Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our school's use of the pupil premium (for the 2026 to 2027 academic year) grant 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	Springwater Academy
Number of pupils in school	153
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	34%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers **(3 year plans are recommended)**	2026-2027
Date this statement was published	31st October 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	Interim review Spring 2027
Statement authorised by	Mike Finlay
Pupil premium lead	Melissa Sparks & Andrew Sudron
Governor / Trustee lead	Pauline Aitchinson

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£59,740
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	£59,740

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our ambition is that every young person within The Ascent Academies' Trust can access the same opportunities, experiences and life chances, regardless of their socio-economic background or personal circumstances. We believe that no young person's participation, achievement or future aspirations should be limited by financial disadvantage. Our approach to Pupil Premium funding is rooted in equity, inclusion and evidence-informed practice, ensuring that barriers to learning, attendance, wellbeing, participation, community belonging and successful preparation for adulthood are identified and addressed.

We recognise that many of our young people face multiple and interconnected barriers. For some, disadvantage is experienced alongside complex SEND, communication needs, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, sensory needs, health needs and challenging family circumstances. Whilst many disadvantaged young people within our academies have additional and complex needs, we recognise that financial disadvantage can create specific barriers which require deliberate identification and targeted support. Our strategy therefore recognises that improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people extends beyond academic achievement and includes confidence, independence, communication, personal development, attendance, engagement and access to wider opportunities.

Our approach is underpinned by our Trust's Strategic Plan, developed through meaningful consultation and collaboration with young people, families, colleagues, trustees and partners. The priorities of communication, cognition, personal development, preparation for adulthood, community belonging and family partnership provide the foundation for our work and reflect our belief that every young person should be known, valued, included and supported to thrive. Through these priorities, we seek to create highly inclusive learning communities where aspirations are raised, barriers are removed and every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential.

In 2025-26, all academies across the Trust participated in the Children Northeast Poverty Proofing the School Day programme. Through consultation with young people, families, colleagues and trustees, this work deepened our understanding of the lived experience of poverty and strengthened our commitment to reducing cost-related barriers, removing stigma and ensuring equitable access to all aspects of academy life. The findings highlighted significant strengths across the Trust, including strong relationships, inclusive practice, curriculum access and enrichment opportunities, whilst also informing both Trust-wide and academy-level planning around attendance, participation, communication, family engagement and access to wider experiences.

High-quality teaching remains at the heart of our strategy. We continue to invest in curriculum development, colleague training and specialist expertise to ensure that learning is ambitious, inclusive and responsive to need. Alongside this, we recognise that positive outcomes for disadvantaged young people are strengthened through effective pastoral support, strong family partnerships and access to wider opportunities that develop confidence, resilience and independence.

We believe that community belonging, social capital and meaningful life experiences play a vital role in improving long-term outcomes and life chances. Through educational visits, enrichment activities, community engagement, extracurricular provision, work-related learning and preparation for adulthood experiences, we seek to ensure that disadvantaged young people can access the same opportunities as their peers and develop the knowledge, skills, networks and aspirations needed to flourish within their local communities and future adult lives. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that disadvantage should never limit participation, ambition or future opportunity.

Attendance, engagement and wellbeing remain key priorities across our Trust. Through pastoral support, multi-disciplinary collaboration and targeted interventions, we work alongside families to remove barriers, strengthen relationships and support readiness to learn. We continue to invest in approaches that promote communication, emotional regulation, independence and positive relationships, recognising the significant impact these have on young people's ability to engage successfully in education and wider academy life.

Our strategy is strengthened through collaboration across our Trust. By drawing upon shared expertise, evidence-informed practice and robust evaluation, we continually review the impact of our work and refine our approaches to meet the changing needs of our young people. Impact is monitored through a range of measures including attendance, engagement, participation, progress towards individual outcomes, preparation for adulthood outcomes and the views of young people and their families. Ultimately, our aim is to improve life chances by ensuring that disadvantage does not determine future opportunity, enabling every young person to achieve, participate, belong and flourish.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Attendance remains a key area of focus for a small group of disadvantaged pupils. At the end of the 2025/26 academic year, the overall persistent absence rate was 21.8%, rising to 27.9% for pupils of statutory school age. Whilst this remains below the national average for special schools, attendance outcomes continue to be disproportionately affected by a small number of vulnerable learners who experience significant barriers to regular school attendance, including complex medical needs, anxiety, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties, periods of hospitalisation and extended absences from education. Attendance for pupils eligible for Pupil Premium was 88.5%, compared with 91.2% for non-disadvantaged pupils, demonstrating a continuing attendance gap. Attendance for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals was lower still at 83.8%, highlighting the need for targeted intervention, family support and personalised strategies to improve

