

Pupil premium strategy statement – Thomas Mills High School & Sixth Form

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils.

It outlines our pupil premium strategy, how we intend to spend the funding in this academic year and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils last academic year.

School overview

Detail	Data
Number of pupils in school	1059 Years 7-11: 831
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	Year 7-11: 175/831 (21.1%)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended – you must still publish an updated statement each academic year)	2025-2028
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	November 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr P Hurst
Pupil premium lead	Mr A Chittock
Governor / Trustee lead	Mr T Allitt

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£155,719
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years <i>(enter £0 if not applicable)</i>	£0
Total budget for this academic year <i>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year</i>	£155,719

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our aim at Thomas Mills High School is to ensure that every pupil, regardless of background, can achieve their full potential. We recognise that pupils who are socio-economically disadvantaged may face additional barriers, and we are committed to reducing these gaps through high-quality teaching, strong relationships and timely, evidence-informed support.

The strategies outlined in this statement are intended to support all our disadvantaged pupils, including all pupil premium pupils, but will undoubtedly have a positive impact on all our pupils. We are led by specific barriers and challenges rather than labels, and stress that those students eligible for the Pupil Premium are not universally 'lower attaining' but are statistically, on average, making less progress than their peers.

High-quality teaching is at the heart of our school and our pupil premium strategy: in seeking to address disadvantage it is important that we focus on creating equity via quality first teaching for all pupils, which is a key whole school priority. We promote positive relationships between teachers and pupils: our inclusive approach allows staff to understand the needs of their pupils and adapt their teaching for the benefit of everyone. Being mindful of the individual challenges some students may face, it is recognised that those pupils who are disadvantaged may require more opportunities to respond in class, more challenging instruction, and more praise. We seek to address early language and literacy difficulties as well as gaps in social and emotional learning.

We recognise that academic progress will be enhanced most efficiently as a by-product of a successful whole-school culture, which promotes high levels of attendance and high expectations for all. According to the Office for National Statistics (2023), varying levels of income deprivation exist within our local area, with 30 neighbourhoods in east Suffolk falling within the top 20% least income-deprived neighbourhoods nationally and 19 amongst the 20% most income-deprived. We have seen over the last few years our proportion of pupil premium pupils increasing, and we are taking a proactive approach to prepare for an increase in pupils facing disadvantage. It is through our use of the Pupil Premium that we aim to negate these inequalities through the overall educational experience the school provides, including extra-curricular activities and trips.

In the words of Pupil Premium expert Marc Rowland: "It's a thousand little moments that lead to great attainment for disadvantaged pupils rather than those big, shiny interventions." There can be no single prescriptive intervention for every disadvantaged child, as every child who experiences disadvantage does so in a different way. Instead, we aim to create a consistent, inclusive culture where small everyday practices, rooted in strong teaching, positive behaviour and pastoral care, can help every disadvantaged pupil to thrive.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Lower literacy and numeracy levels reducing access to high quality teaching
2	Attendance: persistent and longer-term absence, particularly amongst our SEND pupils
3	Parental engagement
4	Mental health & wellbeing issues which impact engagement, behaviour, achievement and attendance
5	Year 11; post-16 aspiration
6	Lack of engagement in enrichment and extra-curricular activities

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 literacy levels allowing all pupils to access high quality teaching	Students with a below functional reading age are identified early and supported to progress. Improved reading ages across the school. Students develop the vocabulary and literacy skills to ensure they can access the curriculum.
Improved numeracy levels	Students with low numeracy levels are identified early and supported to progress.
Improved and sustained attendance	Attendance of disadvantaged pupils should be above local and national averages. Increased parental engagement with pastoral leads (Heads of Year & the Attendance Team) and form tutors to work together to identify barriers and improve attendance. Fewer EWO referrals needed.
Increased parental engagement	Increased parental attendance with parents' evenings and other key events (e.g. Year 11 Information Evening, Sixth-form Open Evening, Year 8 Options Evening, Careers Fair, Years 7-11 Tutors/Parents Evenings etc.) Greater awareness by parents of key events taking place through reminders. Improved communication.
Improved outcomes at KS4, and a reduction in the progress gap at GCSE level	Attainment gap reduced (or non-existent)

	Progress 8 gap reduced (or non-existent) when applicable
Disadvantaged pupils are empowered to make informed and aspirational post-16 choices.	Careers Programme firmly embedded into tutorial programme, so all pupils aware of who and where to source information from. Disadvantaged pupils to aspire to achieve their individual goals and feel confident of their choices post-16 and how to access them. All disadvantaged pupils in years 8-11 to have had one-to-one careers interview in every academic year.
Increase engagement in opportunities that enrich the curriculum, particularly extra-curricular activities and residential trips	Higher percentages of our Pupil Premium pupils participating in clubs on a regular basis. A larger proportion of Pupil Premium pupils attending trips, including activities week.

