



Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding for the 2025 to 2026 academic year to help improve outcomes for 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	NCEA Castle School
Number of pupils in school	158
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	53%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended)	2023/2024 to 2025/2026 (Year 3 of 3-year strategy)
Date this statement was published	Autumn 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	Autumn 2026
Statement authorised by	Patrick Ford-Hutchinson (Headteacher)
Pupil premium lead	Patrick Ford-Hutchinson / Dawn Watson
Governor / Trustee lead	Inclusion Link Governor (Pupil Premium)

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£132,526
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	£132,526

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Castle School is a specialist provision for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities. All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Many pupils experience complex barriers across communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory and/or physical needs.

We have high expectations for all pupils, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding. Our strategy is rooted in securing strong outcomes against EHCP-aligned Individual Learning Plan (ILP) targets, ensuring curriculum progress across pathways, improving attendance and engagement, and removing wider barriers to participation and enrichment.

In Autumn 2023, disadvantaged pupils achieved 76% of ILP targets compared to 83% for non-disadvantaged pupils (a 7% gap). Through targeted provision and strengthened high-quality teaching, this gap has closed. In Autumn 2025, disadvantaged pupils achieved 80% of ILP targets, in line with their peers (80%).

Behavioural incidents per pupil have reduced significantly across the school and are now equal between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils has improved from 85% (Autumn 2023) to 89% (Autumn 2025). While a 4% attendance gap remains, it is reducing and is a clear strategic priority.

Our strategy follows a tiered model:

- Strengthening high-quality specialist teaching
- Providing targeted academic and therapeutic support
- Addressing wider barriers including attendance, family engagement and enrichment

Leaders evaluate impact termly through triangulation of ILP achievement, curriculum progress, attendance, behaviour/incident data and stakeholder voice. Governors receive termly impact reports and challenge leaders on value for money and measurable outcomes.

Evidence-based practice

The use of research and evidence in special education can sometimes be a challenge due to the bespoke provision we put into place for our pupils. However, we use the EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit to enable school leaders to explore principles for positive impact and mechanisms to mitigate potential negatives. Schools can use the Toolkit to establish 'best bets', approaches that are likely to make a positive difference to pupils in school. The development of regulation, communication and independence (drawing upon the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit) is a key feature of our strategic plan for targeted academic support.

We offer specialist interventions such as Occupational Therapy. These specialist therapists also work closely with the teaching and learning team to ensure that the best practice is embedded throughout high quality teaching, such as ensuring consistency in the use of visual support.

Our curriculum is designed to reflect the range of needs within the school and pupils follow the pathway most appropriate to their needs as they progress through school. This strategy will consider where we need to extend or add to provision, particularly for our disadvantaged pupils, in order to reduce the impact of identified barriers to learning.

In 2024–2025, therapeutic integration and strengthened classroom consistency have contributed to the closure of the ILP attainment gap and a significant reduction in incidents per pupil. This confirms that investment in specialist expertise and embedded practice has had measurable impact.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Analysis of our pupil population shows that many of our pupils have significant challenges around communicating and expressing their needs. The current systems in place need to be further developed to ensure that all pupils' 'voices' are heard all of the time, regardless of how pupils communicate (e.g. verbal language, symbol supported, signing, AAC, etc)
2	Emotional regulation difficulties can hinder a student's ability to engage in learning and may require additional support to ensure that challenging behaviour does not impede learning in other areas. Many pupils have sensory needs that necessitate extensive therapeutic intervention. Without careful preparation for learning, these students often struggle to fully engage in the available educational opportunities.
3	There is a clear link between phoneme-grapheme correspondence and the variation in students' phonological awareness and their ability to translate this into written form. Our observations suggest that students who struggle with phonological awareness also face difficulties in accurately representing sounds in writing. Specialist therapist support and assistive technology are essential tools to help these pupils bridge this gap.
4	Progress and achievement are directly linked to pupils' ability to access learning at a level commensurate to ability. The school continues to refine the criteria for identifying barriers that each disadvantaged pupil faces and responding to support those needs in the best way possible.
5	Through annual reviews and parent consultation events, we are aware that many families, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have fewer opportunities to develop cultural capital outside of school.
6	Families, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, found lockdown and the pandemic particularly isolating. They had reduced support or, in some cases, no support from external agencies which would normally have been available
7	Attendance for disadvantaged pupils, while improving, remains 4% below non-disadvantaged pupils. Barriers are predominantly illness and medical appointments, with occasional transport inconsistency and anxiety factors requiring targeted multi-agency support.