	engagement and reduce persistent absence among our most disadvantaged learners.
2	Many disadvantaged young people present with increasingly complex and interconnected SEND needs. When combined with socio-economic disadvantage, these needs can create additional barriers to engagement, attendance, communication, independence and academic progress. High-quality, adaptive teaching is therefore essential to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access learning successfully and make sustained progress towards their individual outcomes. Staff require ongoing training, coaching and specialist support to develop and consistently implement effective evidence-informed strategies, personalised approaches and appropriate adaptations that meet the diverse needs of learners. Without this, disadvantaged pupils are at greater risk of disengagement, reduced attainment and wider inequalities in educational and life outcomes.
3	Our assessments and observations indicate that many pupils require regular access to specialist expertise in sensory integration and sensory regulation to improve readiness to learn, emotional regulation, curriculum engagement and progress towards their individual outcomes. Access to these services through the NHS is often inconsistent, with lengthy waiting times and varying levels of provision. As a result, disadvantaged families may have little or no access to sensory assessments, profiling or specialist advice outside of school, creating a barrier to understanding and meeting their child's sensory needs effectively. This can impact on attendance, behaviour, wellbeing and engagement in learning, placing disadvantaged pupils at greater risk of poorer outcomes.
4	Financial disadvantage can create barriers to participation in enrichment opportunities, residential experiences, extracurricular provision, music activities, community engagement and wider cultural experiences. Poverty Proofing work has highlighted the importance of continuing to reduce cost-related barriers whilst ensuring all young people can access ambitious opportunities and experiences.

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. Reduce attendance barriers for disadvantaged young people experiencing medical, SEMH and anxiety-related needs.	• Attendance for disadvantaged young people remains above national special school averages. • Persistent absence for pupils in receipt of FSM will reduce.

	• Targeted young people demonstrate improved engagement through personalised attendance plans and multi-agency support. • The number of disadvantaged young people categorised as severely absent continues to reduce.
2. Ensure disadvantaged young people with increasingly complex SEND needs achieve strong outcomes from their starting points.	• Assessment information demonstrates that disadvantaged young people continue to make progress in line with or above their peers. • Progress meetings identify barriers early and secure timely intervention. • Multi-disciplinary support continues to improve outcomes for targeted young people.
3. Disadvantaged pupils with identified sensory and occupational therapy needs receive timely specialist support that improves regulation, engagement, communication, independence and access to learning. This reduces barriers associated with SEND and socio-economic disadvantage, resulting in improved progress towards individual outcomes, increased participation in school life and enhanced wellbeing.	• Identified disadvantaged pupils receive timely occupational therapy assessment, sensory profiling and intervention. • Pupils demonstrate improved sensory regulation, evidenced through reduced incidents of dysregulation and increased engagement in learning activities. • Improved progress towards individual EHCP outcomes, particularly those relating to communication, independence, self-regulation and participation. • Families report an improved understanding of their child's sensory needs and greater confidence in supporting regulation at home.
4. Remove financial barriers and improve participation, belonging and access to wider opportunities.	• Disadvantaged young people participate in residential experiences, educational visits, DofE, extracurricular activities and enrichment opportunities at rates comparable with their peers. • Poverty Proofing actions continue to reduce barriers to participation.

	• Family feedback demonstrates that financial circumstances do not prevent participation.

Activity in this academic year

Activity in this academic year
This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium (and recovery premium funding) **this academic year (2026-27)** to address the challenges listed above.

