

Pupil premium strategy statement: St Leonard's Catholic School, Durham

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium (and recovery premium for the 2023 to 2024 academic year) 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	St Leonard's Catholic School
Number of pupils in school	1292
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	16% (statutory school age)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3 year plans are recommended)	2023-2026
Date this statement was published	November 2023
Date on which it will be reviewed	November 2026
Statement authorised by	Local Governing Committee
Pupil premium lead	Mrs V Curry
Governor / Trustee lead	Mr J Cunningham

Funding overview 2024/25

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£194,123
Recovery premium funding allocation this academic year	£0
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	£194,123

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At St Leonard's it is our intention to provide an educational experience that provides excellent academic, social, cultural and moral education. Our vision is that all pupils are known and loved. In keeping with the finest traditions of Catholic education, our ultimate goal is that no child is left behind socially, or academically, because of disadvantage. We aim to raise lifelong aspirations and focus on removing barriers to learning and achieving excellence. At the heart of our approach is high quality teaching and pastoral care. Ensuring that the day to day experience in classrooms is of the highest quality, combined with excellent pastoral care, provides the best possible outcome for all pupils, including those who may be disadvantaged.

On 31st August 2023 the school was ordered to close by the DfE with immediate effect due to the presence of RAAC within the school. The subsequent term was one of extreme challenges, with space to only teach, on average, two-year groups a day for the first half-term in classes that ranged between 90 and 240. Year 7 and 8 were taught at an external venue from in the second half-term of Autumn term and the first half-term of Spring term. Due to the constraints of the site the class sizes were always 60. It was only in the second half-term of the spring term that all pupils returned to the (now split) St Leonard's site, and to a normal timetable with normal class sizes. We will move into a new purpose built, single site school in Spring 2026.

The disruption to the school was without precedent. Unlike the pandemic the children at St Leonard's were exposed to something that was unique compared to other children at Durham and North-east schools. In this time children who may have suffered some disadvantages were at the forefront of the work that the school completed. Over the year the attendance of disadvantaged children improved compared to 2022/23, this was a testimony to the excellent pastoral care that worked alongside the SEND department, the academic catch-up curriculum and the commitment of the whole school community. **It is remarkable, that the disadvantaged children that completed GCSEs in summer 2024 had such a positive progress score, which was above national averages, and showed a real depth to the experience and outcomes of these young people.** The improvements in outcomes continued for disadvantaged pupils continued in 2025, with attendance raising again by 1.07% and GCSE and A level results improving further too.

The school has a broadly average number of pupil premium children, the school's 'Pupil Base Deprivation' is also average, which would indicate that there may be some significant levels of disadvantage in the wide community we serve.

Common barriers to learning for disadvantaged children can be that they are less supported at home, have weaker language and reading skills, lack confidence, and lack access to high quality IT equipment. A minority of pupils who are disadvantaged can have more frequent behaviour difficulties and attendance and punctuality issues. There may also be complex family situations that prevent children from flourishing. The challenges are varied and there is no "one size fits all."

To ensure that no child is left behind we involve all staff in an understanding of how to address the needs of pupils who are disadvantaged, including analysis of data and identification of pupils, so that they are fully aware of the needs of all pupils. We also put in place teaching and learning opportunities to meet the needs of all, including disadvantaged pupils. As a Catholic school, we strive to provide the highest quality education and care to all pupils, with an emphasis on those pupils, who for whatever reason, are vulnerable. Our school lives out it's vision 'All pupils are known and loved' through the work we do with all pupils, in particular those most vulnerable.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Pupil premium pupils show lower rates of progress across their best 8 subjects (including English, maths and EBacc subjects) compared to their peers.
2	Some pupil premium pupils have low-aspirations and lack self-esteem. This can lead to a lack of engagement and progress.
3	Attendance of pupil premium pupils is lower nationally than non disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium pupils are more likely to be persistent absentees. In our school, There is a three-year improving trend for persistent absenteeism for pupil premium children. We have maintained this improving trend, despite the unique impact of point 8 below.
4	A proportion of our pupil premium pupils have reading ages on entry lower than their expected standard. Nationally there is a 22% gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers meeting required standard in English and Maths at KS2.
5	A proportion of our pupil premium pupils struggle to articulate their learning and have a lower range of vocabulary.
6	Some pupil premium pupils may have less access to cultural experiences which hinders their understanding of the wider curriculum and life experiences.
7	National data shows that disadvantaged pupils are four times more likely to be suspended from school than their non-pupil premium peers.
8	St Leonard's was amongst the worst affected RAAC schools, with a period of closure and remote learning, then disrupted learning. This disruption has disproportionately affected pupil premium pupils in a similar way to previous Covid disruption. This will continue to have an impact on pupils as they progress through the school.

