Pupil premium strategy statement SMC 2026 – 27

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils. It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the effect that last year's spending of pupil premium had within our school.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	St Mary's College
Number of pupils in school	2531
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	21%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	September 2025 - July 2028
Date this statement was published	November 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	Termly
Statement authorised by	Maria Stead
Pupil premium lead	Craig Lenham
Governor / Trustee lead	Roy Watson

Funding overview

Detail	Data
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year (including FSM6, CLA's and SSP)	£483110
Recovery premium funding allocation this academic year	£0
Service	£2800
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	**£485910**

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan – Statement of intent

At St Mary's College, we acknowledge that the most significant gains in pupil progress are made in the classroom through high-quality, responsive teaching. For this reason, there is a relentless focus on Highly Intentional Teaching (HIT) strategies for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. We believe that what is essential for some benefits all, not least our disadvantaged learners. With our continued emphasis on closing gaps and enabling exemplary progress, our strategic focus centres on:

1. Reading and Literacy Development

We will continue to prioritise reading for our disadvantaged pupils. Building on our 'Just Reading' strategy, we are embedding explicit reading strategies across all subjects to support fluency, comprehension, and enjoyment. Pupils have regular exposure to high-quality fiction and non-fiction texts alongside structured reading interventions from Year 7 onwards. Through NGRT testing, tutor-time reading, and tailored intervention, we aim to accelerate reading progress so all disadvantaged pupils can fully access our ambitious curriculum.

2. Professional Development: Highly Intentional Teaching (HIT)

Professional development will focus on Highly Intentional Teaching (HIT) approaches, delivered through StepLab and using expert Teaching and Learning leaders in the school. Our model prioritises deliberate practice, precise feedback, and evidence-informed techniques grounded in cognitive science. This ensures that all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantage, benefit from consistently high-quality teaching. Implementation is monitored through coaching cycles, lesson visits, and reflective practice.

3. Digital Literacy and Equity

Our Digital Literacy Strategy remains a central element of our approach to educational equity. Every pupil has access to a 1:1 device, enabling meaningful participation in digital homework, independent study, and blended learning. We continue to invest in digital assessment tools that allow teachers to identify misconceptions quickly and adapt teaching accordingly, ensuring disadvantaged pupils have equal opportunities for success.

4. Data-Driven Monitoring and Targeted Support

We maintain a forensic focus on tracking and analysing the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Using robust assessment and tracking systems, including NGRT data and curriculum assessments, we identify underachievement early and implement targeted support. Teachers, tutors, pastoral teams, and senior leaders work collaboratively to remove barriers to learning and ensure the curriculum remains responsive to pupil needs.

5. Core Enrichment and Cultural Capital

We are committed to ensuring all disadvantaged pupils access our Core Enrichment Offer, which provides high-quality experiences across arts, culture, sport, and community engagement. These opportunities support the development of cultural capital, aspiration, and personal growth, enabling disadvantaged pupils to participate fully in the wider life of the school. Funding continues to remove barriers to participation so that every pupil can thrive academically and personally.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	**Reading and Literacy.** Reading skills are often lower for disadvantaged pupils than for non-disadvantaged peers, limiting their ability to fully access the curriculum. Evidence shows that the impact of lower reading ages is as significant on pupil outcomes in science and mathematics as in literacy-based subjects. This remains a key barrier to achievement across all key stages.
2	**Knowledge and Skills Gaps.** Despite a Progress 8 score for disadvantaged pupils that remains above all pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than their non-disadvantaged peers within our school. This reflects the sustained impact of prior learning gaps in knowledge and skills. Addressing these gaps continues to be a key focus through targeted intervention and high-quality teaching.
3	**Attendance and Lost Learning Time.** While attendance for disadvantaged pupils remains above national averages, it continues to fall below that of non-disadvantaged peers within our school. This disparity results in lost learning time and missed opportunities for sustained progress. Attendance remains a strategic priority, supported by ongoing investment in early intervention and family support.
4	**Behaviour for Learning.** Disadvantaged pupils are proportionally overrepresented in our behaviour data. Barriers linked to self-regulation, resilience, and engagement can affect classroom learning and progress. Developing positive behaviour for learning, consistent highly intentional routines, and effective relationships is central to supporting these pupils to engage fully in their 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 outcomes	Success criteria
1. Improved Reading Proficiency and Curriculum Access. To improve reading proficiency for disadvantaged pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, enabling them to access the full curriculum with confidence. Whole-school reading and vocabulary approaches will support comprehension and communication, alongside targeted intervention for pupils needing additional support.	• NGRT baseline data establishes clear starting points for all disadvantaged pupils. • Interim and final NGRT assessments demonstrate measurable improvements in reading ages for disadvantaged pupils, closing the gap with non-disadvantaged peers. • 'Just Reading' is consistently embedded across tutor groups and subjects, supported by quality assurance. • Targeted reading interventions demonstrate accelerated progress for identified pupils.
2. Improved Progress and Attainment for Disadvantaged Pupils. To accelerate progress and improve attainment for disadvantaged pupils across Key Stages 3 and 4 by identifying and addressing knowledge and skills gaps, ensuring pupils are prepared for future learning and examination success.	• Assessment data identifies gaps in knowledge, skills and attainment for disadvantaged pupils across subjects. • Curriculum adaptations, including the Precision Curriculum and Fix-It Weeks where appropriate, address identified gaps. • Assessment outcomes demonstrate improved progress and attainment for disadvantaged pupils, with gaps against non-disadvantaged peers reducing. • Leaders and teachers use assessment information to evaluate progress and adapt provision throughout the year.
3. High-Quality, Responsive Teaching for Disadvantaged Pupils. To ensure disadvantaged pupils benefit from consistently high-quality teaching, with teachers using Highly Intentional Teaching (HIT) strategies and responsive classroom practice to	• Teachers understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils in their classes and use this knowledge to inform teaching. • HIT strategies are consistently implemented, with quality assurance demonstrating effective classroom practice.

