The Bicester School Disadvantaged Strategy Statement (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	1200 (Y7-13)
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	25% Estimated (Y7-11)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2024-25 2025-26 **2026-27**
Date this statement was published	Draft for approval
Date on which it will be reviewed	1/11/2027
Statement authorised by	Mrs S Knowlton
Pupil premium lead	Mr M Brown
Governor / Trustee lead	TBC

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£255,660
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*	£255,660

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan Statement of intent

What are your ultimate objectives for your disadvantaged pupils?

For all disadvantaged students to play a full and successful part in the academic and wider school community. To achieve this, we aim to:

1. Ensure that all disadvantaged **participate in** the academic and wider curriculum to the same extent as their peers.
2. Ensure that disadvantaged (PP) students on average make **increasingly good progress** year on year and that the Progress 8 gap to their peers is reduced year on year.
3. Increasingly address and **remove the barriers** faced by our disadvantaged students e.g. literacy, poor attendance, lack of social capital, etc.
4. Ensure that an increasing number of our disadvantaged (PP) students access level 3 pathways and strive for none of our disadvantaged students to be classed as NEET at the end of KS4

How does our current pupil premium strategy plan work towards achieving these objectives?

To achieve these objectives the school is adopting the tiered approach recommended by the EEF, which places the greatest focus on promoting high quality teaching, supported by academic interventions and wider non-teaching strategies. Therefore, underpinning this three-year plan is the development of high-quality teaching CPD aided by the recruitment/ retention of high-quality teaching staff, especially in the core subjects.

However, internal data, suggests that weak literacy is a substantial barrier for many of our students, especially our disadvantaged (PP), and therefore developing literacy is core to this plan, alongside other specific interventions based on identified need.

Finally, there is both internal data and academic literature that highlights the need for high quality pastoral/ behavioural support and attendance intervention to meet the needs of our disadvantaged students. As such, funding is directed to ensuring that high quality pastoral care is available to all students, including a specific specialist team to support the most vulnerable students.

What are the key principles of our strategy plan?

The strategy plan is based on the following principles:

- That we promote an ethos that promotes the school's motto of "**Aspire and Achieve**" **for all,** regardless of disadvantage or need.
- That we are an **evidence-based school** and that decisions and interventions should be based on research and data.

- That the most effective method of addressing disadvantage is through a strong focus **on improving teaching and learning**, as advocated by the EEF.
- That **developing literacy** of students, especially where literacy is below chronological age is essential so that students can access the wider curriculum.
- That providing **high quality pastoral and CEIAG support** is essential to meet the wider needs of all students.
- That the use of a robust monitoring system, **focused on outcomes**, that can identify barriers and effectively inform and evaluate interventions is essential to maximise the impact of PP funding.
- That specific interventions should be based on **identified need**.
- That PP funding is leveraged to benefit **as many students as possible**, including non-disadvantaged students.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Disadvantaged (PP) students have lower levels of achievement than their peers on entry to the school and this gap continues to grow during KS 3 & 4
2	Disadvantaged (PP) students' attendance is lower than their peers
3	Disadvantaged (PP) students' reading ages are lower on average than their peers on entry to the school
4	Disadvantaged (PP) students' attitude to learning is on average lower than their peers, which is reflected both in behaviour, effort in class and homework completion
5	Disadvantaged (PP) students' Home Learning Environment, social capital and parental engagement (e.g. attendance at parents' evenings) is on average lower than their peers, with many students living in areas of significant deprivation, especially educational deprivation.
6	The school has a number of refugee students who face a variety of complex challenges.
7	Disadvantaged (including Service) Students are less likely to aspire to level 3 qualifications and further education

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
Improve outcomes at GCSE	The gap between P8 scores as reported by DfE / FFT of disadvantaged (PP Ev6) and their peers is in line with or better than the national average by August 2027 The gap between A8 scores as reported by DfE of disadvantaged (PP Ev6) and their peers is in line with or better than the national average by August 2027
Provide high-quality teaching	95%+ of observed lessons show that aspects of BLIMPS (where appropriate) are effectively incorporated into teaching by July 2027 All core subjects to be taught by subject specialists by July 2027
Provide high-quality CEIAG to improve aspirations and post 16 destination data.	No students are classed as NEET at the end of KS 4 The gap in students (taking into account prior levels of attainment) accessing level 3 courses between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers is reduced by August 2027
Improve attendance of PP students	Attendance of disadvantaged (PP) students increases year on year and is in line with or above national average by end of July 2027 The attendance gap between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers is to be in line with or better than the national average by July 2027
Improve literacy	To close the reading gap between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers. To close the gap between KS3 disadvantaged (PP) students' reading and the national average.
Improve parental engagement	Attendance by parents of disadvantaged (PP) students to parents' evenings and other events increases year on year, and the gap narrows between the parents of

