



# Pupil Premium Strategy Statement

## Hillcrest School

**2025 - 2028**

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	125
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	55%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-26
Date this statement was published	December 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	December 2026
Statement authorised by	Andrea Mead – Head Teacher
Pupil premium lead	Alison Miller
Governor / Trustee lead	Joyce Reid

## Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ FSM</li> <li>➤ LAC</li> <li>➤ Post LAC</li> <li>➤ Service Children</li> </ul>	£75,250 £11,960 £7,890 £350
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years <i>(enter £0 if not applicable)</i>	£0
<b>Total budget for this academic year</b>	<b>£95,450</b>

# Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

## Statement of intent

Hillcrest is a specialist school for pupils with complex needs. All of our pupils have Education Health Care Plans and have a wide range of additional needs. This includes ASC, social emotional and mental health, attachment and trauma, communication and interaction. 8% of our population are Cared for Children (CFC). 14% have social care involvement. As a school we have developed a number of strategies and interventions to support pupils including:-

- Zones of Regulation
- Learner centred time
- Hillcrest Minimum Expectations
- PACE
- THRIVE - individual and class profiles
- ELSA
- Outdoor Learning including Forest School
- Regulation spaces including:
  - sensory rooms
  - outdoor gym
  - chill room
  - rebound therapy
- Speech and language and Occupational Therapy

For the majority of our pupils to access learning, they have to be able to regulate and be 'good to go'. For the *whole child* to thrive it is imperative that we address non-academic barriers before learning can begin for all of our cohort. Emotional and sensory regulation is central to the pupils' readiness to learn and engage in all of the educational and social opportunities available within school, thus giving them the greatest opportunities for success.

As we have a high percentage of Pupil Premium Pupils (55%) and data shows that the academic gap between Pupil Premium Pupils and Non-Pupil Premium Pupils is small across both English and Maths, we have taken the decision to apply the funding as whole school strategy to benefit all. By targeting all pupils, this will, in turn be more beneficial for Pupil Premium Pupils. If the whole school community are able to self-regulate the direct result will be calmer classrooms which are more conducive to learning.

One of our priorities is to continue to remove barriers through a multi-disciplinary approach. Pupil Premium funding will be used over the next academic year to provide funding to continue to integrate specific SaLT and OT interventions so that additional resources can be targeted to best meet with the needs of the pupils in school. This multidisciplinary approach will utilise OT, SaLT, ELSA, THRIVE and trauma informed expertise working closely with class teams to provide goals and strategies to support groups and individuals. Direct impact of regulation and self awareness strategies to support engagement are:-

- Increased window of tolerance
- Increased self confidence and self help skills
- Social skills and opportunities
- Readiness to learn resulting in increased access to learning opportunities
- Aspirations and clear pathways for the future
- Pupils equipped with the functional skills required to be successful adults
- Increased independence and participation in reading and writing

A further priority is to develop and embed reading and writing across the whole school. We aim for all pupils to be functional reader and writers by the time they leave Hillcrest. Reading and writing strategies from Early Years level to Functional Level 1 are embedded in teaching and learning throughout the school including cross curricular links.

## Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	All pupils have an EHCP. A high proportion of pupils have complex needs linked with mental health needs, attachment and trauma histories, Autism and speech, language and communication needs. Primary needs:- 33% SEMH 26% ASC 18% SLC
2	Our assessments demonstrate that the majority of pupils access a holistic/academic curriculum Holistic:5% Holistic and Academic: 32% Academic: 63%
3	THRIVE profiles and assessments highlight gaps in development for pupils where interventions are required to support readiness for learning
4	Pupils access a wide range of OT support including sensory spaces, outside gym, rebound therapy, OT based groups. Occupational Therapists work with pupils and class teams to develop support plans and strategies to support regulation and functionality.

