

Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our school's use of pupil 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	Discovery Special Academy
Number of pupils in school	170 (Nursery – Year 9)
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	65%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended)	2024-2027
Date this statement was published	November 2024
Date on which it will be reviewed	July 2025
Statement authorised by	Jennifer Duncan
Pupil premium lead	Ann Titchener
Governor / Trustee lead	Dean Jackson

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£140,080
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	£140,080

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Discovery Special Academy, our core objective is to ensure exceptional progress for all pupils by meeting them at their unique starting points and helping them achieve their full potential. We are committed to closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers by providing targeted support and creating opportunities for all.

Pupil premium funding is strategically utilised to eliminate barriers to learning and participation, ensuring every child can fully access and engage in the wide range of opportunities available to them. Regardless of socio-economic status or family circumstances, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment where all pupils are empowered to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Central to this commitment is a broad, balanced, and ambitious curriculum designed to support all aspects of pupils' development—academic, social, physical, and emotional. Our curriculum not only nurtures achievement but also prepares pupils for adulthood by equipping them with vital life skills, fostering independence, and instilling the confidence to become effective citizens of the 21st century.

Our approach is collaborative and personalised, built on a multi-agency framework with joint commissioning of services to provide a holistic support network. We take a responsive and highly individualised approach, tailoring interventions to each child's needs, strengths, and aspirations. This ensures that every pupil receives the support required to thrive.

We are equally committed to holistic development, promoting excellence and enjoyment by cultivating a supportive learning community. Our focus extends beyond academic outcomes to encompass the development of social and emotional skills, resilience, and independence, ensuring that all pupils are well-equipped to face the challenges of the future.

A key component of our approach is our strong pastoral focus, which provides comprehensive support to pupils and their families. Discovery Special Academy works closely with pupils to address individual challenges, nurture well-being, and build resilience. Through a compassionate and proactive approach, the academy ensures that every child feels valued, safe, and supported in their journey to achieve their personal best. This support extends beyond the classroom, fostering strong relationships with families and local stakeholders to create a unified network of care.

In the context of post-pandemic education, we are addressing the long-term impacts of disrupted learning while responding proactively to the growing and emerging needs of disadvantaged pupils. Building on previous initiatives, our current plan integrates evidence-based practices to accelerate progress and ensure sustained improvements. Discovery Special Academy is steadfast in its commitment to spending pupil premium

funding effectively and efficiently. By creating an inclusive and empowering educational environment, we ensure that all children are supported to excel and thrive in every aspect of their development. This approach prepares them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need for adulthood and beyond

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Acquisition of language and effective communication continues to be a significant barrier for all our pupils. 100% of our children have communication and interaction needs as part of their SLD diagnosis with over 60% having a diagnosis of ASD. Pupils' experiences beyond school and home can be limited reducing opportunity for rich exposure to language in the early years.
2	Ensuring all pupils have personalised, high quality, well-rounded grounding in early literacy, language and communication leading to high quality phonic and comprehension development.
3	Complex sensory needs impact on pupil's ability to engage, attend, focus and regulate.
4	Pupils come into the academy with low levels of sense of self, personal development and ability to understand and regulate emotions. This was compounded throughout the pandemic and some pupils are displaying increased needs in the area of emotional wellbeing and regulation.
5	The vulnerability of families remains a critical area of need. It is essential to support families in engaging with their child's development and understanding how to access necessary support and services. This awareness is key to ensuring consistent attendance and promoting positive progress.
6	Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) face unique challenges when transitioning out of school and into adulthood.