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 attainment among pupil premium pupils across the curriculum at the end of KS4, with a focus on Ebacc subjects.	2025/26 KS4 outcomes demonstrate that PP pupils achieve: • A trend over time that shows they will achieve in line with nonPP pupils.

Improved progress among PP pupils across the curriculum at the end of KS4, with a focus on Ebacc subjects.	2025/26 KS4 outcomes demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils achieve: • A progress 8 score higher than the national average on a like-for-like basis • A trend over time that shows they will achieve in line with non-PP pupils.
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils, particularly the disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high attendance from 2025/26 demonstrated by: • overall attendance for PP pupils is improved to be in line with non-PP pupils.. • Achieving percentage of PA pupils who are PP is less than 35% with a view to improve this figure year on year.
Increased self-esteem, resilience and ambition of the future	Pupils are confident, independent learners, with positive attitudes to learning as evidenced in quality assurance (pupil & staff voice and work scrutiny) • Increased participation in extra-curricular activities so the same proportion of PP pupils attend as non-PP • Increased proportions of pupil premium pupils progress to a range of higher education establishments, employment or training in line with non-disadvantaged pupils.
Levels of pupil conduct to Behaviour	To reduce the number of disadvantaged pupils being suspended to less than 30% of all suspensions. • That behaviour records show that the number of negative recorded incidents are proportional to non-disadvantaged pupils.
Pupils reading ages will increase as a result of our waves of intervention linked to the Reading Strategy.	Analysis from Read, Write Ink, Lexonic Leap and NGRT Assessments will show an increase in comprehension, fluency and reading ages for pupil premium pupils so that they are catching up to levels in line with their peers.

Activity in this academic year

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: £179,052

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed

Senior staff to lead in implementing high quality teaching and learning across all subjects.	Disadvantaged pupils rely on the classroom more than those who have are not disadvantaged. For the benefit of all pupils, but particularly those who are pupil premium, the experience of the classroom has to be of the highest quality. To ensure high quality teaching and learning: • We focus on Quality First Teaching which we define at St Leonard's by asking our teachers to follow the St Leonard's Teaching and Learning Principles. These key principles are based on Rosenshein's 10 Principles of Instruction. Our quality assurance cycle monitors and evaluates this classroom practice. • All classroom teachers follow consistent lesson resources which are planned centrally and quality assured by our Heads of Department. This is to ensure that all pupils receive the same high-quality experience in the classroom. • All departments plan sequences of learning to include enrichment opportunities, careers opportunities and personal development opportunities. By linking all learning to develop pupils' Cultural Capital we aim to improve the aspirations of all pupils. • All departments plan sequences of learning to include links to gospel values. By linking all learning to the holistic development of our pupils we aim to improve the self-esteem and engagement of all pupils. • All pupil information is easily accessible to classroom teachers on Arbor. All teachers create classroom context sheets during professional development time where they use the information on ClassProfiles to plan for the reasonable adjustments they will implement in the classroom. • We have had regular opportunities for CPD on how to improve sequences of learning to include cultural capital opportunities, retrieval practice, reading and curriculum design in general. Evidence that supports this approach:	1,2
---	--	------------

