



**MERRYLANDS**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY



# MERRYLANDS

## PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

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## Pupil Premium Strategy Statement

2025 - 2026

Merrylands is a member of the Berlesduna Academy Trust

Berlesduna Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales.

Company number 10267656.

Registered Office: Berlesduna Academy Trust, C/O Merrylands Primary School and Nursery, Cumberland Drive, Basildon, Essex  
SS15 6QS



## Pupil premium strategy statement

This statement details our school's use of pupil premium funding for the 2024 to 2025 academic year to help improve the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils. It outlines our pupil premium strategy, the effect that last year's spending of pupil premium had within our school and how we intend to spend the funding in the academic year 2025-26.

### School overview

Detail	Data
School name	Merrylands Primary School and Nursery
Number of pupils in school	549
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	21% (115 of 549 pupils)
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers <b>(3 year plans are recommended)</b>	2023-2026
Date this statement was published	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2026
Statement authorised by	Gemma Pryer Head of School
Pupil premium lead	Phil Andrews Deputy Headteacher
Governor / Trustee lead	Steve West Chair of Governors

### Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation the academic year 2024-25	<b>£186,480</b>
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	<b>£0</b>
<b>Total budget for the academic year 2024-25</b> If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year	<b>£186,480</b>



## Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

### Statement of intent

At Merrylands Primary School and Nursery, we believe that teaching and learning opportunities must meet the needs of all the pupils, irrespective of their background or the challenges they may face, to ensure we provide the very highest standards of education for every child. The focus of our Pupil Premium Strategy is to support disadvantaged pupils and provide them with opportunities they may not always have in order to achieve that goal.

Our ultimate objectives are to:

- Ensure the quality of education for all children is improved.
- Provide all children with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- Close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

High-quality teaching and targeted academic support are both at the core of our approach. By focusing on areas in which disadvantaged pupils require the most support, we aim to close the attainment gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. This should not only improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils but it should also provide sustainability and improved progress for non-disadvantaged pupils. Both high quality teaching and targeted academic support is provided in a variety of ways including:

- Experienced lead teachers who will coach those in their early teaching career as well as new subject leaders.
- A sports coach to up-skill teachers, develop children's participation and enjoyment in PE and to provide a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Targeted interventions delivered by LSAs in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Speech therapy to support pupils identified with speech, language and communication needs.
- Access to an Olympic-size swimming pool where children are taught by qualified swimming instructors.

The next focus area is for the wider approaches where support is also needed for non-academic issues that impact success in school such as **attendance**, behaviour and social and emotional challenges. Our approach will be responsive to common challenges and individual needs to help pupils excel. To ensure they are effective we will:



- Work closely with parents and vulnerable children throughout the school by ensuring our Parent Liaison Officer/Attendance Officer communicates and offers support to parents/carers.
- Ensure Counselling and Play Therapy sessions are available to pupils and their families to provide professional support and guidance.
- Contribute towards school trips, workshops and special events so that every child is able to attend and take part in order to deepen their understanding and take part in real-world experiences.
- Continue to provide a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 lunch club to develop social skills and wellbeing.
- Provide hands-on experiences in the natural environment which will increase children's confidence, problem solving skills and learn to manage risks through Forest Schools with a qualified leader.
- Continue to develop the Early Years outdoor area to provide enriching Outdoor Play opportunities.



## Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	<p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Our attendance data over the last 5 years indicates that attendance among disadvantaged pupils has been between 0.02% and 3.95% lower than for our non-disadvantaged pupils. Persistent Absenteeism amongst disadvantaged pupils is 3.2% higher than across non-disadvantaged.</p> <p>Our assessments and observations indicate that absenteeism is having a negative impact upon disadvantaged pupils' progress.</p>

