

PUPIL PREMIUM AND DISADVANTAGED PUPILS STRATEGY

2026–2027



Serenity School

Applies to	Serenity School
Strategy lead	Headteacher
Strategic oversight	Executive Headteacher / Director of Education
Financial oversight	COO / designated finance lead
Approved by	Proprietary Board
Review cycle	Annual

This strategy explains the school's principles and decision-making framework; the annual strategy statement records the actual cohort, funding received, barriers identified, planned expenditure and impact.

1. Purpose

Serenity School is committed to ensuring that socioeconomic disadvantage does not limit a pupil's achievement, participation, attendance, personal development or preparation for adulthood.

The strategy is deliberately school-specific and pupil-responsive. It is not a fixed package of interventions. Leaders will decide how support is targeted according to the individual pupil, the barrier being addressed, the pupil's pathway, key stage, communication and sensory profile, attendance, family circumstances, EHCP outcomes and the evidence of what is most likely to improve educational outcomes.

Where several pupils share the same barrier, support may be delivered to a group or cohort. Where the need is individual, the response will be bespoke to that pupil. The school may also adopt a whole-school or universal approach where this is the most effective and proportionate way of removing a barrier for disadvantaged pupils.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how the school identifies barriers affecting disadvantaged pupils and how any pupil premium funding received is used, monitored and evaluated. It also establishes the school's wider approach to disadvantaged pupils, including where a pupil is disadvantaged but does not attract pupil premium funding.

The school recognises that disadvantage and SEND can interact in complex ways. As a specialist SEND setting, the school will not assume that a barrier arises from disadvantage simply because a pupil has SEND, or vice versa. Decisions will be based on the individual pupil's starting points, EHCP, assessment information, attendance, communication, wellbeing and wider circumstances.

2. National funding context and Serenity's position

Pupil premium is intended to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For the 2026–27 financial year, the national eligibility categories include pupils who are or have been eligible for free school meals in the previous six years, looked-after and previously looked-after children, and eligible service children.

Serenity is an independent specialist setting. For eligible pupils educated in an independent setting where a local authority pays the full tuition fees, the Department for Education allocates pupil premium to the local authority. The local authority decides how much of that funding to pass to the school and must consult the setting about how the funding is used.

Accordingly, the school will distinguish clearly between:

- pupil premium funding actually received by the school;
- pupil premium or pupil premium plus retained and managed by the local authority or Virtual School Head;
- support funded through the pupil's commissioned placement or EHCP; and
- additional support funded by the school from its own resources.

Pupil premium will never be used to replace provision that the local authority is already required to commission through an EHCP or the core placement. It is additional funding intended to address identified barriers and improve educational outcomes.

Pupil premium is not a personal budget for an individual pupil. Where funding is received, it may support eligible pupils directly, groups of pupils with common barriers, or wider approaches that benefit disadvantaged pupils alongside other pupils, provided the expenditure is evidence-informed and consistent with the purpose of the funding.

3. Eligibility and funding rates for 2026–27

Eligibility	2026–27 rate	Funding route relevant to Serenity
FSM Ever 6 – Reception to Year 6	£1,550 per eligible pupil	DfE allocates to the local authority for eligible pupils in an independent setting where the LA pays full tuition fees.
FSM Ever 6 – Years 7 to 11	£1,100 per eligible pupil	As above.
Looked-after / previously looked-after children	£2,690 per eligible pupil	LAC funding is managed by the local authority/Virtual School Head; PLAC funding arrangements depend on the funding route.
Eligible service pupils – Reception to Year 11	£360 per eligible pupil	Allocated through pupil premium arrangements; primarily intended to support pastoral needs associated with service life.

Pupil premium is ordinarily allocated for pupils from Reception to Year 11. Post-16 pupils remain part of the school's disadvantaged-pupil strategy, but support for Years 12 and 13 will normally be funded through the post-16 funding/commissioning arrangements or the school's own resources rather than pupil premium.