	'Evidence indicates that high quality teaching is the most powerful way for schools to improve pupil attainment, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged students.' EEF guide to Pupil Premium	
--	--	--

High quality Assessment for Pupils	High quality assessment is at the heart of effective teaching and learning. To ensure the curriculum embeds high quality assessment we have the following: • Regular formative assessment opportunities are embedded into classroom practice as this is built into one of our St Leonard's Teaching and Learning Principles. • Heads of Department create their own feedback policies to ensure that feedback is timely and supports pupil progress. With regular feedback opportunities being verbal as well as written. • Formative assessment opportunities are embedded into all sequences of learning and this is monitored by Heads of Department. Heads of Department create these consistent assessments so that we can monitor pupil progress against the agreed milestones of each key stage. These milestones are communicated to parents, pupils and staff through our Achievement and Assessment Guides. • We use the Arbor tracking system to monitor pupils who are underperforming. We monitor the performance of Pupil Premium students in every Key Stage in every department to inform and improve classroom practice and also identify pupils in need of intervention. • Formative assessment opportunities inform the regular reports which communicate pupil progress parents. ○ KS3: There are 3 formative achievement collections per year. ○ KS4: There are 2 formative achievement collections per year and also the final summative assessment point of the GCSE examinations. ○ KS5: There are 3 formative achievement collections per year and also the final summative assessment point of the A-level examinations. • To provide additional support for pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 prior to each assessment point Heads of Department create and implement a 6 Week Plan which classroom teachers follow to support all pupils. • To provide additional support for pupil premium pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 following each assessment point classroom teachers evaluate the progress of their pupil premium students and create an action plan to support improving the progress of pupil premium students where necessary.	1,2
---	---	------------

	Evidence that supports this approach: ‘All teachers understand the importance of providing meaningful feedback. Done well, it supports pupil progress, building learning, addressing misunderstandings, and thereby closing the gap between where a pupil is and where the teacher wants them to be.’ Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning - EEF	
High quality investment in leaders and teachers in supporting professional development	Our CPD cycle has focused on Adaptive Teaching to support pupils with a range of needs, vulnerabilities and our disadvantaged pupils. This work is led by our heads of department who have created an Adaptive teaching guide for their subject. The quality of this work in practice is then reviewed as part of our termly Quality Assurance cycle. Evidence that supports this approach: ‘Research shows that quality professional development plays a fundamental role in a successful school: improving outcomes for pupils and teacher recruitment and retention.’ M Kraft, <i>Can Professional Development Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development?</i> (Browns University: 2018)	1, 2
Reduced class sizes in Mathematics, English, Science and RE	Reducing class sizes reduces the ratio between pupils and teachers, therefore increasing the amount of attention each pupil will receive. This provision creates significantly smaller classes at KS3 and KS4 where there are specific SEND needs or needs of PP pupils who struggle to access the curriculum. Evidence that supports this approach: ‘Reducing class size has a small positive impact of +2 month, on average. The majority of studies examine reductions of 10 pupils.’ Reducing class size Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF	1, 2