5	Pupils who have significant attachment and trauma needs can struggle to regulate which, in turn, impacts readiness to learn. Pupils with high sensory needs require a wide range of therapeutic support (both through specific OT and SaLT trained staff and teaching staff who are upskilled by therapists)
6	Our observations and discussions demonstrate that a high proportion of pupils have communication difficulties resulting in increased dysregulation and distress
7	Assessments and observations carried out by our Speech and Language Therapist demonstrate many challenges faced by pupils with regards to their “hidden” communication and interaction needs often resulting in distress and dysregulation
8	Assessments and observations show that, due to their significant learning needs, our pupils generally have greater challenges around attention, concentration and readiness to learn
9	A focus across school is to increase independence and functionality to support our pupils to be best prepared for adult life when they leave Hillcrest
10	A high percentage of pupils in school have difficulties with reading and writing. These arise from a variety of underlying needs including difficulties with visual perception, motor planning & co-ordination, muscle tone & strength, working memory, phonics, developmental language disorder and dyslexia. Baseline analysis in Autumn 2025 shows 39% pupils within the school need Fresh Start intervention. This has a knock-on effect across the whole curriculum.

## 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
To create a supportive, inclusive school environment that promotes positive mental health and emotional well-being for all pupils, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive targeted support to overcome barriers to learning and personal development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased pupil engagement – movement up through the flight paths</li> <li>• Impact is evidenced through improved THRIVE profiles, assessment outcomes and case studies for targeted pupils.</li> <li>• Impact is demonstrated through improved outcomes recorded in OT programmes and individual pupil case studies.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from pupils shows that targeted interventions (e.g., THRIVE, OT programmes, well-being initiatives) are positively impacting pupil well-being.</li> <li>• ELSA questionnaires provide evidence of the impact of interventions on individual pupil well-being and resilience.</li> <li>• iASEND and Personal and Social Development data shows measurable progress in pupils' personal, social, and emotional development over time.</li> </ul>
<p>Pupils will demonstrate improved emotional regulation, resilience, and readiness to learn, with reduced incidents of dysregulation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact is evidenced through individual pupil learning journals and case studies, showing improvements in emotional regulation, self-reflection, and engagement with OT and SaLT</li> <li>• Pupils move through support stages as recorded on the Bespoke Offer Flowchart, with evidence of positive outcomes at each stage.</li> <li>• Accreditation outcomes show that pupils achieve recognised qualifications and skills relevant to their development.</li> <li>• Pupils consistently apply metacognitive strategies to enhance their readiness to learn, demonstrating awareness of their own thinking and learning processes.</li> </ul>
<p>Increase use of outdoor learning spaces to support emotional and social development with links to curriculum objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetabled sessions ensure all pupils have the opportunity to access the spaces</li> <li>• Access is monitored via the booking form and gaps identified and actioned</li> <li>• Impact is evidenced through improved THRIVE profiles, assessment outcomes and case studies for classes.</li> <li>• Staff are upskilled through targeted CPD led by Forest School trained practitioners.</li> </ul>

<p>Pupils can use a range of communication strategies to support understanding and to develop expressive communication skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SaLT strategies to be disseminated to teaching staff by qualified therapist.</li> <li>• Termly Individual Learning Plan targets with SLC focus linked with EHCP long term targets</li> </ul>
<p>Every pupil will leave Hillcrest with the tools, support, and resilience to achieve their potential and succeed in adulthood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional focus across the Key Stages giving pupils the experiences and opportunities they need to be functional adults</li> <li>• Functional/PSHE focussed curriculum is delivered and assessed on individual basis</li> <li>• Pupil voice is actively used to identify individual functional skills needs, ensuring learning is relevant and personalised.</li> </ul>
<p>All pupils will develop increased independence and active participation in reading and writing across a variety of contexts, while Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils will build on confidence and self-reliance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist software such as Clicker Writer and DocsPlus will provide pupils with reasonable adjustments to support their reading and writing through features such as a document reader, speech feedback, spell checker, word prediction, word grids and word banks.</li> <li>• All pupils who need Fresh Start will access the programme regularly and/or will have personalised action plans</li> <li>• Reading Champion will support implementation of reading strategies across Key Stage 3</li> </ul>