Activity in this academic year

This details how we intend to spend our pupil premium funding **this academic year** to address the challenges listed above.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £87,203

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Accelerated Reader Programme	EEF states that accelerated reader has an effect size of an effect size of +5 for students eligible for FSM, and appears effective for weaker readers as a catch-up intervention at the start of secondary school.	1
Library Development to increase cultural capital	Supports a culture of reading, as well as the wider school culture.	1
Improving quality first teaching through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to develop curriculum monitoring through subject leadership and evidence-informed teaching practices (including the 'Quality Improvement' and 'Quality Assurance' frameworks) - Development for the Teaching and Learning Policy into a more practical guide for teachers (Teacher Tool Kit) 	The EEF toolkit lays out a strong evidence base to support investment of Pupil Premium funding in developing higher quality teaching (e.g. Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning EEF)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that heads of department are able to co-plan effective curriculums and ensure their effective delivery, including use of data driven actions - Subject development meetings (using QI actions and reflection) - Whole staff CPD sessions (focus on SEND universal offer, feedback, adaptive teaching, curriculum sequencing, the 5Ps, as well as reviewing previous themes and ensuring they are embedded) <p>Pupil premium should underpin all decisions at every level: it should play a part in every departmental meeting agenda, CPD events, and curriculum review (QI). Senior staff and managers are to be supported with timely data driven actions.</p>		
<p>Year 11: Elevate Seminars (study skills workshops)</p>	<p>Links to supporting metacognition and self regulation, which as described above show significant impact (+7 months)</p>	<p>4, 5</p>
<p>Teacher recruitment & retention</p>	<p>Links to supporting quality first teaching, see above, as well as implementing the entirety of our strategy</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6</p>

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

Budgeted cost: £14,503

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Targeted Literacy & Numeracy catch-up	EEF guidance states that small group tuition and one to one tuition have an effect size of +4 and +5 respectively.	1, 4
Essential curriculum trips	Trips and visits help build cultural capital and allows pupils to access the core learning.	2, 4, 6

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

Budgeted cost: £54,013

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Attendance Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance policy and implementation from all staff (including staff CPD) - Continued employment of attendance officers (including data admin and administrative attendance officer) and targeted parental engagement 	<p>Supporting attendance EEF</p> <p>EEF guidance states supporting parental engagement has an effect size of +4.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</p>
<p>Behaviour Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of the Thomas Mills Way mantra, including teaching of behaviour, training for staff, and focus on positive working relationships - 'On call' system for supporting inclusion - Reviewing of patterns and trends regularly, to support early intervention 	<p>Supports attendance in lessons (see above), all teaching strategies, and the wider positive learning culture of the school Improving Behaviour in Schools EEF.</p> <p>EEF guidance states behaviour interventions as having an effect size of +4.</p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p>
<p>Transition visits and Year 5 visits Year 7 & Year 12 induction on PD day</p>	<p>A successful transition ensures children develop new friendships and have improved self-confidence, are settled well into school life, are used to their new routines and curriculum continuity. These all support our intended wider school culture.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 6</p>
<p>Inclusion Support Meetings, SES package</p>	<p>EEF guidance states social and emotional learning as having an effect size of +4.</p>	<p>1, 2</p>
<p>School Counselling and other signposting/referrals (school nursing, 4YP, Suffolk Young Carers, Kooth etc.)</p>	<p>EEF guidance states social and emotional learning as having an effect size of +4.</p>	<p>2, 4</p>
<p>Sixth-form peer mentoring</p>	<p>EEF guidance states social and emotional learning as having an effect size of +4 and mentoring +2</p>	<p>4</p>

CAT testing	Early identification of need to help with the targeted academic support and teaching strategies as described above	1
Support for extra-curricular trips and activities week	Whilst the impact of trips is unclear in the EEF framework, we feel that extra-curricular trips and visits help build cultural capital and supports our overall school ethos. We believe the way activities week is integrated into our culture helps character development and sense of belonging in our context. EEF guidance states that arts participation has an effect size of +3	2, 4, 6
Fully establishing the 'Thomas Mills Award', with particular focus on encouraging participation amongst disadvantaged pupils	The Thomas Mills Award has been carefully designed to support character development and our overall school culture. Participation supports a sense of belonging, which helps support attendance. Build a culture of community and belonging for pupils EEF	2, 4, 6

Total budgeted cost: £155,719

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Academic Achievement

Improving academic outcomes for our pupil premium cohort maintains a priority. Whilst we did not have KS2 data for this cohort, we used CAT4 scores to track progress. Our PP students underperformed in summer 2025 results, and show a significant gap in comparison to our non-PP cohort.

Measure (%)	All	Male	Female	PP	Non-PP
5x 9-4 incl. English and Mathematics	68	70	65	45	73
5x 9-5 incl. English and Mathematics	44	47	42	31	47
EBacc Achievement 9-4	29	28	30	17	31
EBacc Achievement 9-5	22	23	20	7	25
English and Mathematics 4+	72	75	69	45	78
English and Mathematics 5+	47	50	43	31	50
Attainment 8 Score	48.87	50.44	46.96	35.59	51.58

Improving combined English and Maths Grade 5+ outcomes remains a priority, and departments have identified specific curriculum and intervention actions to address this.