2025/26	FSM	LAC	Service	Total
No. of Eligible Pupils	39	1	5	
Rates of Pupil Premium	25 @ £1550 (Primary) 15 @ £1100 (Secondary)	£2690	£360	£59,740
Overall Fund-ing		£2690	£1800	

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £23,269

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Targeted specialist OT interventions from Future Steps – To include individual sensory profiling and school and home regulation programmes.	Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists demonstrates that pupils with SEND benefit from timely access to specialist support that removes barriers to participation, engagement and learning. Occupational therapy can improve sensory regulation, independence, emotional wellbeing, participation and access to the curriculum, whilst also building the capacity of staff and families to meet pupils' needs consistently. This is particularly important for disadvantaged pupils, who may experience additional barriers in accessing occupational therapy provision outside of school due to lengthy waiting times and inequitable access to services.	3
Continued implemen-tation of the Trust Readiness to Learn approach, therapeutic interventions, regula-tion support and pasto-ral provision.	Significant reductions in behaviour incidents, physical interventions and improved wellbeing outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach.	3

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

Budgeted cost: £4,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
THRIVE interventions and resources to promote student wellbeing.	The THRIVE Approach The Thrive Approach to social and emotional wellbeing | The Thrive Approach One of the key themes for persistent absence in the academic year 25/26 among disadvantaged pupils was anxiety	1, 2
Music Therapy – External Provider	The British Association for Music Therapy states: The use of Music Therapy with people who have a learning disability concentrates on the use of music as a means of communication, self expression and interaction. Music Therapy can help to: • Increase motivation • Empower people by offering choices • Encourage and stimulate physical movement and co-ordination British Association for Music Therapy :: Learning Disabilities	2

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

Budgeted cost: £30,200

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Family Liaison and Attendance Worker support, attendance interventions and personalised attendance plans.	Attendance remains the most significant barrier for a small group of disadvantaged young people with complex medical and emotional needs. Supporting school attendance | EEF	1
Poverty proofing audit demonstrated strengths in providing all young people access to nutritious food through the day	There is extensive research into the link between school performance and a child's diet, including this report from the 'Centre of research on the wider benefits of learning': WBLResRep18.pdf (ucl.ac.uk) This report states 'Children with nutritional deficiencies are particularly susceptible to the moment-to-moment metabolic changes that impact upon cognitive ability and performance of the brain'	4
Support access to residentials, educational visits, extracurricular provision, Duke of Edinburgh, enrichment and wider community experiences. External providers for enrichment activities.	Participation in enrichment and cultural opportunities supports confidence, belonging, social capital and preparation for adulthood outcomes. Arts participation | EEF Music and Health: What the Science Says | NCCIH	4

Total budgeted cost: £59,000

Part B: Review of outcomes in the previous academic year

Pupil premium strategy outcomes

This details the impact that our pupil premium activity had on pupils in the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

The 2025-26 academic year marked the final year of Springwater Academy's previous 3 year Pupil Premium Strategy. Evaluation of the strategy demonstrates that the academy successfully met the majority of its intended outcomes and continues to secure strong pastoral outcomes for disadvantaged young people.

Although Springwater Academy does not currently have academic assessment data for the year 2025-2026 to confirm the impact of the strategy on disadvantaged pupils academic outcomes we have been able to use attendance data, behaviour data, participation measures, EHCP outcoes and wider outcome indicators to demonstrate that disadvantaged young people continue to achieve well from their individual starting points and benefit from a highly inclusive curriculum and wider opportunities. In order to demonstrate that the academy's approach to supporting disadvantaged young people is effective in securing equitable outcomes across the curriculum despite increasing complexity of need across the cohort and to evidence that there is no significant attainment or progress gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people a thorough assessment system has been put in place to review the strategy at the end of the academic year 2026-2027.

Strengthening Safeguarding Outcome

Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has made a vast improvement, not only on the quality of the Safeguarding within school but also on the capacity of the Senior Leadership Team to continue to drive improvement for all.

In the year 25/26 the DSL focused on education surrounding harmful sexual behaviours and responses to this. This had a clear impact on the culture surrounding these behaviours with an 800% increase in staff recording these on CPOMS and then having support provided by the DSL to put strategies in place to reduce these for individual students.

