Pupil premium strategy statement: The Cedars Academy

Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth

Academic year 2026-27 (year 2 of our 2025-26 to 2027-28 strategy)

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.

The Cedars Academy is one special academy on two sites. Pupil premium is allocated to the academy as a whole, so this statement covers all of our pupil premium funding at both sites. The activity tables show which site each activity is at.

School overview

Detail	Data
School name	The Cedars Academy (URN 138652), with two sites: Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth
Number of pupils in school	252 pupils in Reception to Year 11 at the October 2025 census, which is the basis of our 2026-27 allocation. September 2026 roll: Low Fell 134; High Heworth 163, of whom 131 are in Years 7 to 11 and 32 are post-16.
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	52% (131 of 252 pupils) at the October 2025 census. Our September 2026 records show 143 eligible pupils: 65 at Low Fell (49%) and 78 at High Heworth (60% of learners in Years 7 to 11).
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers	2025-26 to 2027-28. This is the updated statement for 2026-27.
Date this statement was published	November 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	July 2027
Statement authorised by	Michelle O'Reilly, Julie Vincent and Keith Vincent, co-headteachers
Pupil premium lead	Joanne Carr (Low Fell) Dan Hearne (High Heworth)
Governor / Trustee lead	Andrew Thompson

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£168,850 deprivation pupil premium (DfE allocation for 2026-27, based on the October 2025 census)
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years	£0
Total budget for this academic year	£168,850 Split between the sites in proportion to eligible pupils: Low Fell £89,840 and High Heworth £79,010

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

Our aim is for disadvantaged pupils at both sites to achieve well from their own starting points, and to have the same access to communication, independence, wider experiences and preparation for adulthood as their peers.

As a special academy, all of our pupils have complex and individual profiles of strengths and needs. For pupils who also experience socio-economic disadvantage, there can be extra barriers to learning, taking part and wider experiences. We use pupil premium to remove those barriers. Disadvantage is one part of a pupil's context. It does not define their potential.

Our strategy rests on five principles:

- Communication is an entitlement for every pupil. We recognise and support speech, gesture, signing, symbols, visual supports and AAC according to each pupil's communication profile.
- Regulation is shared and relational. We look at the environment, sensory needs, communication and adult support when working out what helps a pupil feel safe and ready to learn.
- Independence grows through meaningful participation, self-care, self-advocacy and decision-making, with adults reducing prompting wherever they can.
- Equity does not mean identical provision. We give each pupil what they need to take part, communicate, learn and do well.
- Decisions follow assessment, not labels. Our pupils' profiles are complex, so we read research through a specialist lens and judge impact by each pupil's progress.

High-quality teaching is at the heart of the strategy. Some activity, such as staff training, benefits all pupils. Where pupil premium pays for whole-school approaches, we identify and evaluate the impact on disadvantaged pupils.

At Low Fell, provision is built around the developmental curriculum and its Informal, Semi-formal Play and Semi-formal Functional pathways. At High Heworth, the development plan's overall aim is to increase learners' independence, access to learning and preparation for adulthood. The younger year groups now include more learners with complex needs, so the focus is on reading and oracy, applied maths, regulation, and preparation for adulthood from Key Stage 3 through vocational tasters, work experience, the Coffee Hub enterprise and the Travel Training Hub. Pupil premium is paid for pupils up to Year 11, so at High Heworth it is generated by learners in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Challenges

This details the key challenges to achievement that we have identified among our disadvantaged pupils. They do not apply to every disadvantaged pupil.