2	<p><b>Attainment &amp; Progress (KS1 and KS2)</b></p> <p>Our assessments and observations indicate that some of our disadvantaged pupils are not meeting age-related expectations within the core subjects.</p> <p>The percentage of Pupil Premium children in KS1 and KS2 who achieved age related expectations at the end of the academic year (2024 - 25) are as follows:</p> <p>Years 1- 5</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Core Subject</th> <th>Pupil Premium</th> <th>All Pupils</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>51%</td> <td>74%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Writing</td> <td>50%</td> <td>72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maths</td> <td>52%</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Year 6</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Core Subject</th> <th>Pupil Premium</th> <th>All Pupils</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>36%</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Writing</td> <td>29%</td> <td>72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maths</td> <td>29%</td> <td>62%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Core Subject	Pupil Premium	All Pupils	Reading	51%	74%	Writing	50%	72%	Maths	52%	73%	Core Subject	Pupil Premium	All Pupils	Reading	36%	73%	Writing	29%	72%	Maths	29%	62%
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3	<p><b>Cultural Capital</b></p> <p>Observations and discussions with pupils and parents/carers indicate that many disadvantaged pupils have not had the opportunity to develop their social mobility and deepen their cultural understanding. This lack of hands-on experiences could therefore hinder a child's understanding into global issues and cultural awareness.</p>																								
4	<p><b>Speech, Language and Communication</b></p> <p>Assessments, observations, discussions with pupils and referrals from teachers indicate underdeveloped oral language skills and vocabulary gaps among many disadvantaged pupils.</p>																								
5	<p><b>Social, Emotional and Mental Health</b></p> <p>Our assessments, observations and discussions with pupils and their families have identified social, emotional and mental health issues for some of our pupils. This is also linked to children experiencing trauma.</p>																								
6	<p><b>Staff Development</b></p> <p>Discussions with teachers especially those in their early teaching career identify that further training and support is needed. As a result of school closures due to the pandemic and the challenges the school has faced with RAAC, teachers/subject leaders have not had the same opportunities and experiences as other teachers/subject leaders who are further along in their career. Also, staff development is needed so that the next generation of leaders are developed.</p>																								



## 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 achieve and sustain improved attendance for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high attendance rate by the end of 2025/2026 demonstrated by the overall attendance for all pupils to be at least 96% and the attendance gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantage peers is no more than 4%.  Reduced persistence absence rate from the end of 2025/2026 to be in line, or better, than national average.
To improve attainment and progress in KS1 and KS2 in the core subjects for disadvantaged pupils.	Reading, Writing and Maths outcomes by the end of 2025/2026 show that more than 70% of disadvantaged pupils meet the expected standard.
To improve speech, language and communication needs among the disadvantaged pupils.	Assessments and observations indicate significantly improved oral language among disadvantaged pupils. This is evident when triangulated with other sources of evidence, including engagement in lessons, engagements with their peers, book scrutiny and ongoing formative assessments.
To improve social, emotional and mental health for all pupils, particularly our disadvantaged pupils.	Sustained high levels of wellbeing evidenced through qualitative data from pupil voice, pupil and parent surveys and teacher observations.
To improve staff developmental opportunities.	Sustained improvement of the quality of teaching and learning evidenced through assessments, observations, pupil voice and staff surveys.
To develop full and rich play opportunities in EYFS and providing further opportunities for creative play.	Sustained improvement in physical development, wellbeing, social and emotional development, concentration and behaviour evidenced through observations, pupil voice, staff survey and CPOMS reports.
To provide all children with equal opportunities to deepen their knowledge and	All children to attend at least one school trip each academic year including a residential trip in Year 6 and participate in at least one workshop in order to deepen



<p>cultural capital they need to succeed in life.</p>	<p>their knowledge and understanding and to take part in real-world experiences.</p>
<p>To up-skill teachers, develop children's participation and enjoyment in PE (including swimming) and to provide a range of extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>All children to participate in at least one PE lesson delivered by the sports coach each week. Staff to work alongside the sports coach to further develop the teaching of PE. All children in Year 4 to take part in weekly swimming lessons.</p> <p>Sustained improvement in physical development and well-being evidenced through attainment and progress, observations, pupil voice and staff surveys.</p>



