

## **Rugby Free Secondary School - Pupil Premium Overview Sheet 2025-26**

### **What is the Pupil Premium?**

Pupil Premium is funding to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools in England. Evidence shows that disadvantaged children generally face additional challenges in reaching their potential at school and often do not perform as well as other pupils.

### **Pupil Premium at RFSS:**

We have a deep understanding of our families and community, and are aware that we have an additional number of students who also face significant barriers, and are therefore considered to be eligible for the same interventions as their official Pupil Premium colleagues at RFSS, despite not being recognised nationally as such.

The percentage of students eligible for the Pupil Premium at RFSS is higher than the average across Warwickshire.

In-keeping with the national picture, the predominant ethnicity for Pupil Premium derives from the 'White English / British' group.

The significant quantity of Pupil Premium students at RFSS, means that much like the provision for SEND students, strategies have to be interwoven through quality-first provision for all, not just bolt-ons for specific sub-groups.

The numbers for each of these sub-groups can be found in the table that accompanies this document.

Along with our Pupil Premium students, we have high numbers of vulnerable students, many of whom were adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic - the majority of these suffered from SEMH-related issues. Some of these students make-up our school refusers (EBSA students). There are individualised plans in place to ensure these students return to school, and we are working with the Inclusive Attendance company to hone our approach to this group of students in particular.

In addition to this, we have a number of disadvantaged students who are not eligible for the Pupil Premium (at least initially), who have joined us from overseas and are EAL students. Many of these reside in shared or sheltered accommodation, or at the Dunchurch Park Hotel with other refugees. RFSS has provided uniform, clothing, food parcels and other items such as bicycles, for this group of students.

Finally, the cost of living crisis and economic recession has meant that many students and their families are now 'just about managing'. These students are tracked and monitored and discussed through Safeguarding Briefings on a weekly basis.

As with the students outlined above, RFSS has provided uniform, food and shopping vouchers for this group of students and their families.

### Pupil Premium & Looked-After Children:

Looked-After Children are also a Governmental focus-group, with funding increasing for LAC and previously LAC to £2530 per annum, for these students. We have 9 students in Care. This group will be an increasing area of focus for Ofsted, who will require an annual report from the virtual school head, which should include:

- Details of how the Pupil Premium for looked after children has been managed
- Evidence of how Pupil Premium spending has supported the achievement of children looked after by the local authority

As part of our excellent practice in relation to this group, we presented on our approaches to Pupil Premium progress and attainment at the ResearchEd National Conference in Milton Keynes, whilst we also spoken at the Virtual Schools Conference, in order to share our practice with other schools. We have also been recorded as part of our inclusive approach by the Student Voice organisation, whilst 41 school and Trust leaders visited us to see our practice over the course of the past 12 months.

### What are the Common Consequences (National):

- Disadvantaged students tend to have lower educational attainment compared to their peers.
- This attainment gap exists by 9 months by the end of Year 6 (1 academic year) and by 18 months by the end of Year 11 (2 academic years).
- The attainment gap has stopped closing for the first time in over a decade. This has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Office for Fiscal Studies shows that at the current rate of change, it will take 560 years for the attainment gap to be equalised.

### The Three Key Areas:

Evidence suggests that pupil premium spending is most effective when used across 3 areas:

1. High-quality teaching, such as staff professional development
2. Targeted academic support, such as tutoring
3. Wider strategies to address non-academic barriers to success in schools, such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional support

Our strategy has been built using the most current evidence and is continuously reviewed based on new research.

### The Six Central Barriers:

Taken from (EEF, 2021):

1. Technological Access: There is less access to technology. In several cases, access to technology is shared. In other instances, there is a lack of internet in the household.
2. Aspirations & Understanding: In several cases, there is a generational lack of aspiration, with many students encouraged to follow in the footsteps of their family members. Some disadvantaged households shy away from support mechanisms, sometimes due to embarrassment.
3. Parental Engagement & Support: There are often increased pressures on disadvantaged students to earn money, as opposed to studying at home. The need for survival often outweighs delayed gratification.
4. Time: Studies indicate that on average, a non-disadvantaged student in secondary school works for 5.8 hours per week outside of school hours - this compares to 4.5 hours per week for a disadvantaged student.
5. Attendance: Disadvantaged students tend to have lower attendance than their non-disadvantaged counterparts. This is particularly evident when there are key events occurring, such as Mock Exams. Attendance to additional sessions after-school also tend to be lower for disadvantaged students.
6. Qualifications: Some schools narrow the curriculum, meaning that students do not sit qualifications that showcase their holistic skills.

### Contextual Barriers:

After analysing all of our Year groups at RFSS, the following barriers were found to be the most prominent:

**Year 8:** The most common barrier for this year group is 'Aspirations and Understanding.' This appears to be a significant marker for this year group as it occupies not only the highest number of Primary instances, but also Secondary as well.

**Year 9:** The most common barrier for this year group is 'Aspirations and Understanding.' This appears to be a significant marker for this year group as it occupies not only the highest number of Primary instances, but also Secondary as well.