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	**Regulation, emotional understanding and access to learning.** Most disadvantaged pupils meet or exceed their personalised expectations, but some need extra environmental adaptation, regulation support and targeted teaching to access learning. At Low Fell in Summer 2026, 85% of disadvantaged pupils in the Developmental Curriculum met or exceeded expectations in Understanding Feelings, compared with 89% of their peers. High Heworth: the younger year groups now include more learners with higher-complexity needs, and some learners need systematic phonics and reading support, or planned sensory and regulation support, to access learning.
2	**Communication and self-advocacy.** Some pupils need more consistent access to AAC, Makaton, symbols, visual supports and adult modelling so they can make choices, communicate needs and take part. At Low Fell in Summer 2026, 94% of disadvantaged pupils in the Functional Curriculum met or exceeded expectations in Expressive Communication, compared with 100% of their peers. High Heworth: oracy, communication and self-advocacy across school, community and adult-life settings are a development priority.
3	**Family engagement, attendance and access to support.** Some families face barriers such as financial hardship, English as an additional language, or difficulty finding their way through education, health, care and community services. These can affect engagement with school and access to support. School records show a growing number of families who need translated or interpreted communication and help to access services. High Heworth: SEND, anxiety and family circumstances lead to persistent absence for some learners, and transitions into, through and beyond High Heworth depend on strong family partnership.
4	**Independence, self-care and preparation for adulthood.** Some pupils need explicit teaching and consistent support to develop toileting, hygiene, dressing, eating, organisation and daily living skills, and to use them at home and in the community. At Low Fell in Summer 2026, 87% of disadvantaged pupils in the Developmental Curriculum met or exceeded expectations in Health and Self-Care, compared with 97% of their peers. High Heworth: learners need planned, increasingly real opportunities to travel, work and live independently, and to use maths and communication in real settings.
5	**Cultural capital, community access and wider experiences.** Cost, transport, accessibility and family circumstances can limit disadvantaged pupils' access to cultural, social, physical and community experiences. Pupils need adapted, supported opportunities to use their communication and independence skills in real settings. Widening community access for younger pupils is a priority at Low Fell this year. At High Heworth, strengthening community, cultural and citizenship experiences is a development priority.

Intended outcomes

This explains the outcomes we are aiming for by the end of our current strategy plan in 2027-28, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
1. Disadvantaged pupils have the sensory and regulation support they need to feel safe, engaged and ready to learn.	Targeted pupils show better engagement and participation from their own baseline, evidenced through Engagement Profiles, curriculum assessment, observations, regulation plans and family feedback. Agreed strategies are used consistently.
2. Disadvantaged pupils have consistent access to Total Communication, including Makaton, symbols, visual supports and AAC.	Targeted pupils make progress against their communication and EHCP outcomes and communicate more independently in more than one setting. Communication profiles are current, and staff use aided language input and agreed supports consistently.
3. Disadvantaged pupils become more independent in self-care, daily living and preparation for adulthood.	Each targeted pupil has a baseline and makes measurable progress in relevant skills, with less adult prompting where appropriate. Skills are used across school, home and the community and show in EHCP and curriculum reviews.
4. Families of disadvantaged pupils are better informed, engaged and able to access support.	More families take part in reviews, workshops and school activities where a barrier was identified. Families get translated or interpreted information where needed. Records show successful signposting and referrals, attendance concerns are addressed with families and partner agencies, and families report a better understanding of EHCP processes and services.
5. Disadvantaged pupils take part in a broad range of enrichment and community experiences.	Participation by disadvantaged pupils is tracked and cost and access barriers are removed. Pupil and family feedback and curriculum evidence show growing confidence, communication and independence in real settings.

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. Activities are chosen from the DfE menu of approaches. Costs are the pupil premium share only.

Teaching (for example, CPD, recruitment and retention)