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

Budgeted cost: £79,838

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Embed and quality assure the Reading Strategy to improve the reading ages of students.	The school's approach to reading has three aspects: • Identification of and intervention for the weakest readers in school • Reading across the curriculum • Reading for pleasure Interventions including Read, Write, Inc. Fresh Start; Lexonik Leap, and Lexonik Advance are in place to support the weakest readers (as identified by the NGRT Reading Assessment). Staff across the curriculum also reference the four types of reading (intensive, extensive, skimming and scanning) in lessons when any reading takes place. The EEF has found that “phonics has a positive impact overall (+5 months) with very extensive evidence.” A National Literacy Trust evaluation of Lexonik found that standardised scores were increased by an average of 11.3. The report states that Lexonik “saw improvements in students’ decoding skills that were sustained months after they participated in the programme...the programme was beneficial for students’ reading as well as their learning overall.” A Northumbria University evaluation of Lexonik “confirmed that the average reading age gain, across all abilities, after 6 hours...was 27 months.” The October 2022 Ofsted report on best practice on reading secondary schools commented that staff training had “included knowledge about how children learn to read, and the components of reading that proficient readers need to master.”	4, 5
Implement a whole schoolwide approach to improving the vocabulary of pupils.	A whole-school approach to teaching vocabulary is used, via Lexonik Vocabulary. Key words that are essential to accessing the curriculum have been identified in every subject and Lexonik Vocabulary (which provides definitions and affix definitions) is embedded in lesson resources so that key vocabulary is pre-taught and affixes are discussed. Alex Quigley (Closing the Vocabulary Gap, 2018) has written that “evidence shows that, alongside socio-	5

	economic status, vocabulary is one of the significant factors that proved relevant to children achieving an A*-C grade in mathematics, English language and English literature.” Dan Willingham (The Reading Mind, 2017) has also written that “studies have measured readers’ tolerance of unfamiliar vocabulary, and have estimated that readers need to know about 98% of the words for comfortable comprehension.”	
Revision Sessions and Intervention Sessions	During our 6 Week Preparation plan for our Year 11 pupils prior to each exam period all pupils are invited to attend after school and lunchtime revision sessions as well as being given comprehensive recorded sessions and paper based resources to support revision. Pupil premium pupils are offered financial support for transport after school to be able to attend these sessions. Throughout Year 11, pupil premium pupils who are identified as underperforming following each exam period are offered intervention sessions during tutor time in English, Maths and Science. Evidence that supports this approach: ‘Recommended in the EEF’s Guide to the Pupil Premium, the tiered model is designed to help schools focus on a small number of strategies with the greatest potential to make a meaningful difference for their pupils.’ One of the tiered model strategies is targeted academic support. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-improvement-planning	1, 2, 6, 8

LSA Training that focuses on deployment that allows pupils to access	Accessing the curriculum is the most effective way to increase pupil progress. LSAs are trained and deployed to skilfully ensure that pupils are accessing the curriculum. Evidence that supports this approach:	1, 2, 4
learning in all lessons.	‘Access to high quality teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their pupils. It is particularly important to ensure that when pupils are receiving support from a teaching assistant, this supplements teaching but does not reduce the amount of high-quality interactions they have with their classroom teacher both in and out-of-class.’ Teaching Assistant Interventions Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF	