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
<p>Improved levels of language, communication, pupil sense of self and resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will make progress in their communication and language development relative to their starting points over a 12-month period (evidenced through PIVATS progress, MAPP, Functional skills and EHCP outcomes). • An embedded approach to communication is evident across the academy. This includes high levels of oral language and communication skills for pupils who are able, and a developed, progressive approach to AAC. • Staff are aware of the impact of language and communication on progress for disadvantaged pupils. • Pupils are confident to communicate in different settings and with different people in the academy and wider locality. • Effective pupil voice develops a sense of self, confidence and agency • Pupils are able to express their sense of self through appropriate communicative means by making choices, expressing opinions and demonstrating confidence in different settings and situations (e.g. trust choir events, performances, work experience, community visits) • The core values pupils need to succeed in their future lives will be embedded.
<p>Pupils make good progress in their phonic and reading comprehension development through a clear focus on early reading skills and a structured, progressive approach to all reading areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85%+ of pupils on the semi-formal curriculum meet or exceed their PIVATS targets in reading as generated by CASPA • Personalised MAPP data, individual case studies and learning journeys demonstrate that pupils on the informal pathway make good progress in early reading from their own personal starting points. • 85%+ of pupils following Functional Skills accreditation meet or exceed their target • Early reading skills lay the foundation for comprehension development for pupils who are developmentally ready. • There is an embedded and structured approach to teaching comprehension which recognises the importance of early language and communication development as the pre-requisite for this. • Reading of high quality texts is embedded within wider subjects across the curriculum.
<p>Pupils are ready to learn, are able to better regulate their sensory and emotional needs (with support), have a growing sense of self and therefore make good progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will have regular access to a range of appropriate therapies to support holistic development. • Staff are confident with delivering a range of appropriate therapies. • Therapies are chosen and delivered based on accurate understanding of need. • Pupils have access to a range of environments and experiences that support their development in all areas. • Reduced incidents of significant behaviour recorded on CPOMs for targeted children. • Monitoring demonstrates pupils are focused and able to access learning. • Pupils make good progress against individual targets.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely external referrals are made to support pupils needs.
<p>Families are well supported by the academy, are aware of services they can access and attendance is improved (particularly PA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school attendance to be at least 94% in the year 2024-2025 with aspirations to increase this in subsequent years. • PA to be below 20% in the academic year 2024-2025, with aspirations to reduce this in subsequent years. • Families are supported to develop the key knowledge, understanding and strategies to support their children at home which in turn impacts on their well-being, attendance and progress. • Families are signposted to services and referrals are timely and lead to effective support from external agencies. • Families have a support network within the academy community and beyond.
<p>Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are successfully prepared for transitioning out of school and into adulthood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable careers programme is in place enables pupils to have knowledge and confidence about their post school opportunities and options. • Pupils study a range of accreditations relevant to employment sectors and their interests. • Pupils access a range of experiences and encounters, work-places and employees, enterprise projects. • Pupils have encounters and experiences with other adult support services available. • Pupils are prepared for independent or supported living. • Pupils' health and well-being is positively supported through the curriculum and wider experiences.

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: £77,684

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Clear, focused CPD based on analysis of pupil and academy needs (quantitative and qualitative) including CPD on language acquisition, communication (AAC), phonics, emotional well-being (linked to PSHERE), therapeutic approaches, accreditations and preparing for adulthood.	EEF states that ensuring an effective teacher is in front of every class, and that every teacher is supported to keep improving, is the key ingredient of a successful school and should rightly be the top priority for Pupil Premium spending.	1,2,3,4,5,6
Development of early literacy, language and communication teaching, resources and a progression document to support language acquisition and comprehension skills.	EEF Preparing for Early Literacy report. Language provides the foundation for thinking and learning and should be prioritised EEF Early Literacy Report Oral language interventions and reading comprehension strategies can both result in +6 months gain.	1,2,6
Purchase further communication, emotional regulation, positive relationships, core values boards for additional areas of the new academy building		
Monitoring and moderation of early reading and phonics teaching and assessment by English Leader.	Ensuring accurate assessment of phonic development ensures understanding of next steps EEF Early Phonics Report	1,2
Recruitment of additional level 2 TAs across the academy to support pupils sensory, social and emotional wellbeing and therapeutic access will ensure teachers are able to focus on teaching and learning. Appointed wellbeing and behaviour HLTA to support	TAs have access to training in order to ensure they are fully prepared for their role in the classroom TAs are employed to add value to the classroom and support what teachers do (more time for teachers to teach, report page 7) TAs in this instance, are supporting pupils to develop independent learning skills and ability to self-regulate through structured	1,2,3,4,6

the development of the TA and pastoral team.	interventions (e.g. SIT, BLAST, phase 1 phonics) Best use of TA report	
Recruitment of independent careers advisor (Career Wave) to provide independent advice and guidance to secondary pupils	<p>Good careers provision outweighs the starting disadvantage gap by meeting young people's individual needs.</p> <p>High quality careers education is helping young people become more career ready and achieve positive destinations. As students progress through secondary school, their career readiness grows (21%pts increase between Year 7 and Year 11)</p> <p>Young people's career readiness rising as result of careers education The Careers and Enterprise Company</p> <p>Children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience multiple vulnerabilities, significantly limiting their readiness and ability to learn but also impacting school absenteeism, and the likelihood of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) later in adolescence [3]. There is also evidence to suggest that disadvantage can decrease young people's aspirations [4].</p> <p>APPG-REPORT-SEPT-23.pdf</p>	4,6