**Year 10:** The most common barrier for this year group is 'Technological Access.' There are more students in this year group who rely on their mobile phone as their main source of technological access. The most common secondary Barrier as reported is attendance to school.

**Year 11:** The most common barrier for this year group is 'Time', though 'Attendance' also features heavily. There is a correlation between both, but how we give this group opportunities at GCSE, will be key.

*Our analysis and school-based research indicates that Barrier 2, 'Aspirations and Understanding' is the most prevalent barrier across Key Stage 3 at RFSS, and that Barrier 5 is particularly common within Key Stage 4.*

***For a further overview of how we tackle each of the barriers, please see the attached matrix.***

### The Seven Steps to Success:

Taken from (EEF, 2021):

1. What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference: improving teaching quality generally leads to greater improvements at lower cost than structural changes. Good teaching for all pupils has a particular benefit for disadvantaged pupils.
2. Targeted small group and one-to-one interventions have the potential for the largest immediate impact on attainment.
3. The transition between phases of education – notably early years to primary, and primary to secondary – is a risk-point for vulnerable learners. Year 7 often sees the gap widen further and never recover.
4. Catch up is difficult: we should aim to get it right first time round for all children.
5. Literacy is a vital component for disadvantaged students and there is no excuse for not deploying the existing, extensive evidence to support the teaching of it.
6. Essential life skills (or 'character') are important in determining life chances and can be measured in a robust and comparable way. Much less is known, however, about how these skills can be developed and whether they lead to increased academic attainment.
7. Sharing effective practice between schools – and building capacity and effective mechanisms for doing so – is key to closing the gap.

### Teaching & Learning Strategies:

We have had a renewed focus on Pupil Premium students in recent years, with several CPD sessions relating to quality-first teaching and learning strategies that research suggests are instrumental in accelerating the progress of Pupil Premium students.

Thus far, these have included:

- Ensuring that Pupil Premium students are not sat together in seating plans

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 1 (What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference), in order to allow students to work with other students who may have increased levels of cultural capital.*

- Ensuring that Pupil Premium students are not grouped together during paired / group tasks

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 1 (What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference), in order to allow students to work with other students who may have increased levels of cultural capital.*

- Ensuring that questions are deliberately targeted at Pupil Premium students in a cold-calling manner

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 1 (What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference), in order to allow students to work with other students who may have increased levels of cultural capital.*

- Ensuring that live modelling takes place in lessons (WAGOLL)

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 1 (What happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference), in order to allow students to work with other students who may have increased levels of cultural capital.*

- Pupil Premium Focus 3 students for each half-term.

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 2 (Targeted Intervention), in order to ensure students are deliberately targeted by classroom teachers through positive discrimination.*

- Early interventions for English and Maths from Year 7 onwards.

*This strategy has been utilised in order to conform to Step 2 (Targeted Intervention) and Step 4 (Catch Up), in order to ensure students are deliberately targeted from Year 7 onwards to ensure that the gap does not widen further.*

In addition to this, we have begun to analyse and report on the progress of Pupil Premium students in all year groups, not just those who are in examination cycles.

### Additional Research:

#### **Teach First:**

In 2021, Teach First released a manifesto entitled 'A Fighting Chance for Every Child – Ending Educational Inequality'. This manifesto was released following detailed research into the Covid-19 pandemic, and was underscored by the notion that '*Educational inequality is rife in this country. Less than half of disadvantaged students (45%) pass English and Maths GCSEs (45%), the minimum entry requirement for most options after school.*'

Within the manifesto, Teach First outlined the eight most significant components that they are lobbying the Department for Education about:

1. Increase school funding.
2. Increase Pupil Premium funding per student.
3. Boost the Covid-19 recovery package.
4. Pilot a reduction in teachers' timetables and loadings.
5. Make the curriculum broader and more inclusive for all.
6. Support the development of aspiring student leaders.
7. Invest in careers education.
8. Ensure every child has access to an electronic device and the internet.

### ***House of Commons Library:***

In December 2022, the House of Commons held a research briefing in response to gathering concerns about the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium. Following the publication of national GCSE results in August 2022, educational leader concluded that the key stage 4 (GCSE phase) disadvantage gap “increased by the largest annual amount since comparable statistics have been available over the last decade.” To counteract this, there are Governmental plans at GCSE, for higher levels of funding for disadvantaged students, weighted more heavily toward persistently disadvantaged pupils – ie, those who have been eligible for FSM for most of their school careers.

Much like the Teach First manifesto, much of the concerns reside around funding for Pupil Premium students, given the sheer quantity of students who are now in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

2021-22 academic figures indicate that 2.2million students are in receipt of the Pupil Premium, with £2.68billion spent nationally on an annual basis. At present, schools receive £985 per student, which is set to be increased to £1035 per student from 2023-24.

Other key changes relate to admissions, with priority admissions given to those students who are eligible for the Pupil Premium. Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children eligible for the early years pupil premium, the Pupil Premium, or the service premium.

There are also plans to extend the Pupil Premium to include those aged between 16 and 19 in full-time education. The new 16-19 Pupil Premium should be allocated at the same rate that it is allocated to secondary school pupils.