## 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: £6,110

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
National College	National College to support staff CPD including curriculum, learning and beyond.	1,2,5,6,8,9,10
P&I Training	Yearly re-accreditation to develop in house trainers who can deliver P&I training to all staff to ensure that a consistent approach towards de-escalation and physical intervention strategies.	1, 5, 6, 7
THRIVE	4 THRIVE practitioner – 2 training course per year to maintain THRIVE Practitioner status  <a href="https://www.thriveapproach.com/impact-and-research">https://www.thriveapproach.com/impact-and-research</a>	1,2,3,5,6,8
Fresh Start training	Reading Champion to complete Fresh Start training to support implementation in school  <a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/read-write-inc-and-fresh-start">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/read-write-inc-and-fresh-start</a>  <a href="https://www.ruthmiskin.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Fresh_Start_case_study_schools.pdf">https://www.ruthmiskin.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Fresh_Start_case_study_schools.pdf</a>	10
SaLT and OT training	Developmental Language Disorder - what is it, key signs and their impact on learning and life skills, strategies to support pupils with persisting language difficulties  Motor Functions - gross and fine motor skills, impact of motor difficulties on health & wellbeing, daily living skills and in the classroom, strategies and equipment to support pupils	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9

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

Budgeted cost: £47,059

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Specialist SaLT provision for specific students to increase communication skills and ability to learn	Input from SaLT is provided at individual, small-group, and whole-class levels, as well as through clubs tailored to pupils' specific interests and needs. This approach has been shown to enhance communication, foster peer relationships, and support the development of self-regulation strategies.	1, 5,6,7,8
Specialist OT provision supports students by providing advice and targeted interventions to develop skills that enhance learning and promote independence throughout their lives.	<p>OT evidence demonstrates that therapeutic support for sensory and physical needs improves students' functionality and regulation, leading to greater engagement in learning and expanded opportunities</p> <p>Stephen W Porges – The Polyvagal theory</p> <p><a href="#">The polyvagal theory: neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation -</a></p>	1, 5,6,7,8
Curriculum Support – Clicker/Docs Plus/Ipads	<p>Clicker/DocsPlus is a versatile tool that can be used in school, college, at home, and in the workplace, providing pupils with a functional word processor that promotes independence and engagement across a variety of settings. DocsPlus is also utilised to support pupils during exams, enhancing accessibility and confidence.</p> <p><a href="https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker">https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker</a></p> <p><a href="https://crickmedia2.blob.core.windows.net/files/docs/product-files/clicker-7/rvsd-teacher-use-of-cricksoft-to-support-literacy-2018-final.pdf?svrsn=bffcaae0_34">https://crickmedia2.blob.core.windows.net/files/docs/product-files/clicker-7/rvsd-teacher-use-of-cricksoft-to-support-literacy-2018-final.pdf?svrsn=bffcaae0_34</a></p>	1, 5,6,7,8
Fresh Start resources	Fresh Start resources accessible and refreshed to ensure availability for sessions.	8

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

Budgeted cost: £42,281

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Student Support Team	<p>Working closely with families to build trust and collaboration, enabling targeted support that encourages students with previous attendance challenges to participate fully in school life.</p> <p>Peer mentoring to develop students within school to pair with another student acting as a positive role model. This builds relationships outside of normal school contact, build confidence or the mentor whilst demonstrating positive behaviour for the mentee.</p> <p>Regular rebound therapy sessions delivered by student support team to aid regulation, develop communication skills, increase confidence and self esteem and build trusted relationships.</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/behaviour-interventions</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.reboundtherapy.org/about/benefits">https://www.reboundtherapy.org/about/benefits</a></p>	1,4,5,6,7,8
Jigsaw Therapy support to play	Structured outdoor play provides opportunities for students to engage socially, fostering both independent play skills and positive interactions with peers.	1,4,5,6,7,8
Sports sessions	<p>Coaching in a variety of sports provides students with opportunities to try new activities, discover their strengths, and develop skills that support positive, healthy lifestyles. The structured coaching also promotes self-regulation as students learn new techniques and build confidence—for example, through sessions like Box Fit.</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/physical-activity">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/physical-activity</a></p>	1, 4, 9