8	A minority of families have requested increased access to enrichment opportunities and alternative timings for parent events. Ensuring equitable participation for disadvantaged pupils remains a priority.
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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	How we will measure / evidence	Success Criteria by July 2026
There are sustained and enhanced improvements in the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across all year groups at Castle School. Our focus on continuous development and innovative educational strategies has ensured that every student receives the highest quality education, fostering their growth and creating an inclusive and thriving learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no discernible gap between the least effective and most effective teaching and learning. • Planning is fit for purpose and clearly linked to a sequentially planned curriculum detailing steps to improvements for all cohorts. • Evidence of improvements is robust. • Staff utilise a range of approaches to ensure all pupils are accessing learning. • Specialist interventions, phonics/EarlyTalk Boost/literacy programme boost measurable outcomes. • Accountability systems and evaluation processes rapidly identify further areas for development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All monitoring will include the school's PPG analysis record. • Progress from baseline information Data analysis • Planning is sequentially mapping next steps to progress • Source of evidence-Data analysis, monitoring planning x 1 per term • Staff report pupils are engaging for longer periods of time. • Baseline measure inform ILP targets. • ILP analysis x1 a term • Therapy outcomes are in line or exceed expectations • School based therapists collate information on the impact of their work and report this to governors. • Resources support greater degree of engagement in learning. • Teacher assessment, checklist recording of improvements in sensory regulation as a result of improved resourcing, weighted vests, sensory stories etc. • The ILP attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is maintained within $\pm 2\%$ termly. • Behaviour incidents per pupil are no higher for disadvantaged pupils than for their peers.
All students' needs are met comprehensively across all pathways. Our commitment to tailoring our educational programs and support services has resulted in a holistic and inclusive learning experience for each student. This approach has empowered all students to reach their full	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre formal and formal cohort pupils make progress in line with or above expectations • Engagement and Semi-formal cohorts make progress in line with teacher/therapy expectations. • Therapy programmes are integrated into ILP targets resulting in class teams collaborating to meet and report upon outcomes. • Staff have specific, specialist training to meet needs. They teach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in outdoor equipment secures progress in physical development for EYs Y1 cohort Cherry Garden, EYFS assessment analysis • Progress for all curricula strands is in line with expectations Data analysis. ILP/subject. • Increased number of pupils using writing as a form of communication. • En records, data analysis.