Budgeted cost: £13,960 (Low Fell £6,960; High Heworth £7,000)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Neurodiversity-affirming CPD for all staff, planned from identified pupil need and followed up with coaching in class.	Sustained professional development with modelling, feedback and follow-up improves teaching. Careful adaptation of teaching underpins good SEND provision. We check impact through classroom practice and pupil progress, not just staff feedback. EEF: effective professional development EEF: SEND evidence review	1, 2, 4	Low Fell	£1,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
ELKLAN "Supporting Autistic Young People" accredited course for one member of staff, shared with colleagues across the school.	Explicit, interactive language support is one of the stronger approaches in the EEF Toolkit. The research is not specific to pupils with complex SEND, so we judge impact against individual communication profiles and EHCP outcomes. EEF: oral language interventions	1, 2	Low Fell	£700
Level 5 Thrive apprenticeship, with end-point assessment this year, to build in-house capacity for relational support, co-regulation and staff coaching.	Thrive publishes its own impact evidence. We do not treat programme claims as proof, and evaluate through each pupil's baseline, engagement and regulation. Thrive: impact and research	1	Low Fell	£1,660
Forest School Level 3 and Outdoor First Aid for a member of staff, replacing the previous Forest School lead.	Outdoor learning shows potential benefits for learning and wider outcomes, although the evidence is not specific to SEND. Our rationale is participation: outdoor settings give pupils more chances to communicate, regulate, make choices and use independence skills. EEF: outdoor adventure learning	1, 4, 5	Low Fell	£1,600
Attention Autism training for Key Stage 3 staff, so pupils can access Personal Development and RSE in a structured, motivating way.	Evidence supports explicit joint attention and communication approaches for autistic pupils in general, rather than this programme specifically. We evaluate engagement, communication and understanding of safety and boundaries from each pupil's baseline. EEF: oral language interventions EEF: SEND evidence review	1, 2, 4	Low Fell	£2,000
Fresh Start phonics: training for relevant staff and programme resources, with Salford Reading and Comprehension assessment used to target support.	Systematic phonics has strong evidence for pupils learning to read, and can help older pupils who have not yet secured decoding. Every learner who may need it is baselined and progress is reviewed termly. EEF: phonics	1, 2	High Heworth	£3,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Attachment and trauma-sensitive practice: staff development towards the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award, covering co-regulation, relational practice and the impact of adversity on learning.	Consistent, relational approaches help pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Impact is judged through learner voice on safety and trusted relationships, and through engagement and attendance. EEF: improving behaviour in schools EEF: SEND evidence review	1, 3	High Heworth	£4,000

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

Budgeted cost: £27,832 (Low Fell £10,544; High Heworth £17,288)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Total Communication and AAC: speech, language and communication interventions delivered by class teams and overseen by the speech and language therapist, with teacher release for planning and review.	Aided language input and consistent adult modelling help pupils with complex communication needs to communicate, make choices and take part. AAC is a route to communication, not a reward or a step before speech. RCSLT: augmentative and alternative communication	1, 2, 4	Low Fell	£2,000
Targeted communication and emotional understanding support from the Thrive practitioner (HLTA, one day a week), plus the Thrive Online subscription and assessments.	Responds to the Summer 2026 priorities of Understanding Feelings and Expressive Communication. Support is matched to the pupil rather than one model for all. EEF: SEND evidence review	1, 2	Low Fell	£8,544 (39 days at £196, plus £900)
Activities of daily living programmes informed by occupational therapy: toileting, hygiene, dressing, eating, organisation and communicating needs.	Responds to the Summer 2026 Health and Self-Care priority. Occupational therapy focuses on taking part in everyday routines at home, school and in the community. RCOT: occupational therapy for children and young people	4	Low Fell	£0 (within the Treetops service below)
Fresh Start phonics intervention for identified learners in regular timetabled sessions.	As above. Each learner has a recorded starting point and programme, reviewed termly. EEF: phonics	1, 2	High Heworth	£15,288 (78 days of HLTA time at £196)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Applied maths for identified learners through Maths for Life and the Coffee Hub: money, change, budgeting, stock, pricing and measuring.	EEF guidance supports building on what pupils already know through well-chosen tasks. Learners with SEND do not always carry skills from one setting to another, so the Coffee Hub gives planned chances to use maths for real. EEF: improving mathematics in key stages 2 and 3	4	High Heworth	£2,000

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

Budgeted cost: £127,058 (Low Fell £72,336; High Heworth £54,722)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Specialist sensory integration assessment and support from Treetops Occupational Therapy: 39 visits a year, including staff training, sensory profiles, environmental audits and advice for families.	Current RCOT guidance recommends a participation-focused approach with clear goals and review, and not using sensory interventions on their own. We evaluate participation, regulation, access and independence. RCOT: sensory approaches	1, 4	Low Fell	£21,631 (39 visits at £554.64)
Contribution to a Healthcare Assistant post delivering daily living and personal care programmes, including dressing and personal care around swimming and hydrotherapy.	The aim is to support pupils to take part and then reduce prompting, so that skills transfer across settings. RCOT: occupational therapy for children and young people EEF: SEND evidence review	4	Low Fell	£5,694 (4 hours a day, two days a week: 78 days at £73)
Makaton across school and home: a designated teacher leads staff training and coaching and runs parent and carer workshops (half a day each half term).	Makaton is one part of our Total Communication approach. Using the same signs at home and at school gives pupils more chances to communicate. RCSLT: augmentative and alternative communication	2, 3, 4	Low Fell	£2,000
Preparation for adulthood: HLTA support for work-related learning, employer encounters and community experiences for pupils in Key Stage 4.	Supported work-related learning gives pupils real contexts to use communication, choice-making, independence and work skills, and supports their EHCP outcomes. Preparing for Adulthood	4, 5	Low Fell	£3,822 (half a day a week: 39 half days at £98)