Music	<p>Further development of the school’s music offering aims to cultivate students’ musical interests, enhancing confidence, social interaction, independence, resilience, and supporting emotional well-being through its therapeutic impact.</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation</a></p>	1, 9
Transition Administrator / Family Support	<p>Builds strong relationships with students and families prior to their start at Hillcrest, allowing sensitive information to be gathered to create personalised support toolboxes ready from day one. Acts as the primary point of contact between feeder schools, families, and Hillcrest to ensure smooth transitions and early learning success.</p> <p>Ongoing parental engagement is central to fostering effective home–school partnerships. By sharing relevant student information, Family Support can work collaboratively with families and signpost to external services when needed. Early relationship building at the start of a student’s journey makes this sensitive process more manageable and supportive for both the school and families.</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance/communicate-effectively-with-families">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/leadership-and-planning/supporting-attendance/communicate-effectively-with-families</a></p>	1, 9
Trampoline bed	Trampoline bed replacement to ensure continue delivery of rebound sessions	1,4,5,6,7,8

**Total budgeted cost: £95,450**

## Part B: Review of the previous academic year

### Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

The coaching accessed by senior leaders has been transformational in supporting them to drive meaningful change across the school. These coaching sessions have enabled senior leaders to reflect on their practice, develop their leadership skills, and grow in confidence within their roles, strengthening leadership capacity across the school.

We have three in-house **Prevention and Intervention (P&I)** trainers who deliver training across the school. This ensures a consistent *Hillcrest approach* when supporting both staff and pupils. Incidents are regularly reviewed, allowing staff to identify learning opportunities and implement improvements to practice through targeted training and reflection.

Four members of staff are trained in **Rebound Therapy**, ensuring that pupils have regular access to rebound interventions. The trained staff work collaboratively to develop programmes, share good practice, and run joint sessions. This supports pupils' physical development, sensory regulation, and engagement.

The school has two **ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)** practitioners who provide targeted support across the school. They run both group and individual sessions and offer guidance and advice to staff teams to support pupils' emotional wellbeing and development.

Specialist **Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT)** provision is in place for specific pupils, supporting the development of communication skills and improving pupils' ability to access learning.

We have increased our **Occupational Therapy (OT)** and **Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT)** provision across the school. This has enabled more pupils to access support through bespoke sessions, group work, and interventions delivered within class teams. As a result, pupils have shown improvements in communication, peer relationships, and regulation strategies, while also supporting sensory and physical needs. This contributes to greater independence and functionality, helping to prepare pupils for future learning and life beyond school.

**Clicker** and **Docs Plus** licences are available for use across the school. These assistive technologies support pupils in developing their writing skills, resulting in increased writing output and greater independence when recording their ideas.

Our **Trauma-Informed Counsellor** has worked with individual pupils while also supporting staff teams through debrief sessions and delivering trauma-informed practice training. This ensures that staff are better equipped to support pupils with complex emotional needs.

The **Student Support Team** works across the school supporting pupils, class teams, and families. They provide a wide range of expertise and play a key role in ensuring

that pupils receive the most appropriate interventions and strategies as they progress through school and prepare for their next stages.

Sports and music interventions provide opportunities for pupils to develop resilience, confidence, and self-esteem through personalised programmes that reflect their interests. By utilising the skills and interests of staff members, the school has fostered a growing enthusiasm for these areas among many pupils.

Transition is a key focus throughout the school year. Effective transition planning ensures the best possible start for new pupils and supports pupils moving between phases. Strong partnerships between home and school play a vital role in ensuring transitions are positive and successful.

## 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

## 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***

Included in the overall pupil premium funding reported above due to small amount

**The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils**

Included in the overall pupil premium funding reported above due to small amount

## Further information (optional)

*Use this space to provide any further information about your pupil premium strategy. For example, about your strategy planning, implementation and evaluation, or other activity that you are delivering to support disadvantaged pupils that is not dependent on pupil premium funding.*