<p>potential in every aspect of their education. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils continues to improve.</p>	<p>pupils, following teachers plans and report upon progress. This results in a highly bespoke, small steps approach to meeting progress targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress is measurable and sustained. • Disadvantaged pupils achieve expected curriculum progress at or above the rate of non-disadvantaged pupils. • The Cognition and Learning ILP gap is maintained within $\pm 2-4\%$ termly. • The attendance gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is reduced to below 2%. • Persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils reduces year-on-year. • Attendance risk register does not show disproportionate representation of disadvantaged pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dis-regulated behaviour, incidents and accidents decreasing over 3 terms. • Behaviour logs, accident, near miss analysis. • Data on literacy development, access to reading, phonics from a baseline. • Collation of improvements to reading, generalisation of phonics collated by En lead and reported to governors. • Disadvantaged pupils achieve expected curriculum progress at or above the rate of non-disadvantaged pupils. • The Cognition and Learning ILP gap is maintained within $\pm 2-4\%$ termly. • The attendance gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is reduced to below 2%. • Persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils reduces year-on-year.
<p>Increased parental and carer involvement has led to substantial improvements in the all-round development of our students. Our commitment to fostering strong partnerships with parents and carers has resulted in collaborative efforts to support and enrich the educational journey of each student. This approach has ensured that all our students thrive in all aspects of their development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/carers work in partnership with school to set/agree EHCP targets • Parents report that information home is informing them of areas of development which supports well-being, consistent behaviour management and personal development. • Parent attendance at school events has supported relationships with staff and shared details on pupil presentation within home and school. • Parent support group has been established, and this includes events focusing on key areas of school improvement. • Parent View comments on Ofsted site and through parent surveys are influencing improvements. • Parent survey responses demonstrate at least 95% positive responses regarding safety, happiness, leadership and progress. • Participation of disadvantaged families in school events and training is tracked termly and increases year-on-year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted support for families reduces stress associated with dysregulated behaviour • Parents are applying strategies taught in school, at home, in support of a 24-hour approach. • Parental feedback, Parent View, surveys. • Increased parental attendance at school events which develops a greater understanding of pupils needs and how to support at home • Parental attendance records. • Celebration events planned and implemented by key staff to share success. • Record of events and attendance figures. • Parent survey responses demonstrate at least 95% positive responses regarding safety, happiness, leadership and progress. • Participation of disadvantaged families in school events and training is tracked termly and increases year-on-year.

<p>Assessment is at the core of curriculum development, utilising it effectively to inform and drive progress. Our commitment to a comprehensive approach has ensured that assessment serves as a valuable tool in shaping our curriculum. This approach has resulted in a curriculum that is responsive, meaningful, and tailored to the unique needs of all our students, ultimately enhancing their educational experience, including those who may face disadvantages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data informs the impact of the curriculum in leading learning for all pupils. • Staff use assessment to baseline pupils which informs target setting for all learners. • Subject specific and ILP targets are monitored to ensure high expectations. • All targets are SMART and evidence of achievement is documented and moderated. • Data tracking is embedded and used effectively to identify pupils at risk of underperformance. Subsequent planned interventions boost learning. • Highly robust data systems indicate disadvantaged pupil's needs are met and progress is in line with peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional PPA time for teachers to support baseline assessment, and the compilation of evidence to show improvement of the PPG cohort in terms of ILP and subject related outcomes. • Data 'drops' to senior leader for analysis then reports to parents and governors through the HT report, staff discussion. • The purchase of additional resources to assess levels of progress and achievement are supporting a sequentially planned approach to teaching and learning. Tracking, data records and subsequent analysis. Reports to governors.
<p>Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) consistently incorporate accurate assessments of pupils' needs. Furthermore, our long-term targets within EHCPs have prioritised enhancements that directly improve the quality of pupils' lives. Our dedication to creating individualised plans that align with our students' requirements has fostered an environment where each pupil, regardless of their background, can thrive and experience an enriched quality of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Reviews are chaired by teachers who review the relevance of targets and report upon outcomes as detailed within the Code of Practice. • Teachers access specific SEN Code of practice training • Pupils identified as requiring a change of provision are prioritised and actions followed up robustly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time out of the classroom by teachers is supported by HTLA cover for PPG cohort. • Emergency reviews in support of the most disadvantaged pupils supports improvements in provision. • Annual Review documentation. • PPG pupils engage in opportunities beyond school to widen experiences, generalise taught skills in functional situations, develop vocabulary, social skill development and knowledge of the community life. • Records of visits and outcome reported through the EHCP reviews. Data analysis of progress and achievement.
<p>A meticulously planned, purpose-built, and accessible curriculum is successfully implemented for all our pupils. Our dedication to ensuring a cohesive and individually tailored curriculum has empowered every student, regardless of their background, to engage in meaningful</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is sequentially planned for all three curriculum pathways. • Staff use the curriculum as a framework for meeting learners needs. • Pupils learn essential knowledge and skills to support them to take part in community life (Cultural Capital) • Pupils access the approach to communication/Literacy/English at a level commensurate to abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Resources support a fit for purpose curriculum. • Data analysis, monitoring and staff feedback. • Events within and out of school support higher aspirations for disadvantaged pupils, enhances well-being and supporting growth in self-esteem and confidence. • Post 16 pupils access opportunities within the world of work to broaden experiences and