4. Principles for use of funding

- High expectations: disadvantaged pupils are expected to achieve ambitious academic, personal and independence outcomes from their individual starting points.
- Needs first: expenditure is based on diagnosed barriers, not on a standard entitlement or identical offer for every eligible pupil.
- Additionality: pupil premium supplements, and does not replace, EHCP provision, commissioned therapies, statutory duties or ordinary high-quality teaching.
- Evidence-informed practice: funded activity will align, where applicable, with the DfE menu of approaches and relevant evidence, including the EEF evidence base.
- Pathway-sensitive: the same strategic objective may look different in Nurture, Semi-Formal and Formal provision.
- Impact over activity: leaders will evaluate whether funded approaches improve outcomes rather than simply recording that money has been spent.
- Whole-pupil view: academic progress, communication, attendance, regulation, wellbeing, independence, engagement and preparation for adulthood may all be relevant measures where they are genuine barriers to educational outcomes.
- No stigma: pupils will not be labelled or treated differently in a way that publicly identifies their pupil premium status.

5. Identifying barriers to achievement

At the start of the academic year, and whenever a pupil joins or circumstances change, leaders will identify the most significant barriers affecting disadvantaged pupils. Evidence may include:

- baseline and ongoing curriculum assessment;
- reading, literacy and numeracy assessment where relevant;
- MAPP, pathway-specific or other developmental assessment where appropriate;
- EHCP outcomes and annual review information;
- communication and AAC profiles;
- attendance and persistent/severe absence information;
- behaviour, regulation and engagement information;
- therapy and specialist reports;

- safeguarding, social care and PEP information where relevant;
- pupil and parent/carer voice;
- careers, destinations and Preparation for Adulthood information; and
- case sampling of disadvantaged pupils across pathways, key stages and vulnerability groups.

Leaders will avoid generic assumptions such as 'disadvantaged pupils need more interventions'. The school's annual strategy must identify the actual barriers in the current cohort and link expenditure to those barriers.

6. Serenity's universal no-charge offer and wider disadvantaged support

Serenity's wider approach to disadvantage includes a strong universal offer. The school does not charge pupils or families for ordinary participation in school life and seeks to remove financial barriers that could otherwise affect attendance, belonging, participation, dignity or access to the curriculum.

As part of this approach, the school currently provides, where applicable:

- school uniform without charge;
- educational visits, trips and curriculum-related activities without charge;
- a free school lunch for every pupil who wishes to eat one, irrespective of individual pupil premium eligibility;
- curriculum resources, equipment and materials required for learning without charge;
- access to enrichment and wider opportunities without asking families to make a financial contribution; and
- other practical support where a cost could create a barrier to participation or educational engagement.

These arrangements form part of Serenity's inclusive and disadvantaged-pupil strategy, but leaders will not automatically record the whole cost of universal provision as pupil premium expenditure. Where pupil premium funding is used towards a universal or wider-school approach, the school will be able to explain the identified disadvantage-related barrier, why the approach is appropriate, the proportion of funding used and the intended impact on eligible pupils.

Where the school meets these costs from its own resources, this will be identified separately as additional school-funded support for disadvantaged pupils and families rather than presented as pupil premium spend.

7. The DfE menu of approaches

Where pupil premium funding is received by the school, funded activity will normally fall within the DfE menu of approaches:

7.1 High-quality teaching

- high-quality teaching, assessment and curriculum adaptation;
- professional development, coaching and mentoring;
- evidence-informed approaches to reading, language, literacy and numeracy;
- technology that improves assessment, access or teaching; and
- staff development in approaches that particularly improve access for disadvantaged pupils with SEND.

7.2 Targeted academic support

- one-to-one or small-group tuition;
- targeted literacy, numeracy and language interventions;
- structured teaching-assistant or Progress Partner interventions;

- targeted resources or technology to overcome an identified barrier; and
- additional academic support for qualifications, accreditation or transition where appropriate.