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

cost: £9,840

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Increase rates of attendance. Embed and quality assure the implementation of the school's new Attendance Policy.	In order to learn, pupils need to regularly attend school; in order to achieve good attendance, we offer the following: • Introduced a Trust led attendance policy in January 2024 with a focus on relationships and the importance of PP attendance. • Raised the importance of attendance through tutor time discussions / tutor competitions / messaging to parents . Developing the role of the tutor and Year Lead. • Created bespoke support for pupil premium children who are PA or at risk of becoming PA, using Year Leaders to lead this project. • Dedicated one hour in the morning at the start of each day so that pastoral staff can support families with attendance messaging, with a focus on the needs of pupil premium families. • Year Leader oversight and leadership of attendance: weekly monitoring meetings with specific actions. • Bespoke reintegration packages for pupils struggling with anxiety. • Work with the Local Authority Team to meet parents and set targets. Evidence that supports this approach: 'The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage 4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils with no absence are 1.3 times more likely to achieve Level 4 or above, and 3.1 times more likely to achieve Level 5 or above, than pupils that missed 5% of sessions.' Department for Education Report on Attendance, 2016.	3, 8
Increase selfesteem, resilience and ambition for pupils and their families.	Evidence suggests that supporting young people's social and emotional skills can reduce symptoms of anxiety, increase attendance and participation in school life. To create a climate that meets mental health needs, wider needs and support pupils who at times struggle with school routines we have:	1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Provide bespoke support for pupils suffering from anxiety or other mental health difficulties.	- Established a 'Well Being Drop-in': - Counsellor: The school has access to a qualified counsellor who will see pupils based on need. Personal Development: The school has a very rich Personal Development Programme, which includes regular updates on Mental Health, including assemblies, work with tutors and guest speakers. - SEMH: Appointment of a member of support staff who specialise in SEMH and safeguarding who support pupils when there are specific barriers to learning. - Offer bespoke support packages to all pupils who are at risk of suspension, or who have received a suspension. These include high levels of parental and pupil input to diagnose issues and support pupils to help them meet school expectations. Evidence that supports this approach: <i>'There is good evidence that universal and targeted cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) interventions are effective in reducing internalising symptoms in young people.'</i> Adolescent mental health: A systematic review on the effectiveness of schoolbased interventions Early Intervention Foundation (eif.org.uk)	
Enrichment Programme	We are committed to all pupils experiencing a wide and diverse enrichment programme, including clubs, activities, visits, outside speakers, residential opportunities. We offer the following: - A coordinated programme across all areas of school life that is shared with parents, carers and pupils in a high-quality manner. - A series of retreats across Key Stage 3 that provide all pupils with the opportunity to engage in residential activities.	1, 2, 3, 7, 8

	• A range of activities that reflects the level of interest of the entire school community. • Communication to parents about pupil uptake on clubs / activities. • Tracking of pupil participation and appropriate intervention from tutors to support pupils attending clubs / activities. Evidence that supports this approach: ‘Extra-curricular activities have the potential to develop both academic skills and essential life skills which can help highly able students to succeed – such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication skills. Interventions which ensure that disadvantaged highly able students have access to extracurricular activities could potentially help to close the gaps between these students and their peers.’ Sutton Trust, Missing Talent, (July 2018). https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/teaching-assistant-interventions https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/extending-school-time	
The school is committed to providing additional support for pupils, as needs arise, so that disadvantaged pupils can fully access the school's curriculum in the broadest possible terms.	We are supporting families with a range of costs including, but not limited to: • ICT equipment • School uniform • Music lessons • Food and hygiene packs • Basic school equipment • Residential Trips Evidence that supports this approach: ‘Pupils from lower socioeconomic households are less likely to be able to afford the cost of school uniforms. Schools intending to change their school uniform policy should therefore consider what provision can be made to cover the costs of uniform changes for disadvantaged pupils.’ https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/school-uniform https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/school-uniform	1, 2, 3, 7

Total budgeted cost: £ 268,731

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 2024 to 2025 academic year.

Updates

Achievement: Pupil Premium children achieve above national expectations at St Leonard's. In 2024 these pupils achieved a A8 grade score of 4.4, in 2025 this has increased to 4.8. This means that pupil premium children at St Leonard's achieve higher than national averages. In 2025 63.6% of Pupil Premium children achieved grade 4 in English and in maths.

Attendance: Pupil premium attendance improved by 1.07% from 23/24 to 24/25 in line with a 4 year trend of improvement. Persistent Absenteeism of PP pupils fell in the same period 3.51%. With a whole school focus on PP attendance for 2025/26 and the introduction of Year Lead attendance links, as well as whole staff training from Marc Rowland, our relationship-based approach should see us continue to improve the attendance of PP pupils this year.

Reading: PP pupils are always prioritised when intervention is allocated. Pupils who score below 89 on their NGRT will be identified straight away and begin intervention at the next available cycle. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are now fluent readers has increased by 7 percentile points, which is almost double the improvement rate across the general pupil population (4 percentile points). The gap in fluency rates between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils has narrowed from 7% to 5%.

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you purchased in the previous academic year. This will help the Department for Education identify which ones are popular in England

Programme	Provider
n/a	