Whilst the data trends are not as positive as in previous years, we still feel that our accelerated reader program and literacy interventions continue to be beneficial to students. 7 of our Year 7 pupil premium students participated in paired reading and, on average, made expected progress across the year (+0.7 years). 70% of Year 7 students overall showed improvements in reading ages, and students starting with a below functional reading age generally improved with gains of up to 1.1 years. In Year 8, students improved on average by 0.45 years. This data will be worth monitoring, as we would hope to see gains more similar to the 2023-2024 period.

More students completed the Certificate of Entry and Functional Skills maths courses in Year 11 this year, in addition to their GCSE. The intention of this was to support our lowest attaining pupils in being able to understand the fundamentals of mathematics they will need for everyday life. The SNAP maths intervention program was used with Year 7&8 pupils with a high likelihood of dyscalculia. Pupils demonstrably improved in

their ability to count accurately and with speed, as well as recognise patterns, comparisons and connections between numbers. In the Autumn term 2024, 6th form students supported a 'paired maths' program to those underperforming in Year 8 sets (all groups). Pupil premium students were given priority and evidenced improvements in this time.

We have 14 of our 29 leavers studying for A Levels (48.3%), 12 students at college (with 1 studying at Level 3 and 2 at Level 2), and 1 student with an apprenticeship. At the time of writing we have 2 pupils from the school who are not in employment, education or training. These are PP pupils – one of whom started a college course but has not continued, and the other who has been struggling with attendance for some time. Both students are in touch with the early help team.

Attendance

Our overall attendance improved from 2023/2024, for both PP and non-PP students, with our gap between PP and non-PP attendance shrinking slightly (91.8% and 86.3% respectively). Our data compares favourably here to 'similar schools' (VYED), where pupils with FSM attended on average 84.7%. Students who are both pupil premium and SEND remain a particular focus in 2025-2026, as we still have significant work to do in this area. It should be noted that this is, in part, due to our comparatively low numbers of students on our SEND register. Looking at the start of this academic year, attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is "lower than at least a quarter of similar schools".

Behaviour

It is a continued trend that a larger proportion of our PP pupils have logged behaviour instances, and a greater proportion of these pupils are trapped in the behaviour cycle. Over the whole academic year there were 23 fixed term suspensions, with 16 of these being for PP students (total 56 days lost). There were 2 permanent exclusions, 1 of whom was PP.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the work completed in this area, however enhanced support in this area enables many students to engage more effectively with school routines and expectations. We aim to be a fully inclusive school, and hope to help more of our pupils engage positively with the learning opportunities available to them and use bespoke approaches to help individuals 'break' the behaviour cycle.

Wellbeing

Pupil premium pupils continue to be disproportionately represented in terms of wellbeing needs and interventions. The most common issues were relating to home issues, behaviour related to other safeguarding concerns, mental health and self-harm.

As a school we had 9 different students who received counselling through the school last year (4 of whom were PP), and 40 who accessed the school nursing service (10 PP). 8 students had FSP meetings (8 PP). This indicates the continued importance of our pastoral support for our PP students.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Trips

- Extra-Curricular Activities

Over the course of the last year, the number of students who attended a club fluctuated between the 50-60% of the overall cohort. For PP students, this appeared to be improving significantly, and the gap to be closing. To date (Autumn term 2025, so far), 53.8% of pupil premium pupils have reported attending at least one club – which is actually slightly higher than our non-PP cohort.

- Activities week

We had significantly more pupils participating in residential trips this year.

Year 7: 82.8% overall (PP was 72.4%)

Year 8: 76.3% overall (PP was 68%)

Year 9: 73% overall (PP was 56%)

We feel this is really important, and whilst there is still a significant gap in Year 9, the overall participation rate is much improved from previous years.

We are still striving to close the gap between PP and non-PP attendance at clubs, using strategies such as personal invitations and encouragement, along with whole school structures (e.g. the Thomas Mills Award).

Our strategy statement aims to address prevailing attainment gaps, encourage more students to actively participate in all aspects of school life, and deliver support for students' social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Externally provided programmes

Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you used your pupil premium to fund in the previous academic year.

Programme	Provider
Bespoke use of learning platforms	Accelerated reader, SNAP maths, ATS
Alternative Provision (not being used for 2025-2026 onwards)	The Nest, Pathway Skills

Service pupil premium funding (optional)

*For schools that receive this funding, you may wish to provide the following information: **How our service pupil premium allocation was spent last academic year***

The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils

Further information (optional)

Our strategy is guided by the EEF's principles and shaped by the specific challenges of our rural context. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at our school has increased in recent years, and our approach reflects the need for early identification, consistent monitoring, and coordinated support.

Our aim is to ensure that every disadvantaged pupil is consistently known, supported, and able to thrive within our rural community.