7.3 Wider strategies

- attendance support;
- social, emotional and behavioural support;
- communication with and support for families;
- enrichment, cultural capital and wider life experiences;
- breakfast or meal support where this directly addresses readiness to learn;
- careers, employability and independence activity where linked to identified barriers; and
- other evidence-informed support that removes a barrier to educational participation or achievement.

8. How the strategy is applied across Serenity pathways

Pupil premium is not allocated by pathway, key stage or pupil as a fixed amount. The framework below shows the types of barriers and responses leaders may consider. The actual response will be bespoke to the pupil or cohort and may differ even where pupils are in the same pathway or year group. Any funded activity must be linked to the needs of the current disadvantaged cohort and to measurable intended outcomes.

Pathway	Typical barriers that may be prioritised	Examples of appropriate pupil premium use	Examples of impact evidence
Nurture	Low engagement or readiness to learn; communication barriers; dysregulation; anxiety; disrupted prior education; attendance; limited access to enriching experiences.	Targeted communication and interaction work; additional evidence-informed regulation/readiness-to-learn intervention; attendance and family work; structured literacy/numeracy at the pupil's developmental level; enrichment that develops engagement, confidence and functional independence; staff training directly linked to identified barriers.	Improved engagement and time available for learning; progress in communication; reduced dysregulation that interrupts learning; improved attendance; progress against individual curriculum/EHCP outcomes; increased independence and participation.
Semi-Formal	Gaps in functional literacy/numeracy; communication/AAC barriers; limited independence; difficulties generalising learning; attendance or engagement issues.	Targeted language, literacy and numeracy; assistive technology/AAC access beyond core commissioned provision where justified; small-group/1:1 intervention; community learning; travel, life-skills and independence work; targeted attendance support; staff development.	Progress from baseline in functional communication, literacy/numeracy and independence; improved curriculum access; stronger attendance/engagement; successful generalisation of skills; progress towards Preparation for Adulthood outcomes.
Formal	Attainment gaps; reading/writing/maths gaps; gaps caused by disrupted schooling;	Diagnostic assessment; targeted tuition; reading/literacy/numeracy interventions; subject catch-up; revision/exam support; curriculum	Accelerated or sustained progress from starting points; closing knowledge/skill gaps;

	low attendance; exam access; limited cultural capital; barriers to qualifications, careers or progression.	resources/technology; attendance intervention; careers/vocational enrichment; mentoring; staff CPD to improve disadvantaged-pupil outcomes.	qualification outcomes; improved attendance; improved engagement; successful transition to the next stage; improved careers readiness.
--	--	---	--

9. Key-stage considerations

The school will consider age and stage alongside pathway. The examples below are not a fixed spending formula.

Phase	Possible priorities	Examples of evidence
EYFS / Reception (where applicable)	Communication and language; PSED; early literacy/numeracy; engagement; attendance; sensory access; family engagement.	EYFS baseline/progress; communication measures; attendance; engagement and participation; transition evidence.
Key Stage 1	Early reading; communication; early mathematics; self-regulation; attendance; participation.	Phonics/reading assessment where appropriate; pathway assessment; communication; attendance; progress from baseline.
Key Stage 2	Reading fluency/comprehension; writing; mathematics; communication; independence; transition to secondary phase.	Standardised/internal assessment where appropriate; pathway data; attendance; curriculum progress; transition evidence.
Key Stage 3	Closing literacy/numeracy gaps; curriculum access; attendance; engagement; independence; careers awareness.	Assessment against starting points; reading/numeracy data; attendance; engagement; personal development/careers evidence.
Key Stage 4	Qualifications/accreditation; English/maths; vocational learning; attendance; careers; transition.	Qualification progress/outcomes; functional skills/GCSE or other accreditation; attendance; work-related learning; destination planning.
Post-16 / Key Stage 5	Pupil premium itself is not ordinarily allocated post-16. The school will nevertheless continue to identify and address disadvantage through appropriate post-16, commissioning and school resources, with a strong focus on independence, qualifications, employment, community participation and destinations.	Accreditation; sustained attendance; vocational outcomes; independence; work experience; careers activity; destination and transition evidence.