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

Budgeted cost: £30.303

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
1:1 and small group tutoring support delivered by qualified teachers	Research supports high-quality teaching approaches delivered by qualified teachers and can result in a +5 month gain (See various research reports from EEF and others)	1,2
Further development of a range of language acquisition intervention	EEF Preparing for Early Literacy report. Language provides the foundation for thinking and learning and should be prioritised	1,2

including speech and language programmes	EEF Early Literacy Report Oral language interventions can result in +6 months gain.	
Development/purchase/CPD on augmentative and alternative communication aids – research and trial of electronic apps and aids for pupils who demonstrate capacity to access this	Bercow report 2008 AAC https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2013_Shining_a_Light_on_AAC.pdf	

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

Budgeted cost: £86,355.93

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Structured interventions to support sensory, social and emotional development delivered by level 2 and 3 TAs that supports high-quality teaching	Where TAs are working individually with pupils the focus should be on retaining access to high-quality teaching, for example by delivering brief, but intensive, structured interventions. Used in this way, research shows that TAs delivering targeted interventions can have +3/4 months impact.	1,2,3,4,5
Increased access to counselling for pupils	Best use of TA report Although limited, research demonstrates social and emotional learning approaches can also have a +4-month gain.	
Delivering Early Bird, Early Bird + and Teen life programmes to parents to support understanding of children's social, emotional and sensory needs.	SEL report	
Further investment in access to sensory/therapeutic spaces and classroom therapeutic provision, 2 x minibus lease	A large body of literature indicates that pupils with sensory integration disorders (SID) and learning disabilities (LD) benefit from sensory integration therapy (SIT) and multisensory activities (Ayres, 1979; Longhorn, 1988; Cheatum and Hammond, 2000; Bundy et al, 2002; Reynolds and Reynolds, 2010).	1,2,3,4,5,6
Increase access to varied and rich experiences to support the development of language and	All evidence linked to development of language acquisition, Early literacy and communication support this action. (action includes minibus lease/additional	1,2,3,4,5,6

communication for all, alongside preparing for adulthood	staff training to drive bus/ music teacher/EVOLVE)	
Granular focus on attendance data supported by case studies, increased engagement with families and regular discussion at SLT level with a particular focus on PA. CPD/discussions increase staff and parental understanding of the importance of good attendance to support welfare as well as educational outcomes (and the impact of non-attendance on families)	The DfE analysis below looks at the attainment of pupils at the end of KS2 and KS4 and the absence each pupil accrued across the whole key stage. This highlights the importance of good attendance as higher overall absence across a school career leads to lower attainment and progress. Pupils with a high persistent absentee rate are less likely to stay in education. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/absence-and-attainment-at-key-stages-2-and-4-2013-to-2014 Based on extensive research, parental engagement has a positive impact on average of +4 months' additional progress. Parental engagement	3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5
Continue programme of workshops for families, parents and carers. Workshops to be focused on a range of academic, therapeutic and wellbeing areas.	There is robust evidence that regular participation in sport and physical activity can support individuals to have improved physical health and better mental wellbeing. The UK CMOs'8 reported that the evidence to support the health benefits of regularly taking part in physical activity had become more compelling. They stated that performing regular physical activity is associated with improved attainment, concentration, and learning, improved mental health, and a healthier weight status. Wider benefits for young people doing regular physical exercise, reported by the CMOs,' included improved learning and attainment; managing stress; self-efficacy; improved sleep; the development of social skills; and better social interaction.	
Continuation of stay and share sessions, story and sign	Enhancing physical education provision and improving access to sport and physical activity in school. DFE (March 2024)	
Commissioning of Live it and Get Active sports after school club		

Total budgeted cost: £194,342.93

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 2022 to 2023 academic year.

