that disadvantaged pupils are motivated and resilient learners.	Disadvantaged pupils can access appropriate support for their mental health. Pupils will feel happier and supported. Appropriately trained staff. Attainment and attendance will improve. Better engagement with disadvantaged families, and an increased partnership with home and school.
To provide opportunities for greater inclusion of disadvantaged pupils and increase their sense of belonging to our school community.	More access to in-school and external enrichment activities. Increased liaison with partner groups in the local community. Alternative Curriculum and

	Personal Development in school will address issues that concern our pupils.
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Activity in this academic year 2025-2026

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: £ 111000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Purchase of standardised diagnostic assessments for baseline assessing, for exam access arrangement testing and for monitoring progress.</p> <p>Training will be provided for key staff to ensure assessments are interpreted correctly.</p>	<p>Standardised tests can provide reliable insights into the specific strengths and weaknesses of each pupil to help ensure they receive the correct additional support through interventions or teacher instruction:</p> <p>Standardised tests Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p>	1,3
<p>Improving literacy in all subject areas in line with recommendations in the EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance.</p> <p>We will encourage professional development focussed on each teacher's subject area.</p> <p>Reading Intervention teacher to continue to provide targeted support, through timetabled sessions.</p>	<p>Acquiring disciplinary literacy is key for students as they learn new, more complex concepts in each subject:</p> <p>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</p> <p>Reading comprehension, vocabulary and other literacy skills are heavily linked with attainment in maths and English:</p> <p>word-gap.pdf (oup.com.cn)</p> <p>How Schools are Closing the Word Gap – Oxford Language Report 2021-22</p> <p>oxford.ly/wordgap</p> <p>Improvement in reading ages 2023-24 for those on the programme.</p>	1,3,4

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

Budgeted cost: £ 15000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Saturday School, for core subjects. Short term (4 weekly) programmes of intense intervention for Y11.	Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both one-to-one: One to one tuition EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk) And in small groups: Small group tuition Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF	1, 3, 4
Assertive Mentoring Programme, focussing revision, exam technique, motivation and engagement	In general, mentoring aims to build confidence and relationships, to develop resilience and character, or raise aspirations, rather than to develop specific academic skills or knowledge. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring	4
Tutor period intervention for Years 9,10,11, delivered by heads of core subjects	Small group tuition to provide intensive tuition in small groups to support lower attaining learners or those who are falling behind https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition	1,3,4
Department revision sessions after-school. TAs available at core sessions to assist disadvantaged / additional needs pupils.	Small group tuition to provide intensive tuition in small groups to support lower attaining learners or those who are falling behind https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition	1,3,4

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

Budgeted cost: £ 30000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Embedding principles of good practice set out in DfE's Improving School Attendance advice.</p> <p>Attendance Officer to implement new strategies to tackle PA, with a pro-active approach.</p>	<p>The DfE guidance has been informed by engagement with schools that have significantly reduced persistent absence levels.</p>	2
<p>Wellbeing to be a priority across the curriculum, by having a focus on awareness, including staff training for how to identify and support, and training for pupils through Personal Development and Prayer and Liturgy. Training for staff involved with SEMH (counsellor, Chaplain, ELSA, SENDCO, identified pastoral staff)</p>	<p>Social and emotional learning strategies develop a positive school ethos and greater engagement in learning. These can be targeted at students with particular social or emotional needs.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/social-and-emotional-learning</p>	2, 4,5
<p>Increased opportunities to</p>	<p>Through our Alternative Curriculum programme, we have been successful in ensuring there were no NEETs</p>	2,3,4,5

<p>address issues of engagement, belonging, aspiration and community. Access agencies and providers who can help school to re-engage those pupils at risk of PA, crime, anti-social behaviour or becoming NEET. Use the Personal Development Curriculum and the Alternative Curriculum to address these issues.</p>	<p>from our cohort following this pathway, in 2020,2021, 2022 and 2023 and only 2 NEETS from 2024 and 2025 respectively. The guidance and support from the Careers Service, Compass Bloom, NEST, the Police, local post-16 colleges and CFWS has been effective and these agencies adapt and respond to what the needs are for our school. Whenever there have been minimal NEETS, we have continued to provide personalised support, engaging with agencies to reach out to these pupils.</p>	
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Total budgeted cost: £ 156000

Part B: Review of outcomes in the previous academic year

Pupil premium strategy outcomes 2024-2025

This details the impact that our pupil premium activity had on pupils in the 2024 to 2025 academic year.

Whilst literacy and reading remains a focus for disadvantaged pupils, the impact of the pupil premium activity on pupil outcomes has been extremely positive. There is a successful reading intervention programme, with a dedicated member of staff leading on this. All pupils are assessed on their reading ability in Key Stage 3. This means there is a clear picture of which pupils need reading support. In turn, this has significantly helped the Learning Support department, who can focus now on which pupils have SEND, rather than just low reading ages, and they have a more manageable amount of pupils to support.

Results for progress of disadvantaged pupils have fallen slightly on 2024. There was a reduction in the % of disadvantaged pupils achieving 5 standard or strong passes including English and maths. Grades in maths fell at grade 4+ and even with good performance in English, this impacted the overall % for DP attainment. There was a similar pattern for grades 9-7 including English and maths. This reinforces the challenge that our disadvantaged pupils need to aim higher and have greater aspiration and resilience.

Attendance remains consistently above the national averages, and pleasingly, there has been a slight decrease in the in-school gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged attendance, which is now 6.87%, down from 7% the previous year. There still remain some disadvantaged pupils who are PA, and there is a small number who are either long-term sick or have Emotionally Based School Avoidance. In 2024-25, we found this to be an increasingly challenging issue. We employed a range of strategies to encourage reintegration. There has been training in EBSA by key pastoral staff, and school is using the support of external agencies. We felt that sometimes the support available did not give us the tools to actually get the children back on the school premises, and we have found that any external support is based on a small-steps approach. Whilst we do understand the evidence behind this approach, it is nevertheless, frustrating. This takes a great deal of time, review, admin and funding, and the improvement last year is only slight, hence, this remains a focus for 2025-26.

We have been able to identify particular behaviour patterns with our new focus on the using Synergy consistently. This has meant that wellbeing and mental health are still identified as a priority, as they pose much greater challenges for us in school. This is

reflected in certain behaviour and attendance data, and the increase in referrals for social and emotional support and Early Help Assessments. The impact was particularly acute for disadvantaged pupils. We used pupil premium funding to provide targeted wellbeing support for pupils, based on need when required, or to source external support. We have increased the number of dedicated pastoral non-teaching staff and now have 3 full-time Pastoral Managers (Y7, Y8 and 9 and Y10 and 11), a counsellor, a Chaplain, an ELSA TA and the SENDCO. A proportion of their salaries are funded by PP. This means there is a greater capacity to respond to need, and even though the cases are increasing, we are better equipped to deal with them as they arise.

Of our disadvantaged pupils, all but two went onto post-16 education, employment or training, the same as in 2024. Targeted careers support, college visits and resources were provided from the PP funding for identified disadvantaged pupils who did not have support available from the home/family. Where specific equipment was required for their next steps, this was provided and funded. For the two NEET pupils, we are still providing ongoing support and guidance, assisted by Lancashire County Council's Youth Futures Team.