identify and address individual learning needs and remove barriers to progress.	• Assessment and questioning identify misconceptions and inform timely adaptations to teaching. • Evidence from lesson visits, work scrutiny and assessment outcomes demonstrates improved access to learning and progress for disadvantaged pupils.
4. Improved Attendance and Engagement. To improve attendance and engagement for disadvantaged pupils by identifying and addressing barriers to school participation, strengthening pastoral support and promoting positive behaviour for learning, self-regulation and engagement.	• Attendance data demonstrates improved attendance for disadvantaged pupils and a reduction in the gap with non-disadvantaged peers. • Targeted attendance and pastoral interventions are implemented promptly for pupils experiencing barriers to attendance. • Behaviour data is monitored to identify and address the disproportionate representation of disadvantaged pupils in behaviour incidents and suspensions. • Pastoral records, classroom quality assurance and pupil voice demonstrate improved engagement and participation in learning.
5. Effective, Targeted Intervention and Support. To ensure disadvantaged pupils receive timely, targeted academic and pastoral support in response to identified needs. Provision will be informed by assessment and other relevant evidence, with its effectiveness evaluated to ensure it improves outcomes and represents appropriate use of Pupil Premium funding.	• Assessment analysis, including question-level analysis where appropriate, identifies disadvantaged pupils who require additional support. • Targeted interventions are implemented promptly and are matched to identified barriers and needs. • Participation, implementation and impact are monitored proportionately, with appropriate adjustments made where provision is not having the intended effect. • Evaluation demonstrates the contribution of targeted support to improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and informs future funding decisions.

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 : £240610

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed	Budget (£)	Impact
Implementation of a structured CPD programme focused on Highly Intentional Teaching (HIT) strategies, supported by fortnightly protected directed time and the StepLab platform.	Effective professional development that is sustained, collaborative, and focused on explicit teaching mechanisms leads to improved student outcomes. The EEF highlights that CPD should target specific teaching strategies and build habits through regular feedback and deliberate practice. High-quality, responsive teaching is the single most powerful lever to accelerate progress and close the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils. Effective Professional Development | EEF	2 & 4	221710	Consistent, deliberate, and high-quality teaching practices across all classrooms through structured instructional coaching, maximising effective lesson time and accelerating progress for disadvantaged pupils.
Continued implementation of our Digital Literacy Strategy, focusing on digital assessment tools across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to enhance learning and data analysis.	EEF guidance on Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning highlights that well-integrated digital tools can boost engagement and remove barriers for disadvantaged pupils, especially when used to provide timely feedback and personalise learning. Furthermore, the UK Government's Digital Strategy emphasises building digital skills and infrastructure to enhance learning. EEF - Digital Technology Guidance DfE - Digital Strategy	2	18900	Enhanced Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 academic outcomes and accelerated progress for disadvantaged pupils, achieved through refined diagnostic assessment practices, rapid feedback loops, and precise, data-driven teaching.

Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)
Budgeted cost : £107600

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed	Budget (£)	Impact
Provision of targeted small group tuition for disadvantaged pupils at risk of not meeting expected progress in core subjects.	Small group tuition is identified by the EEF as an effective intervention (+4 months' progress), enabling targeted support tailored to specific learning gaps when delivered by trained teachers. EEF - Small Group Tuition Guidance	2 & 3	44000	Accelerated progress and narrowed attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils in core subjects through focused, responsive teaching in a supportive small group setting.
Provision of targeted nurture groups across Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8, and 9) and the 'Humanities for Life' programme at Key Stage 4, delivering small-group academic, curriculum access, and social-emotional support.	EEF research highlights that nurture provision, small-group tuition (+4 months' progress), and tailored curriculum pathways build self-regulation and accelerate academic progress for disadvantaged pupils by removing non-academic barriers to learning. EEF - Social and Emotional Learning Guidance EEF - Small Group Tuition Guidance	2 & 3	31000	Accelerated progress, higher classroom engagement, and improved self-regulation for disadvantaged pupils across Key Stages 3 and 4, closing attainment gaps in core and humanities subjects[
Establishment of a Literacy Lead TLR role to oversee and develop a comprehensive reading enrichment programme, fostering reading enjoyment and literacy across the school.	Research by the National Literacy Trust shows fewer than 50% of young people enjoy reading, highlighting the need for targeted literacy engagement activities. Embedding reading in school culture accelerates progress in literacy and supports broader curriculum success. National Literacy Trust Report 2021	1	5500	Increased engagement with reading and literacy among disadvantaged pupils, leading to improved reading ages and strengthened cross-curricular attainment.
Sustained delivery of the 'Just Reading' programme and NGRT testing to ensure disadvantaged pupils access high-quality reading materials daily to develop	The National Literacy Trust (2021) reports that 1 in 8 pupils lack access to reading materials at home. The University of Sussex Faster Read Project found that pupils read to daily at pace made accelerated progress in reading fluency and comprehension.	1	4700	Improved reading fluency, comprehension, and confidence across all year groups, contributing to higher literacy levels and narrowing the reading gap

fluency and comprehension.	National Literacy Trust Report 2021 University of Sussex – Faster Read Project			for disadvantaged pupils.
Deployment of a Literacy Teaching Assistant / Academic Tutor to deliver targeted small-group and one-to-one literacy interventions for disadvantaged pupils below age-related expectations.	The EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance report highlights that high-quality literacy interventions—including phonics, reciprocal reading, and structured peer reading—significantly boost outcomes when delivered by trained staff. EEF - Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools	1	22400	Improved reading fluency, comprehension, and confidence among disadvantaged pupils, with measurable gains in reading ages verified through diagnostic testing.

Wider strategies (for example, related to attendance, behaviour, wellbeing)
Budgeted cost : £134900

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed	Budget (£)	Impact
Pastoral Support and Attendance Strategy — deployment of dedicated pastoral staff and attendance officers to remove non-academic barriers to attendance, behaviour, and wellbeing for disadvantaged pupils through targeted monitoring and intervention.	The EEF Pupil Premium Guidance Report identifies social, emotional, and behavioural support as key components of effective wider strategies. The DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance report highlights early intervention, consistent monitoring, and strong pastoral relationships in improving attendance for disadvantaged cohorts. EEF - Pupil Premium Guidance Report DfE - Working Together to Improve School Attendance	1, 2, 3 & 4	43800	Improved and sustained attendance for disadvantaged pupils above national averages, alongside reduced behaviour incidents through proactive support and strengthened relationships.
Strategic pastoral leadership and progress tracking — provision of strategic oversight by pastoral leaders to collaborate with teaching staff, remove learning barriers, and ensure disadvantaged pupils access an ambitious curriculum.	DfE guidance Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders highlights strategic leadership in removing barriers and driving progress for disadvantaged pupils through targeted collaboration. DfE - Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders	2	61000	Sustained academic progress and narrowed attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils across all key stages, verified through ongoing data analysis and targeted intervention.
Enrichment and Extra-Curricular Programme — ensuring disadvantaged pupils have equitable access to a broad range of enrichment activities (sports, arts, and cultural experiences) by removing financial and logistical barriers.	EEF research identifies access to enrichment as a key component of effective provision. DfE research into Character Education and Development demonstrates that enrichment participation positively correlates with improved behaviour, attendance, and attainment for disadvantaged pupils. EEF - Pupil Premium Guidance Report DfE - Character Education Framework	3 & 4	11300	Increased participation of disadvantaged pupils in extra-curricular activities, driving improved attendance, engagement, resilience, confidence, and cultural capital.