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Enrichment, cultural and community opportunities, removing cost and access barriers, including theatre, visits, residential experiences and visiting workshops. Five cultural workshops are booked for 2026-27.	Arts and enrichment evidence is general rather than specific to SEND. We judge impact through participation and pupils using their skills in real settings. EEF: arts participation	1, 4, 5	Low Fell	£3,145 booked, plus £1,044 for further visits: £4,189 in total
Outdoor learning environment: contribution to accessible outdoor provision for pupils without direct outdoor access, sensory and physical equipment, and a bike and road safety track.	Well-designed outdoor spaces give pupils regular chances to regulate, communicate, make choices and practise independence and road safety. EEF: outdoor adventure learning RCOT: sensory approaches	1, 4, 5	Low Fell	£5,000
Family Liaison: contribution to two full-time Family Liaison posts, covering translation and interpreting, EHCP support, attendance support, parent workshops, Early Help referrals and access to community services.	Purposeful, accessible work with families supports pupils' learning, particularly where families face communication or financial barriers. EEF: parental engagement	2, 3, 4	Low Fell	£30,000
Travel Training Hub: baseline each identified learner's travel independence and teach road safety, route planning, timetables, fares and public transport, moving from simulation to supported community travel.	Independent travel opens up work, college and community life. The aim is the greatest safe level of independence for each learner, not independent travel for all. Preparing for Adulthood	4, 5	High Heworth	£8,644 (39 days of HLTA time at £196, plus £1,000 for fares)
Work-related learning: the Coffee Hub (Café Under the Canopy) as an internal work-experience route, plus vocational tasters, work experience and volunteering.	Supported work-related learning gives real contexts for communication, money and employability skills, and supports EHCP and preparation for adulthood outcomes. Preparing for Adulthood	4, 5	High Heworth	£4,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s)	Site	Cost
Family Liaison: individual attendance support plans for learners at risk of persistent absence, structured family contact and multi-agency support, and transition planning with families.	Working with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance is central to DfE attendance guidance. Purposeful, accessible work with families also supports learning. DfE: working together to improve school attendance EEF: parental engagement	3	High Heworth	£26,478
Sensory integration room and individual sensory and regulation plans for identified learners, built into timetables rather than used only after dysregulation.	Current RCOT guidance recommends a participation-focused approach with clear goals and review, not sensory interventions on their own. RCOT: sensory approaches	1	High Heworth	£4,000
Forest School and outdoor learning area, linked to horticulture, sustainability, regulation and preparation for adulthood, including any staff training needed.	The evidence is general rather than specific to SEND. The rationale is participation, regulation and using skills in real settings. EEF: outdoor adventure learning	1, 4, 5	High Heworth	£6,600 (£1,600 for Level 3 and outdoor first aid training, plus £5,000 for the area)
Community and cultural experiences: educational visits and partnerships with local and cultural organisations, removing cost and access barriers.	Arts and enrichment evidence is general rather than specific to SEND. Impact is judged through participation and learners using their skills in real settings. EEF: arts participation	5	High Heworth	£5,000

Total budgeted cost: £168,850 (Low Fell £89,840; High Heworth £79,010)

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

We assess progress against each pupil's personalised expectations. Our groups are small, so a change for one or two pupils can move a percentage noticeably. We read the figures alongside individual progress, Engagement Profiles, EHCP outcomes, case studies and the views of pupils and families.