Impact statement 2023-24	
Aim	Evidence of impact
Improved levels of language, communication, pupil sense of self and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vast majority of pupils continue to make good progress in their communication and vocabulary/language acquisition (84% disadvantaged pupils met or exceeded PIVATS targets). • Case studies for pupils measured on MAPP shows that they made very good progress in communication. • Pupils across the academy have had increased exposure to new language and vocabulary through a well-developed curriculum (evidenced through knowledge organisers, communication boards, book spines, 3 stories a day etc used). • A full review of key vocabulary across all areas of the wider curriculum has ensured continued clarity of progression. • Talk for writing has impacted on vocabulary and also language acquisition in writing as well as in symbol exchange communication (forming sentences) • Environments have been developed to support language and communication for all pupils • Pupils have participated in a range of external visits and experiences, including residentials, choir festivals
Pupils make good progress in their phonic and reading comprehension development through a clear focus on early reading skills and a structured, progressive approach to all reading areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils made good progress in their language and communication development across the academic year 2023-24 linked to phonics, reading and comprehension. • High quality phonics CPD for teachers and teaching assistants has ensured consistent and coherent approaches across the academy pathways, evidenced through monitoring. This has allowed early career teachers and apprentice teachers to be successful and confident in their phonics teaching, taking ownership and contributing to the development of resources. • 'Talk for Writing' approaches will continue to be adapted to be used in informal and EYFS groups. • SaLT interventions have continued to support the development of language, vocabulary and phonic acquisition. • Pupils continued to have increased access to a range of experiences and opportunities through the minibus lease. In 2023-24 this included participation in trust events, activities such as swimming, horse-riding, therapy dog visits, residential visit, and a range of community visits.
Pupils are ready to learn, are able to better regulate their sensory and emotional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils have regular access to sensory integration therapies. • Pupils have been assessed and reviewed by OT from Treetops Occupational Therapy to support sensory integration programmes which

<p>(with support) and therefore make good progress</p>	<p>has supported pupils being ready to engage in focused learning activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are confident with delivering these sensory integration therapies. Rebound training for Teaching Assistants has taken place. Further CPD to support new staff coming to the academy will be led by SLT in 2024-25. • Resources such as compression vests, weighted jackets, weighted blankets, vibrating cushions, z-vibes etc. purchased and have been a visible support to a range of pupils across all pathways. Resources will continue to be explored and purchased in 2024-25. • Group rooms and shared spaces have been developed to support regulation in all areas of the academy, supporting transition. These include, communication stations, vibrating panels. • Purchase of fish tanks x3 provides additional sensory input and transition support. • For the vast majority of targeted pupils there have been reduced incidents of significant behaviour recorded on CPOMs. Incidents of distressed behaviour are low in the academy (see CPOMS) • Additional level 2 TA support has offered access to education and learning environments, allowing teachers to focus on teaching and learning and ensuring all academic, therapeutic and social and emotional needs are catered for. This has been further strengthened for 24/25. • Emotional well-being and behaviour HLTA has offered greater support to pupils to develop self-regulation, increasing access to learning. • Development of the academy farm provides opportunities for therapeutic interaction with animals to support emotional regulation and readiness to learn. • Monitoring demonstrates pupils are focused and able to access learning. • Pupils across the academy made good progress against individual targets (see data held in the academy).
<p>Families are well supported by the academy, are aware of services they can access and attendance is improved (particularly PA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school attendance was 92.9% (which is well above special school national attendance, and reflects a year on year increase). Disadvantaged attendance was 91.8%. This is an excellent outcome, which is significantly above national special school attendance (87%) and in line with the vast majority of mainstream settings. • School age PA was 19%, which is a significant decrease from the previous academic year and significantly lower than the national special school PA rate of 36.8%. • Families have been signposted to services and referrals were timely and led to effective support from external agencies and the academy pastoral and welfare team. • Pupil and Family Support Advisor has added capacity to the pastoral and welfare team increasing the number of families receiving early interventions. • Emotional well-being and behaviour HLTA has added additional support to pupils and the pastoral team.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Sensory Integration Therapy	Treetops Occupational Therapists
Movement skills	Madeline Portwood
BLAST	Developed in Stockton
Sports sessions and after school club	Live it and Get Active
Counselling	Time for You
Speech and Language	NHS
Therapy Dogs	Private provider
Horse Riding	The Unicorn Centre
Residential visit	Carlton Outdoor Centre
Residential visit - London	Private provider
Meadow project	Middlesbrough Arts
Intergenerational Project	Middlesbrough First
Sensory play centre visits	Pendragon/Senses
Careers advisor	Career Wave

Further information (optional)

To support the growing needs related to ASD within the academy community, this year we are continuing the application process for autism accreditation – this will allow us to audit and reflect on existing good practice and build on this using appropriate expertise in partnership with others.

The academy will deliver Early Bird+ and Teen Life training, in addition to Early Bird, to families following training with the national autistic society this academic year. This gives us an initial three-year license to run the training allowing us to offer increased support for families.

This academic year, the academy will continue to develop its careers and enterprise offer, particularly offering work experience and enterprise opportunities in year 9.

The academy has continued to engage with a range of external providers and charities to develop all environments in the academy to allow independence, preparation for adulthood, academic progress, emotional regulation and therapeutic access.