<p>and enriching learning experiences, fostering their growth and development</p>	<p>ambitious and includes specialist approaches to meet needs. Staff know how to teach reading/emergent literacy skills to SEND pupils exceptionally well and reading books are aligned to levels of ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are confident in meeting the needs of their class of learners and as a result they differentiate learning outcomes accordingly. • Pupil's sensory needs are met which ensures they are accessing learning. 	<p>support choices for life beyond school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review documents, EHCP reports. Pupil voice. Progress and achievement data. • 1:1 support accelerates rates of progress for pupils at risk of underachievement. • Literacy resources and improvements to library provision support a love of reading. Data, pupil voice. • Art and Music therapy for pupils struggling with mental health supports a sense of well-being and achievement. Pupil voice, staff feedback. • 1:1 support for pupils struggling with confidence and self-esteem linked to their mental health includes the management and follow up with external services. This includes OT. Medical records, EHCP reports, mental health workers feedback.
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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.

The following activities are directly aligned to identified barriers and are evaluated termly through PP vs non-PP data analysis, attendance monitoring, behaviour scrutiny and stakeholder feedback.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £47,398

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>School Occupational Therapist (60% allocation) Cost: £36,398</p> <p>Evidence</p>	<p>Integrated occupational therapy supports sensory regulation, engagement and access to learning. EEF Behaviour Interventions and Individualised Instruction evidence base.</p> <p>Leadership development and external challenge strengthen teaching consistency and monitoring systems.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4</p>

<p>Educational consultancy and external school improvement support (including leadership development and evaluation). Cost: £11,000</p>	<p>The Matthew Effect - emphasises the importance of getting fundamental skill development right for disadvantaged pupils to enable their progress</p> <p>EEF (Guide to Pupil Premium) – ensuring an effective team is in front of every class, and that every teacher is supported to keep improving, is especially important for socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Sir John Dunford – Pupil Premium National Champion 2013 to 2015 sets out 12 points that have the most impact on disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions</p>	<p>1, 2</p>
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Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £83,628

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>HLTA x2 (Hydro & Rebound) – 60% allocation Cost: £51,183</p>	<p>Entry criteria: Identified through ILP analysis, curriculum progress, attendance risk register, incident profile and therapist assessment. Exit criteria: Step-down when targets are sustained across two review points; provision reallocated to the next identified cohort</p> <p>Targeted intervention most effective when structured and responsive to specific need (EEF Small Group Tuition / TA interventions).</p> <p>Small group tuition is most likely to be effective if targeted at pupils' specific needs.</p> <p>EEF Small Group Tuition EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Behaviour interventions EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Small group tuition EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Teaching assistant interventions</p>	<p>2, 4</p>

<p>Jigsaw Therapy (Occupational Therapy) Cost: £17,910</p>	<p>Entry criteria: Identified through ILP analysis, curriculum progress, attendance risk register, incident profile and therapist assessment. Exit criteria: Step-down when targets are sustained across two review points; provision reallocated to the next identified cohort.</p> <p>Targeted therapeutic input supports regulation and readiness to learn. EEF Behaviour Interventions.</p> <p>By integrating therapy across the school week, pupils' access to learning will be maximised.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Music Therapist Cost: £14,535</p>	<p>Entry criteria: Identified through ILP analysis, curriculum progress, attendance risk register, incident profile and therapist assessment. Exit criteria: Step-down when targets are sustained across two review points; provision reallocated to the next identified cohort.</p> <p>Arts participation and structured therapeutic approaches improve wellbeing and engagement.</p> <p>By integrating therapy across the school week, pupils' access to learning is maximised.</p>	<p>2,5</p>