Low Fell. The Summer 2026 Progress and Achievement report covered 123 pupils: 76 in the Developmental Curriculum, of whom 39 were disadvantaged, and 47 in the Functional Curriculum, of whom 32 were disadvantaged. Most pupils met or exceeded their personalised expectations. The table shows the percentage meeting or exceeding expectations in selected areas.

Area (Summer 2026)	Disadvantaged pupils	Other pupils
Developmental: Listening and Attention	97%	97%
Developmental: Understanding	97%	95%
Developmental: Speaking	97%	95%
Developmental: Understanding Feelings	85%	89%
Developmental: Health and Self-Care	87%	97%
Functional: Expressive Communication	94%	100%
Functional: Relationships	94%	87%
Functional: Independent Living	97%	100%

Disadvantaged pupils matched or did better than their peers in Listening and Attention, Understanding, Speaking, Making Relationships, Sense of Self, Moving and Handling, People and Communities, The World and Technology, and in Functional Relationships. The areas to work on are Understanding Feelings, Health and Self-Care and Expressive Communication. The Health and Self-Care difference is four pupils.

In July 2026 the Low Fell Principal reported to trustees that pupil premium pupils were on the same trajectory as their peers, and that strategies in the pupil premium plan had had a significant impact, particularly sensory and communication input.

High Heworth. In 2025-26 the High Heworth plan focused on sensory integration and regulation, assistive technology, enrichment and therapeutic support. Outcomes for disadvantaged learners at High Heworth will be reported against the baselines in this statement from 2026-27. All 36 Year 11 leavers in 2025-26 had a recorded destination: 18 stayed at Cedars for post-16 and 18 moved to local authority or college SEN provision, with none recorded as NEET.

Attendance. In 2025-26 overall attendance for all pupils was 92.2% at Low Fell and 90.2% at High Heworth, and 17.9% and 24.2% of pupils respectively were persistently absent (below 90%). In June 2026 trustees noted that attendance in every category, including pupil premium, was above national averages.

Evaluation. At Low Fell, the sensory and communication input worked best, and leaders reported to trustees that it had a significant impact. Disadvantaged pupils did less well than their peers in Understanding Feelings, Health and Self-Care and Expressive Communication, so for 2026-27 we have targeted these directly: the Thrive practitioner focuses on emotional understanding and expressive communication, and the Healthcare Assistant and daily living programmes focus on health and self-care. At High Heworth,

sensory integration, outdoor learning and enrichment continue in 2026-27, and the focus has widened to reading, applied maths, attendance and preparation for adulthood. Based on this evidence we are on course to achieve the intended outcomes by 2027-28.

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
Thrive Approach	Thrive
Sensory integration and occupational therapy	Treetops Occupational Therapy
Attention Autism	Gina Davies Autism Centre
Makaton	The Makaton Charity
ELKLAN training	Elklan
Grid for Schools (AAC)	Smartbox
Read Write Inc.	Ruth Miskin Training
Outdoor learning and forest school	True North
Counselling	Kalmer

Service pupil premium funding

How our service pupil premium allocation was spent last academic year
Service pupil premium is paid for pupils from armed forces families. Its main purpose is pastoral support. In 2025-26 we received service pupil premium for a small number of pupils, so we describe its use in general terms to protect their privacy. We used it for pastoral support matched to each pupil: a trusted key adult who checked in with them regularly, extra preparation and reassurance at times of change such as a parent's deployment or a family move, and regular contact with families so that school and home worked together.
The impact of that spending on service pupil premium eligible pupils
Pupils were supported to stay settled and engaged in school, including during periods of change at home, and families valued the regular contact with school. We review impact for each pupil through their individual plans and will continue the same support in 2026-27.

Further information

Planning, implementation and evaluation. Impact is reviewed for each pupil, each activity and the strategy as a whole. We do not rely on percentage comparisons alone. We use curriculum assessment against personalised expectations, progress towards EHCP outcomes, Engagement Profiles and observations, communication profiles, daily living baselines, participation records for enrichment and work-related learning, family engagement records and case studies.

Leaders review activity during the year and change provision where the evidence shows it is not meeting need. Trustees review pupil premium spending at the Resources, Audit & Risk committee and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the Curriculum & Pupils committee.