10. Looked-after and previously looked-after pupils

For looked-after children, the school will work with the relevant Virtual School Head and designated teacher arrangements so that any pupil premium plus is linked to the pupil's Personal Education Plan and identified educational needs.

Where funding is retained by the local authority, the school will seek clarity about what is being funded, how it supports the pupil and what evidence is required. Where funding is passed to the school, expenditure and impact will be recorded.

For previously looked-after pupils, leaders will ensure that their specific educational needs are considered within the disadvantaged-pupil strategy and that parent/carer insight is taken into account where appropriate.

11. Attendance, behaviour and safeguarding

Leaders will consider whether absence, anxiety, dysregulation, behaviour, safeguarding factors or family circumstances are barriers to educational outcomes. Where pupil premium is used in these areas, there must be a clear educational rationale and intended impact.

Support may include attendance casework, mentoring, family engagement, breakfast/readiness-to-learn support, structured social-emotional interventions or access to enrichment. Pupil premium will not be used simply to fund routine safeguarding duties or provision that the school is required to provide regardless of pupil premium status.

12. Decision-making and approval of expenditure

The Headteacher is responsible for the school's pupil premium strategy and for ensuring that expenditure reflects the needs of the current cohort. Decisions will be informed by relevant leaders, which may include the SENDCo, designated teacher for looked-after/previously looked-after pupils, safeguarding lead, curriculum leaders, attendance lead and finance staff.

Before expenditure is approved, leaders should be able to answer four questions:

Question	Required evidence
1. What is the barrier?	Cohort data, assessment, attendance, case sampling, pupil/parent voice or other evidence.
2. Why this approach?	Evidence-informed rationale and link to the DfE menu of approaches where the grant conditions apply.
3. What will success look like?	Clear intended outcome and measure, proportionate to the pupil/pathway.
4. How and when will we know?	Named owner, review date, monitoring source and evaluation method.
5. Is the response proportionate and bespoke?	Why this level of support, for this pupil/cohort, pathway and key stage; whether a universal, group or individual response is most appropriate.

13. Monitoring impact

Pupil premium impact will be reviewed at least termly. Monitoring will focus on whether the identified barrier is reducing and whether the pupil or cohort is achieving the intended outcome.

- academic and curriculum progress from individual starting points;
- reading, literacy and numeracy outcomes where relevant;
- communication and engagement;
- attendance and persistent/severe absence;

- behaviour/regulation where this is a barrier to learning;
- personal development, independence and participation;
- qualifications and accreditation;
- careers, work-related learning and destinations;
- parent/pupil feedback where relevant; and
- case-study evidence triangulated with objective data.

Leaders will not judge impact solely by whether an intervention was delivered. If an approach is not producing the intended impact, it will be adapted or stopped.

14. School-level evidence and Ofsted readiness

The school will maintain a concise evidence trail so that leaders can explain the disadvantaged-pupil strategy without relying on narrative alone. The minimum evidence should include:

Evidence	Minimum content	Review frequency
Disadvantaged pupil register	Eligibility/status; pathway; key stage; LAC/PLAC/service status where relevant; funding route.	Live / at least termly
Funding record	Amount received, source/LA, date, amount retained by LA where known, planned/actual spend.	Termly
Barrier analysis	3–5 school-level challenges plus pupil/cohort-level evidence.	At least annually; updated when cohort changes
Intervention/spend tracker	Activity, cost, cohort, pathway/key stage, owner, intended outcome.	Termly
Impact dashboard	Headline outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, appropriately contextualised by pathway and starting point.	Termly
Attendance analysis	Disadvantaged attendance and persistent/severe absence; actions and impact.	At least half-termly
Case samples	Small number of representative pupils across pathways/key stages showing baseline → action → impact.	Termly
Annual strategy statement	Funding, challenges, planned activity and evaluation of previous year.	Annual

Under Ofsted's September 2026 independent-school inspection toolkit, inspectors consider how leaders identify and support socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, how accurately needs are assessed, whether leaders act to reduce barriers, whether specialists are involved where necessary, and whether disadvantaged pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. The school's evidence should therefore show the link between identified need, action and impact.