## Activity in this academic year 2025-26

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: £41037**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
Two lead teachers to provide coaching to those in their early teaching career and new subject leaders. They will work closely with them to identify and build on their strengths and to identify and address their areas of development.	<p>Research indicates that high quality teaching can narrow the disadvantage gap. By creating our own coaching programme, we can ensure that professional development effectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on staff knowledge</li> <li>• Motivates staff</li> <li>• Develops teaching techniques</li> <li>• Embeds practice</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Effective Professional Development   Education Evidence   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p>	2, 6
A sports coach to up-skill teachers, develop children's participation and enjoyment in PE and to provide a	<p>Research indicates that high quality teaching can narrow the disadvantage gap. A qualified sports coach and qualified swimming instructors can ensure we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on staff knowledge and confidence • Motivate staff</li> </ul>	2, 3, 5, 6



<p>range of extracurricular activities.</p> <p>Access to an Olympic-size swimming pool where children are taught by qualified swimming instructors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop teaching techniques</li><li>• Embed practice</li><li>• Develop children’s participation and enjoyment</li></ul> <p>Due to financial costs, pupils from disadvantaged background may be less likely to be able to benefit from sport clubs and swimming lessons outside of school. By providing sports clubs and swimming lessons free of charge or at a reduced cost, schools give pupils access to benefits and opportunities that might not otherwise be available to them.</p> <p>The prime benefit from regular physical activity is improved physical development however, there are also wider benefits such as improved health and wellbeing, which in turn may improve attendance thus improvement in attainment and progress.</p> <p><a href="#">Effective Professional Development   Education Evidence   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p> <p><a href="#">Physical Activity   Education Evidence   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p>	
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## Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support structured interventions)

**Budgeted cost: £76,447**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Targeted interventions focusing on disadvantaged pupils will be delivered by LSAs in KS1 and KS2. The interventions will focus on Maths, Reading, Phonics and Writing.</p>	<p>Research which focuses on teaching assistants who provide one to one or small group targeted interventions shows a stronger positive benefit of between four and six additional months on average. Often interventions are based on a clearly specified approach which teaching assistants have been trained to deliver: <a href="#">Teaching Assistant Interventions   Teaching &amp; Learning Toolkit   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Speech therapy to be delivered by a speech therapist and trained speech and language LSA. The Speech Therapist and LSA will support children with SLCN and will make 1:1 speech and language recommendations. They will also provide staff training and whole school approaches that can be used.</p>	<p>There is evidence to suggest that disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be behind their more advantaged peers in developing early language and speech skills, which may affect their school experience and learning later in their school lives.</p> <p>Given that oral language interventions can be used to provide additional support to pupils who are behind their peers in oral language development, the targeted use of approaches may support some disadvantaged pupils to catch up with peers, particularly when this is provided one-to-one:</p> <p><a href="#">Oral Language Intervention   Teaching &amp; Learning Toolkit   Education Endowment Foundation   EEF</a></p>	<p>2, 4</p>



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

**Budgeted cost: £74,136**

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Embedding principles of good practice set out in the DfE's Improving School Attendance advice.</p> <p>This will involve training and release time for staff to develop and implement new procedures. This will also involve the continuing appointment of the Attendance Officer to improve attendance particularly for our disadvantaged pupils by communicating and providing additional support for vulnerable families.</p> <p>New processes for tracking and advising attendance, arranging meetings (particularly for disadvantaged) families.</p>	<p>The DfE guidance has been informed by engagement with schools that have significantly reduced levels of absence and persistent absence.</p> <p><a href="#">Working Together To Improve School Attendance   Department for Education</a></p>	<p>1, 2</p>



<p>Professionally trained counsellor will work with pupils and their families to provide professional support and guidance.</p>	<p>Schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, by developing approaches tailored to the particular needs of their pupils. All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes: preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.</p> <p>Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support is crucial:</p> <p><a href="#">Mental health and behaviour in schools (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p>	<p>2, 5</p>
<p>Develop full and rich play opportunities in EYFS by providing further opportunities for creative play.</p>	<p>There are many benefits of full and rich play opportunities including improvement in physical activity, well-being, social and emotional development, creativity, behaviour as well as reduced accidents.</p> <p>Improved health and wellbeing can also improve attendance which in turn can improve attainment and progress.</p> <p><a href="#">Outdoor Play and Learning   Research and Evidence</a></p> <p><a href="#">Imagination and Creativity   Help for Early Years Providers</a></p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p>