	disadvantaged (PP) and non-disadvantaged (PP) parents
Increase access to full curriculum – including, trips, extracurricular and wider curriculum	Recorded participation in extracurricular activities by disadvantaged (PP) students increases year on year and the gap between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers is reduced based on 2023 baseline To ensure that all disadvantaged (FSM) students have access to paid for resources such as ingredients and revision guides in KS 4 To ensure that no disadvantaged student lacks the IT equipment to fully engage with the online curriculum
Improve attitude to learning and behaviour	The gap in reported attitude to learning between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers falls year on year The gap in the number of C's issued, internal isolation and FTE continues to fall between disadvantaged (PP) students and their peers To ensure that the number of disadvantaged (PP) students who are permanently excluded is in line with or below the school average across the three years.

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: £ *115,000*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Recruitment and retention of key specialist teachers, including funding additional TLR posts in core subjects	DfE research (2016) suggests that student's attainment in core subjects such as maths is greater when delivered by a specialist teacher	1,4
Continued teaching and Learning focus on evidence-based strategies to support Quality First Teaching linked to Lemov's 'Teach Like a Champion' and whole school BLIMPS approach.	Supporting the Attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils (DfE, 2015) suggests high quality teaching as a key aspect of successful schools. Wider educational literature e.g. Lemov (2010) & Sherrington, (2019) suggests that selected methodologies are most effective at improving student outcomes. This is further supported by the EEF Tool Kit (2021) which claims significant improvement in learning e.g. Interleaving and questioning +7 Months Assessment for learning / feedback + 6 Months	1,4
QA led by expanded Teaching and Learning Team, SLT and HoDs to provide developmental feedback, identify (and fund as appropriate) training & resource needs and to share best practice.	DfE guidance on Teacher Standards states that 'Systems of appraisal and monitoring of teaching are necessary and can help to determine starting points for professional development'. Collected teacher efficacy is highlighted by Hattie (2016) as the most effective influence on student achievement (+1.57) and therefore supports strategy of sharing good practice.	1,4
Funding of literacy co-ordinator to further embed whole school literacy strategy to explicitly teach literacy in lessons and tutor time	EEF guidance report (Improving literacy in secondary schools, 2021) recommends prioritising "disciplinary literacy" and developing students' ability to read complex texts as key aspects of improving literacy	1,3,4

focusing on tier 2 vocabulary.		
CPD programme linked to BLIMPOS – with a strong focus on Oracy and stretch and challenge.	Supporting the Attainment of Disadvantaged Pupils (DfE, 2015) suggests high quality teaching as a key aspect of successful schools, while the EEF (2024) claim that Improving oracy can help disadvantaged pupils develop vocabulary, comprehension and academic language, supporting stronger literacy and learning outcomes.	1,4
Continued use of NPQs to improve student outcomes	The EEF's guide "Putting Evidence to Work, A Guide for Implementation" (Sharples, Albers, & Fraser, 2018) – highlights the importance of building leadership capacity to deliver school improvement	1,4
Continued use of online homework platforms e.g. Educake to improve effectiveness of homework	These platforms enhance student learning by providing immediate feedback, which has been shown to improve understanding and retention of material (Koedinger et al., 2013).	1,4

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

Budgeted cost: £ *63,000*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Year 7 & 8 Accelerated Reader – class readers, targeted support from teacher	Accelerated reader has been reported (Baye, Slavin, & Haslam, 2019) to have a significant effect size of +0.24 (p<.05).	1,3
Increase the amount of 1:1 literacy intervention to support students with low levels of literacy in KS3	Education Endowment Foundation. (2021) reports that on average, one-to-one tuition is associated with approximately **+ 5 months' additional progress** compared to similar pupils not receiving it.	1,3
Year 9 Reader Plus – promote engagement at home	EEF report into Literacy programmes (Baye, Slavin, & Haslam, 2019) suggest that they commonly have a significant positive effect size.	1,3
Small group tuition during tutor time to key yr 11 students	EEF Toolkit (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021) suggests that small group tuition has +4 months benefit and	1,6