15. Annual Pupil Premium Strategy Statement

Where pupil premium funding is received, the school will produce a school-specific annual strategy statement using the DfE structure as far as it is applicable to an independent setting. Serenity's expectation is that each school receiving pupil premium will publish an updated statement on its website annually, normally by 31 December, even where the precise DfE publication duty does not apply directly to the independent setting.

The statement will include:

- the number and profile of disadvantaged pupils, without identifying individual pupils;
- the amount of pupil premium funding received by the school and, where known, funding retained or managed by the local authority;

- the principal barriers identified from evidence;
- the intended outcomes;
- the evidence-informed approaches and expenditure planned;
- the school's wider no-charge/universal offer and any additional school-funded support that reduces financial barriers, clearly distinguished from pupil premium expenditure;
- how provision differs where relevant across Nurture, Semi-Formal and Formal pathways and key stages; and
- evaluation of the previous year's activity and impact.

16. Roles and accountability

Headteacher

- owns the school strategy and ensures it reflects the current cohort;
- ensures expenditure is additional, purposeful and evidence-informed;
- ensures leaders can demonstrate impact; and
- ensures the annual statement and supporting evidence are current.

Executive Headteacher / Director of Education

- provides challenge and quality assurance;
- checks that planned activity is educationally coherent and appropriate across pathways;
- reviews whether outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving; and
- supports consistency of expectations across schools without imposing identical spending.

Finance lead / COO

- maintains an auditable record of funding received and expenditure;
- ensures pupil premium is distinguished from core placement funding and other commissioned provision; and
- supports financial monitoring and reporting.

Proprietary Board

- provides strategic oversight and challenge;
- seeks assurance that leaders know the disadvantaged cohort and the barriers they face;
- reviews whether expenditure is appropriately targeted and whether it is improving outcomes; and
- ensures leaders are held to account for impact rather than spend alone.

17. Review

This strategy will be reviewed annually and sooner if national pupil premium arrangements, Ofsted inspection expectations or Serenity's funding arrangements change.

Appendix A – School Pupil Premium Strategy and Impact Tracker

This appendix is intended as the minimum operational record to sit behind the published strategy statement.

School	
Academic year	2026–27
Number of eligible pupils	
Pupil premium received by school	£
Pupil premium retained/managed by LA (where known)	£
Named lead	
Date strategy approved	
Next termly review	
Date published	

A1. Current barriers

Barrier / challenge	Evidence	Affected pathway / key stage	Intended outcome

A2. Planned expenditure and impact

Activity	DfE tier	Pathway / KS	Cost	Owner	Measure / target	Impact / review

A3. Termly headline dashboard

Measure	All disadvantaged	Nurture	Semi-Formal	Formal
---------	-------------------	---------	-------------	--------

Attendance				
Persistent/severe absence				
Curriculum progress				
Reading/literacy				
Numeracy				
Communication/engagement				
Qualifications / accreditation				
Preparation for Adulthood / destinations				

A4. Case-sampling questions

- What was this pupil's starting point and identified barrier?
- What additional action was taken, and why was this action selected?
- How did it complement rather than replace the pupil's EHCP/core provision?
- What evidence shows that the barrier reduced or the pupil's outcome improved?
- What changed as a result of the review?

References

Department for Education, Pupil premium: overview, updated 24 August 2026.

Department for Education, Using pupil premium: guidance for school leaders, updated 24 August 2026.

Department for Education, Pupil premium: conditions of grant for the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

Department for Education, Pupil premium 2026 to 2027: technical note.

Ofsted, Non-association independent school inspection toolkit, for use from 7 September 2026.