Due to joining Ascent Academies Trust the DSL role is now able to be funded elsewhere therefore this will allow us to use the pupil premium funding to support attendance moving forward

Sensory integration and readiness to learn outcomes.

Behaviour outcomes strengthened slightly in the year 2025-2026

- No suspensions were issued.
- Behaviour incidents reduced from 615 incidents in Autumn Term to 472 incidents in Summer Term, a decrease of 23%
- 36% of overall young people were referred to Future Steps for individual profiling and creation of regulation programmes.
- 43% of pupil premium young people worked 1.1 with Future Steps

These outcomes demonstrate a positive impact of the training from specialist OT provider Future Steps and individual interventions for our young people with the highest sensory profiling needs.

Educational Visits and enrichment opportunities

Significant opportunities were provided for disadvantaged young people to access educational visits and enrichment opportunities

- 9 young people accessed residential experiences.
- All young people accessed at least 1 offsite educational visit that linked with curriculum themes.
- Work experience opportunities were secured through partnerships including Carol's Bonnie Dogs, Harrogate Hospital, Sensory Works and more.
- Community engagement, careers education and employer partnerships continued to expand.
- A sensory pantomime was provided at school free of charge for all primary and secondary aged pupils. All 6th form pupils attended Harrogate Theatres Pantomime.

Secondary and 6th form young people also achieved a range of accredited outcomes linked to community engagement including ASDAN Towards Independence, Pupil progress and Personal and social development. These outcomes further demonstrate the effectiveness of the academy's approach in preparing disadvantaged young people for adult life.

When considering the impact of music therapy the feedback from our PMLD practitioners was overwhelmingly positive – the following comment was made from one of our PMLD teachers:

'Music therapy has been transformative for our secondary PMLD group, enabling them to be engaged with one another, vocalise, and respond to different sounds. Over time, they have come to make their own music with the support of Kerry and are now able to generalise the skills they have learned in these sessions across the curriculum. For example, beating with a drum stick to dabbing paint on a canvas.'

Observations from these sessions have seen an improvement in individual communication and interaction outcomes as well as social, emotional and mental health outcomes.

Poverty Proofing

Springwater Academy worked with Children's North East to take part in a poverty proofing audit – Key strengths within the audit included:

- Curriculum costs are funded through the school at no additional cost for families
- Food – all pupils have access to nutritious snacks supporting readiness to learn
- Engagement and Participation – student support team provide an open door policy for pupil support.
- Family Support – individualised care packages are provided for targeted families
- Relaxed approach to uniform removes costs and stigma surrounding uniform. Clothes are also provided for families on request from the family hub.

These strengths have a significant positive impact on disadvantaged pupils by reducing financial barriers, removing stigma and ensuring all pupils can fully participate in school life. This aligns closely with the principles of Poverty Proofing, which aim to ensure that no child is excluded or treated differently because of their family's financial circumstances.

Overall Evaluation

Although the strategy made a positive impact on behaviour and wellbeing outcomes the strategy in 2025-2026 was focused on these pastoral outcomes therefore the evidence surrounding closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils has not been impactful. Further strategies should focus more on a balance of pastoral and attainment outcomes, ensuring there is no gap within teaching and learning outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Future strategies should include an emphasis on quality first teaching.

Attendance should become a key area of focus for disadvantaged pupils at Springwater Academy. In 2025-26, pupils eligible for Free School Meals recorded an attendance rate of 83%, compared with 92% for their non-disadvantaged peers. This 9% gap highlights the ongoing challenges faced by some disadvantaged families and demonstrates the need for continued targeted intervention, family support and attendance monitoring. Improving attendance should become our top priority in 2026-2027 to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can fully access learning opportunities and achieve their potential.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Music Therapy	Kerry McDermott
Specialist OT service	Future Steps

Service pupil premium funding (optional)

For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information:

Measure	Details

How did you spend your service pupil premium allocation last academic year?	We bought a number of resources including targeted books and different family small world figures which have been placed in the THRIVE room which we use to support students mental health and wellbeing. Students are able to access this at any time they wish either for 1.1 work with an adult to support their understanding of parents having to go away. The small world resources have given an opportunity to learn and express feelings through play also.
What was the impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils?	

Further Information