	1:1 tuition can have a benefit of +5 months	
Funding to provide academic/ Assertive mentoring to selected students	Academic mentoring enhances student motivation, and improves academic outcomes. (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Karcher, 2008).	1,3
Funding for Assistant Head teacher to lead interventions	Effective leadership in educational interventions is crucial for ensuring successful implementation, and promoting positive outcomes, (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008)	1,3,4
Provide increased bespoke EAL support for disadvantaged EAL students	Evidence indicates that proficiency in English is the strongest predictor of academic attainment for EAL learners, and refugee and late-arrival children often lag without targeted language support. (Strand and Lindorff, 2021)	6

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

Budgeted cost: £ *77,660*

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Provide high quality pastoral care e.g. by funding Pastoral Managers and AHOY to provide support including mentoring and support of all disadvantaged students	High-quality pastoral care has been linked to improved academic performance. A study by Roffey (2012) found that students who receive effective pastoral support tend to have better motivation, increased school engagement, and higher academic achievement. .	1,2,4
Provide high quality behavioural management support by funding Behaviour Managers.	Research by Simonsen et al. (2008) highlights that proactive behaviour interventions reduce disruptive behaviours, promote positive school climates, and enhance students' social skills, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and overall well-being.	1,4
Provide quality bespoke “RISE” provision support to vulnerable students, including:	Research by Berridge et al. (2012) demonstrates that this type of support can improve engagement, reduce exclusion rates, and provide tailored support, helping vulnerable students achieve better educational and social outcomes	1,4

• Career guidance and skills sessions to support aspirations and target setting. • Use of Thrive program to upskill RISE staff to support behaviour for learning. • Development of GCC and RISE specific curriculum to prevent issues with loss of learning.		
Continue to provide 1:1 career adviser Interviews	CEC report (2020): highlights the importance of careers guidance. Effect sizes reported by Hattie (2016) show that Careers interventions have an effect size of +0.38 and are likely to have positive effect on student achievement	1,4
Increase number of careers events attended by PP students.	CEC report (2020): highlights the importance of careers guidance. Effect sizes reported by Hattie (2016) show that Careers interventions have an effect size of +0.38 and are likely to have positive effect on student achievement	1 ,4.
Promote positive mental health and wellbeing of students and provide clear routes for additional support if required. To be achieved through: • Staff Training of key staff by MIND for MHFA. • Development of PSHE curriculum.	Help-seeking behaviours for mental health involve reaching out for support, yet adolescents in greatest need often don't seek help (Divin et al., 2018). Key facilitators include mental health literacy and trusting relationships with adults, particularly school staff (Aguire Velasco et al., 2020). Long-term research shows teachers' positive relationships with students can significantly impact mental health, often more persistently than academic outcomes. For effective support, prioritising staff well-being is also crucial.	2,4,6
Provide funding towards Attendance manager and Associate	Research presented by organisations such as Welsh Assembly Government (2011) & Durrington Research School	1, 2

member of SLT to allow targeted attendance activities, including: • Implement new attendance policy to more effectively reintegrate students with poor attendance. • Incorporate attendance into transition planning. • Work with PP parents and students to identify specific barriers to attendance. Provide targeted bespoke support based on specific barriers e.g. Yr 11 support tutor group	(2018) suggest that the identified activities all have a significant impact on attendance outcomes for PP students	
Work with partners (Getting Oxfordshire online etc) to provide laptops and ICT access for all students	Wider literature e.g. Colman (2021) shows that PP students significantly affected by digital divide, especially during pandemic.	5,6
Funding for behaviour managers to provide a range of support and sanctions to reduce the risk of PEX and FTE	Effect sizes reported by Hattie (2016) show that reducing disruptive behaviour has an effect size of +0.32 and is likely to have a positive outcome on student outcomes.	1,4
Provide twice termly young carers support meeting	Becker (2007) highlights that "Young carers often face additional emotional and practical challenges that can negatively impact their academic achievement and wellbeing"	5
Develop improved support for disadvantaged students transitioning from KS 2 to 3	Improving KS2–KS3 transition supports academic progress, wellbeing, and engagement—especially for disadvantaged pupils—by reducing disruption and fostering belonging, which boosts attainment and narrows inequality. (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021)	1,3,4