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

Budgeted cost: £1,500

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Parent events and training / Enrichment activities for pupils</p> <p>Review Enrichment Offer and match to curriculum pathways</p>	<p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Behaviour interventions</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Teaching assistant interventions</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Small group tuition</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Parental engagement</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Arts participation</p> <p>EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Outdoor adventure learning</p>	<p>1,4 5,6,7,8</p>

Total budgeted cost: £132,526

Each activity is evaluated termly using PP vs non-PP ILP achievement, curriculum progress, attendance, incidents and stakeholder voice. Leaders report costed impact to governors and refine, discontinue or reallocate provision where evidence of value-added impact is limited.

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.

Headline impact (strategy trajectory):

ILP gap: 7% (Autumn 2023) → 0% (Autumn 2025)

Attendance (PP): 85% (Autumn 2023) → 89% (Autumn 2025) (gap remains 4%)

Behaviour/Incidents: incidents per pupil equalised (Autumn 2025: 0.02 vs 0.02)

Parent voice (Oct 2025): 100% report their child is happy and feels safe; 100% would recommend the school

Disadvantaged pupils are not disproportionately represented on the behaviour or curriculum risk registers.

During 2024–2025, our Pupil Premium strategy remained central to whole-school improvement, with over half of our cohort eligible for Pupil Premium funding. The strategy has focused on securing strong EHCP-aligned outcomes, strengthening high-quality teaching, improving attendance, reducing behavioural disparity and ensuring equitable access to enrichment.

Attainment and ILP Progress

In Autumn 2023, there was a 7% attainment gap in ILP target achievement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Through strengthened therapeutic integration, improved classroom consistency and targeted intervention, this gap has closed.

By Autumn 2025, disadvantaged pupils achieved ILP targets at the same rate as their peers (80% vs 80%). Across Communication, SEMH and Sensory areas, previously significant gaps have been eliminated. In Summer 2025, disadvantaged pupils exceeded non-disadvantaged pupils in overall target achievement.

This demonstrates sustained improvement over the three-year strategy period and confirms that disadvantaged pupils are achieving in line with their peers.

Curriculum Progress

Across the final three data cycles of 2024–2025, disadvantaged pupils consistently achieved expected curriculum progress in line with or above non-disadvantaged pupils. Improvements in sequential curriculum mapping, moderation and therapy integration have strengthened consistency across pathways and reduced variability in classroom practice.

Behaviour and Engagement

Behaviour incidents per pupil have reduced significantly across the school. Disadvantaged pupils are no longer disproportionately represented in behavioural risk, and incident rates are now equal across groups.

This reflects embedded therapeutic practice, strengthened regulation approaches and effective targeted HLTA interventions.

Attendance

Attendance for disadvantaged pupils has improved from 85% (Autumn 2023) to 89% (Autumn 2025). While a 4% gap remains, the trajectory is positive, and attendance remains a clear strategic priority for the next phase of the strategy.

Parent survey responses indicate that absences are predominantly linked to illness or medical appointments rather than dissatisfaction with school provision.

Parental Engagement and Wider Development

Parent survey evidence (October 2025) confirms very high levels of parental confidence. All responding parents reported that their child feels happy and safe at school, and the overwhelming majority would recommend the school to others.

Open-text feedback highlights strong relationships with staff, effective communication and the positive impact of enrichment activities on pupils' confidence and independence.

This stakeholder feedback strongly validates the direction of the strategy.

Overall Evaluation

Overall, the Pupil Premium strategy has demonstrably narrowed attainment gaps, eliminated behavioural disparity and sustained strong curriculum progress for disadvantaged pupils. The remaining priority is to further reduce the attendance gap and strengthen equitable participation in enrichment and wider experiences, with termly evaluation informing refinement and allocation.