Provision of a free daily school breakfast for disadvantaged pupils to remove barriers to learning and ensure readiness for the school day.	Food Foundation research highlights the impact of household food insecurity on concentration and learning. EEF evidence reviews show that free school breakfast provision improves attendance, punctuality, and classroom engagement for disadvantaged pupils. Food Foundation - Food Insecurity Data EEF - Free School Breakfast Provision	3	2800	Increased attendance and punctuality among disadvantaged pupils, leading to improved concentration, lesson engagement, and readiness to learn.
Establishment of 1:1 peer mentoring and reading buddy programmes, pairing Sixth Form students with younger disadvantaged pupils to support literacy, academic progress, and sports coaching.	EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit identifies peer tutoring as a high-impact intervention (+5 months' progress), proving particularly effective when structured and supported by trained mentors. EEF - Peer Tutoring Guidance	2 & 3	800	Improved reading fluency, comprehension, and academic confidence for disadvantaged mentees, alongside enhanced leadership and communication skills for peer mentors.
Provision of targeted, independent careers guidance, prioritising disadvantaged pupils to support engagement, ambition, and post-16 transition.	DfE's Pathways to Success report highlights that targeted careers advice improves post-16 progression and reduces NEET rates among disadvantaged young people. DfE - Pathways to Success	1 & 2	4700	Confirmed positive post-16 destinations for 100% of Year 11 disadvantaged pupils, with increased motivation, engagement, and informed career decision-making.
Provision of free instrumental music tuition for disadvantaged pupils to enhance academic outcomes, self-efficacy, and creative development.	EEF's Arts Participation report indicates that engagement in arts activities, including music tuition, positively impacts academic achievement, self-regulation, and broader skill development for disadvantaged pupils. EEF - Arts Participation Guidance	2, 3 & 4	10500	Sustained participation in music tuition supporting improved academic progress, attendance, engagement, and emotional wellbeing for disadvantaged pupils.

Total cost : £483110

Part B: Review of outcomes in the previous academic year

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

- In 2025-26, attendance for PP students rose by +0.74 percentage points to 93.88% (up from 93.14%). With non-PP attendance remaining flat at 96.00%, the gap between cohorts continued to close. This improvement evidences the combined effectiveness of quality first teaching and multi-layered pastoral support. Because PP attendance remains significantly above national and local benchmarks, we will maintain investment in our attendance strategy to drive continued progress.
- In 2025–26, there were 28 PP students suspended, which represents a suspension rate of 5.21 per 100 PP pupils. This remains below the national suspension rate of 10.88 per 100 pupils and demonstrates the impact of our inclusive curriculum, pastoral support, and early intervention strategies. We continue to monitor and refine our approaches to ensure all disadvantaged pupils can engage positively with school life.
- Our Key Stage 3 reading strategy continues to deliver strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, with overall PP progress matching non-PP peers and Year 8 PP students achieving an additional +5 months' progress. Standardized gains across all KS3 year groups exceeded the national average benchmark of 100, evidencing better-than-expected progress and strong literacy gains. From 2025 onwards, NGRT data has been tracked separately for PP pupils to enable more granular diagnostic analysis.
- Progress 8 for disadvantaged students in 2025–26 is +0.47, which is significantly above the most recent national figure for disadvantaged pupils (-0.57 in 2023). This demonstrates the significant progress towards closing the attainment gap for PP students, underpinned by high-quality teaching and targeted interventions.
- Our investment in the Core Enrichment offer meant that 100% of PP pupils accessed enrichment activities in 2025–26, supporting the development of cultural capital and students' growth as active citizens.

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

Further information (optional)

At St Mary's College we are committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of starting points or level of disadvantage, are able to succeed and leave school confident and prepared for their next steps in life. Students eligible for FSM or who are CLA continue to be monitored in the Sixth Form and support is provided as required to maintain progress towards and beyond targets.