Total budgeted cost: £ 255,660

Part B: Review of the previous academic year*

*Please note that FFT estimates and benchmarks have been used in this section because final DfE data for Key Stage 4 outcomes and school attendance was not available when this report was written.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes

In 2026, FFT estimates indicate that disadvantaged students achieved an average Attainment 8 score of 35.3. Whilst this represents a slight decline compared with the 36.7 achieved in 2025, outcomes remain above the 33.7 achieved in 2024 and are therefore substantially stronger than at the beginning of the current three-year strategy period.

Due to the absence of KS2 data for recent cohorts, the 2025 and 2026 Progress 8 measures are based on FFT estimates using CAT4 data. They should therefore be treated with a degree of caution when compared with historical DfE Progress 8 measures. It should also be noted that FFT estimates indicate that the 2026 disadvantaged cohort entered Key Stage 4 with slightly lower prior attainment than the 2025 cohort, making direct comparisons between the two cohorts more complex.

FFT data suggests that disadvantaged students achieved an estimated Progress 8 score of -0.39 in 2026. This represents a considerable improvement compared with -0.77 in 2024 and indicates that the gains made in recent years have been broadly sustained. However, a notable attainment and progress gap remains between disadvantaged students and their peers. Further analysis suggests that these differences are disproportionately concentrated among disadvantaged students with SEND, making this group a particular focus for future intervention.

Overall, the available evidence indicates that the school remains on track to meet the targets within its three-year disadvantaged strategy, although this will need to be confirmed once final DfE data is published. Consolidating the improvements secured since 2024, while continuing to reduce the gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers, will remain central to the strategy.

Quality of teaching

A wide range of internal quality assurance activities, including lesson observations, learning walks, book looks and thematic reviews, indicates that teaching at The Bicester School remains consistently strong. Effective use of the school's BLIMPS strategy was evident in 100% of lessons observed, with behaviour, modelling and student participation identified as particular strengths. Positive behaviour for learning was observed in over 95% of lessons, modelling in 78% and interleaving in 70%.

These findings were supported by the June 2026 external Equity Thematic Review, which found that classrooms were inclusive, relationships were positive and quality-first

teaching met students' needs in the majority of lessons visited, while also identifying greater consistency in adaptive practice as an area for further development

The school has also reduced its reliance on non-specialist teachers in core subjects. During 2025-26, only 5.4% of English lessons, 0.6% of Mathematics lessons and 3.5% of Science lessons were taught by non-specialists. In all cases this is substantially lower than the most recently reported national DfE figures.

Academic Interventions

A range of targeted academic interventions were delivered during 2025-26. Analysis of the key Year 11 core interventions showed a positive impact:

- **Mathematics:** 17 students improved by an average of **0.71 grades** from the November mocks, compared with **0.74 grades** in 2024-25.
- **English:** students improved by an average of **1.14 grades**, compared with **1.09 grades** in 2024-25.
- **Science:** 12 students improved by an average of **1.0 grade**, compared with **0.1 grades** in 2024-25.

1:1 Assertive mentoring was introduced during the final weeks of Year 11 to provide intensive one-to-one support for 21 vulnerable students, predominantly those who were disadvantaged and/or identified with SEND. These students improved by an average of 0.4 grades from the March mocks. Given the relatively short period in which the programme operated, the school will review how this model of intensive mentoring can be introduced earlier and used more effectively throughout the academic year.

Literacy

Disadvantaged students typically enter the school with lower reading scores than their peers, with NSS gaps ranging from 3.7% to 6.6% across Years 7 to 10. There also continues to be a substantial gap in reading for pleasure, with disadvantaged students reading considerably fewer words than their peers.

Reading assessments are used to identify students requiring additional support. During 2025-26, 27 disadvantaged students received weekly Lexia intervention, increasing their NSS by an average of 1.47 points, although progress was variable. Year 12 reading mentors also supported 53 Year 7 students. Disadvantaged girls made particularly strong progress, increasing their NSS by an average of 3.27 points, while disadvantaged boys made more limited progress. In response, the mentoring programme will be adapted to improve engagement among boys and extended to Year 8.