<p>Contributing towards school trips, workshops and events so that every child is able to attend and take part in order to deepen their understanding and take part in real-world experiences.</p>	<p>There is an abundance of research that shows good quality learning outside the classroom adds significant value to children's learning. It provides a context for accumulating integrated and subject based knowledge and for developing key skills. Effective learning outside the classroom relies on problemsolving skills, cooperation and interpersonal communication which are all essential skills.</p> <p><a href="#">LOTC   Research</a></p>	<p>2, 3, 4, 5</p>
<p>Provide hands-on experiences in the natural environment which will increase children's confidence, problem solving skills and learn to manage risks through Forest Schools with a qualified leader.</p>	<p>Evidence shows that Forest Schools improves confidence, social skills, communication, motivation, physical skills, knowledge and understanding.</p> <p><a href="#">Forest Schools   Forest Research</a></p>	<p>1, 2, 4, 5</p>

**Total budgeted cost: £191,620**



## 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 2024 to 2025 academic year.

#### **Attendance**

Attendance and punctuality has been tracked more thoroughly throughout the year and procedures have been followed for persistent absence.

Attendance for the whole school during this academic year was 93.8% (94.2% previous year). Attendance for non-Pupil Premium children was 95.2% compared to 88.8% for Pupil Premium children. This shows a difference of 6.4% which is slightly higher than last academic year and much higher than our target of 4% target.

Persistent absence for the whole school during this academic year was 18.2% (17.1% previous year) compared to 46.0% (37.7% previous year) for Pupil Premium.

Several families were supported by the Parent Liaison Officer/Attendance Officer throughout the academic year including sign posting to agencies who can support with finance, accommodation etc.

#### **Coaching**

2 lead teachers supported teachers in the early stages of their teaching career. They met with them to discuss areas for development, observed lessons, gave constructive feedback and ensured the next steps were then actioned. They also covered their classes in order for the teachers to observe teaching taking place in other year groups. The feedback from the teachers and lead teachers has been extremely positive. Observations from SLT also indicate the positive impact coaching has had on both teaching and learning and have been able to identify how they have implemented new ideas into their own classroom.

#### **SENCO**

The SENCO has worked closely with staff, pupils and their families to ensure children's needs are met and to offer support and guidance to parents/carers. She has provided relevant staff training for teachers and support staff to support the needs of the children in particular classes and also helped prepare the new SENCO for his new role. The



SENCO has also helped many pupils transition to Merrylands as well as transition to their primary, special or secondary school.

### Sports Coach

The Sports Coach has worked alongside teachers and the PE lead to up-skill teachers and has also developed children’s participation and enjoyment in PE. This is evidenced through observations, pupil voice and staff feedback. She has provided extracurricular sporting activities at lunchtime and afterschool and has also attended competitions with the children to provide support and guidance.

### Progress and Attainment

Interventions have taken place across the school for identified pupils in the core subjects. The interventions provided accelerated progress for these pupils.

By July 2025, the data indicates that there has been a reduction in the percentage of Pupil Premium children across the school who were working at or above age-related expectations compared to the summer assessments in 2024 for Reading, Writing and Maths (see below table). However, it must be noted that in years groups that have particularly dropped there are increasingly high numbers of SEND including children working in the ASC (specialist provision). These children will be closely monitored as the terms progress. It is important to again note the link between persistent absence and working below age -related expectations.

	% of Pupil Premium children working at or above age related expectations.	
	Summer Term 2024 (107 pupils)	Summer Term 2025 (115 pupils)
<b>Reading</b>	59% / 63 pupils	50% / 50 Pupils Y1 72% Y2 47% Y3 59% Y4 38% Y5 38% Y6 36%
<b>Writing</b>	58% / 58 pupils	52% / 52 Pupils Y1 67% Y2 35% Y3 59% Y4 50% Y5 38% Y6 29%
<b>Maths</b>	58% / 62 pupils	50% / 50 Pupils Y1 78% Y2 47% Y3 55% Y4 50% Y5 31% Y6 29%