Access to the Curriculum and Wider Opportunities

All students have access to the full curriculum, with guidance provided to support appropriate Key Stage 4 choices. Where subjects involve additional costs, financial support ensures that this does not restrict access. For example, FSM students choosing Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE receive free ingredients. The effectiveness of this support is reflected in the current Year 9 option groups, where disadvantaged students account for 28% of those choosing the subject, a higher proportion than their representation within the year group

Funding for trips and residentials, including Barcelona, alongside spotlight events and targeted encouragement, has increased wider participation. Overall, 46% of disadvantaged students participated in at least one activity, compared with 52% of their peers. Although changes to recording make direct comparisons difficult, this suggests the participation gap has narrowed over the last two years.

Equal engagement in sporting activities remains an area for development, particularly for Service and refugee students affected by transport arrangements. This data informed changes to Sports Day leading to almost universal participation, and the PE department will build on this through inter-year competitions during the coming year.

Attendance

Attendance remained a significant challenge during 2025-26, particularly for disadvantaged students. Attendance for disadvantaged (FSM6) students was 82.5%, compared with 92.0% for their peers, whilst 32.4% of disadvantaged students were classified as persistently absent. Although disadvantaged attendance was broadly stable over the previous two years, attendance outcomes in 2025-26 did not show the improvement that the school had hoped to achieve.

A targeted Year 11 attendance tutor group supported 18 vulnerable students, improving their attendance by 4.5%. The intervention was also shown to have halted the decline in attainment that these students had experienced during yr10.

Consequently, improving attendance, particularly amongst disadvantaged and vulnerable students, remains a key priority within the current disadvantaged strategy.

Mental Health Plan

Supporting students' mental health continued to be a significant priority during 2025-26, with 262 incidents relating to mental health and wellbeing recorded on CPOMS. In response, the school expanded its preventative and targeted support through a new partnership with TellMi, giving students access to an anonymous, counsellor-moderated peer-support platform. This was supported by assemblies for Years 7 to 10 focusing on mental health, digital safety and the impact of online behaviour.

Further targeted support was provided through the Mental Health Support Team, including one-to-one six-week intervention programmes and a workshop on low mood attended by 30 students and 30 parents. Additional provision included a six-week anxiety and mental health programme delivered by BHYP for a small group of Year 10 students, alongside targeted work with seven students delivered by The Training Effect. These developments have strengthened the school's capacity to identify concerns and provide early and targeted support. However, given the continued level of need, supporting students' mental health and evaluating the impact of individual interventions will remain an important priority within the disadvantaged strategy.

Behaviour

Behaviour continues to be a significant priority for the school. Although most students engage positively with school expectations, concerns are concentrated amongst a relatively small group, many of whom experience multiple barriers to learning.

The average number of Cs recorded for disadvantaged students reduced from 65 in 2024-25 to 60 in 2025-26, while the average for their peers reduced from 26 to 20. During the year, 78 students received a total of 180 suspensions. Further analysis showed that disadvantaged students with SEND remained particularly over-represented across the behaviour data.

There was a notable improvement in permanent exclusions, with the total reducing from three to one and the number involving disadvantaged students reducing from two to one. The school considers the intensive preventative and early-intervention work delivered through the RISE programme to have contributed significantly to this reduction. Consequently, the continued development of RISE and other targeted support will remain a key focus within the disadvantaged strategy.

CEIAG and Destination Data

Careers provision continued to be a strength during 2025-26. This was supported by the June 2026 Equity Review, which identified work experience and post-16 destinations as particular strengths, with provision tailored effectively to the needs of vulnerable students. The launch of the school's first annual Careers Pathways Fair led to a significant increase in participation in careers-related activities, complementing the existing programme of careers interviews, employer encounters and work experience. Work experience participation increased from 92.5% to 93.5% overall, including an increase from 82% to 87% for disadvantaged students and from 80% to 87% for students with SEND.

At the point of reporting, only one student was identified as NEET, while 40.4% of disadvantaged students progressed to a Level 3 destination, broadly in line with the 41% recorded in 2025. Further analysis showed that disadvantaged middle and high prior

attainers progressed to Level 3 pathways at rates comparable to, or above, their peers. However, disadvantaged students remained over-represented within the low prior attainment group and were therefore more likely to progress to Level 1 or Level 2 courses. Consequently, continuing to raise aspirations and support disadvantaged students to access the most appropriate post-16 pathways will remain a priority.