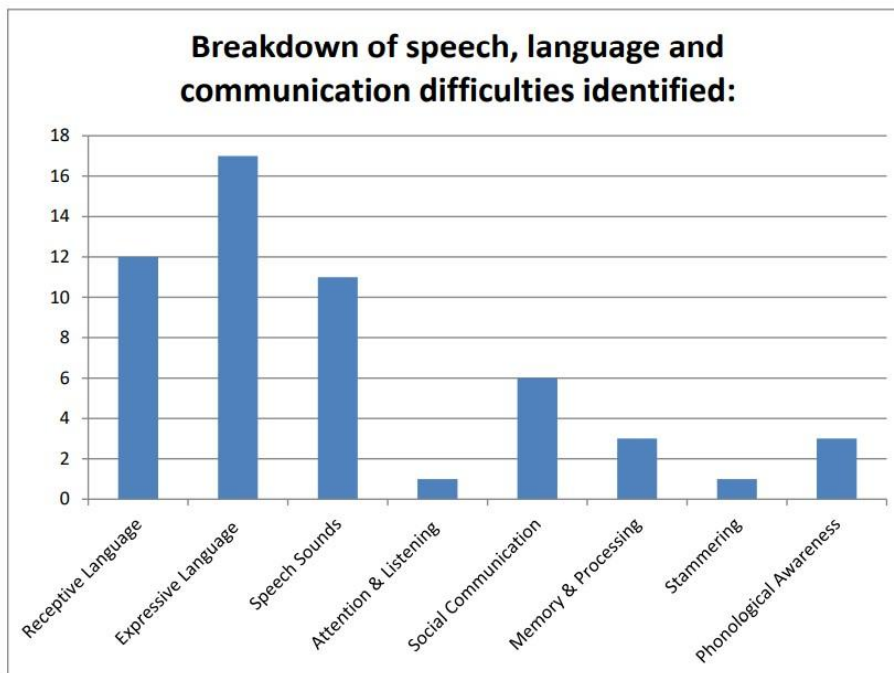


## Counselling

A counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society worked with three children one day per week. One play therapist provided sessions for individuals one day per week. During the course of the year, some children have completed their agreed sessions and new pupils have commenced accessing the support. Based on observations and pupil voice, children have expressed how they have found the sessions beneficial and have been given strategies they can use to support their own well-being and self-regulate their emotions. Staff have also observed positive changes within the classroom and on the playground resulting in less incidents involving these individuals.

## Speech, language and Communication Difficulties

The table below identifies the breakdown of speech, language and communication difficulties identified by the Speech Therapist at the start of the academic year:



The Speech Therapist and trained LSA, who delivers speech and language interventions, worked with children on both a 1:1 basis and in small groups to meet the set targets.



## **Outdoor Play and Learning / Forest School**

We have continued to develop our opportunities for outdoor play. The playgrounds have been “zoned” so a variety of new equipment and activities can be accessed. Pupil play leaders and pupil council have also helped with the development of this and have also been involved in running some activities for their peers. The outcomes have shown that we have reduced incidents at lunchtime, increased enjoyment as well as further responsibilities provided to the pupils. We have also observed improved social and communication skills and pupils are also entering classrooms happy and ready to learn.

During the course of the year, all children have been able to access the Forest School lessons for a half term, engaging in activities such as den-building, fire-lighting and working with tools. Children have demonstrated increased confidence and teamwork skills through these sessions.

## **Cultural Capital**

Each year group attended at least 1 school trip and our year 6 cohort attended their residential trip to the Isle of Wight. Each year group also experienced a workshop linked to the areas of learning during a particular term. The different experiences have helped to deepen pupil’s knowledge and understanding about particular subjects and has also helped them to retain subject knowledge. They have also helped pupils to take part in real-world experiences.

## **Early Years Pupil Premium**

Early Years have benefitted from workshops to celebrate events such as Chinese New year as well as the purchase of new outdoor play equipment. Each class has also participated in weekly Forest School Sessions for two half terms in Reception and weekly sessions throughout the whole academic year in Nursery.

## **Externally provided programmes**

*Please include the names of any non-DfE programmes that you purchased in the previous academic year. This will help the Department for Education identify which ones are popular in England*

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Provider</b>
Literacy & Numeracy Software	IDL