

Pupil premium strategy statement – St Bernard's Catholic High School

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	648
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	30%
Academic year/years that our current pupil premium strategy plan covers (3-year plans are recommended – you must still publish an updated statement each academic year)	2025-2028
Date this statement was published	31 st December 2025 <i>Reviewed October 2026</i>
Date on which it will be reviewed	31st December 2027
Statement authorised by	D Vince
Pupil premium lead	D Vince/L Hamilton
Governor / Trustee lead	David Schofield

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£212,850
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (enter £0 if not applicable)	£0
Total budget for this academic year <i>If your school is an academy in a trust that pools this funding, state the amount available to your school this academic year</i>	£212,850

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

- *At St Bernard's Catholic High School, our ambition is that every child succeeds, regardless of background, circumstance or starting point. We are committed to ensuring that disadvantage is never a barrier to achievement, personal development or future opportunity.*
- *We do not view pupils as simply being eligible for Pupil Premium funding; rather, we recognise them as priority pupils whose needs, aspirations and potential must remain at the forefront of every decision we make. We know that each pupil's barriers are unique and therefore require personalised, responsive and ambitious support.*
- *Our approach is rooted in the belief that the most significant factor in improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is consistently excellent teaching. We prioritise high-quality, adaptive classroom practice and strive to ensure that pupils keep up rather than catch up. Through carefully planned curriculum delivery, targeted intervention and effective pastoral support, we aim to remove barriers before they become entrenched.*
- *Leaders have taken rapid and decisive action in recent years to transform the culture of the school following a period of underperformance. Behaviour, attendance, expectations and relationships have improved significantly, creating a calm, purposeful and inclusive environment in which pupils can learn and thrive. We recognise that vulnerable and disadvantaged learners are often most affected by low expectations, disruption and poor attendance and, therefore, have been at the centre of our improvement work.*
- *Whilst the school has secured notable improvements in culture and overall outcomes, leaders recognise that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain the most significant priority for further improvement. We are determined that the gains made in behaviour, attendance, inclusion and school culture now translate into stronger academic outcomes for all groups of learners.*
- *We are particularly committed to ensuring that disadvantaged pupils with additional barriers, including SEND, attendance difficulties and social, emotional or mental health needs, remain fully included within the life of the school. Through strengthened SEND provision, specialist staffing and a reduced reliance on external Alternative Provision, we are ensuring that pupils receive the support they need whilst maintaining access to a broad and ambitious curriculum.*

- *The impact of this strategy will be reviewed rigorously by school leaders and governors. We will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our approaches, adapt provision where necessary and maintain an unwavering focus on securing the very best outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Our aim is not simply to narrow gaps but to ensure every pupil develops the knowledge, character and qualifications needed to flourish in the next stage of education, employment and life.*

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Attendance <i>Last year, St Bernard's overall attendance was 92.0% compared to the National average for state-funded secondary schools of 91.4% (figures from FFT Aspire). The attendance for PP students was 86.84% compared to the 94.31% for non-PP students. PP National average was 86.2% (FFT Aspire) so lots of our attendance strategies in place are having impact. We therefore still need to invest in attendance as the number one priority to ensure all students are on site every day and making every day count, one of our key mantras and forms part of our shared language in the school community. As PP students disproportionately reflect the attendance figure, this investment and any associated strategies will have a greater impact for them bringing them in line with non-PP students. Major barriers to attendance come from high level of cover lessons, occasionally with external supply teachers. This is often an issue with disadvantaged students who are disproportionately high for classroom removals when the normal teacher is not present.</i>
2	Outcomes for PP students Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain significantly below those of their peers. In 2026, disadvantaged pupils achieved an Attainment 8 score of 19.8, with 15% achieving Grade 4+ in English and Mathematics and no disadvantaged pupils achieving Grade 5+ in English and Mathematics. Cohort analysis identified a combination of low prior attainment, SEND, attendance concerns, school refusal, social and emotional barriers and a number of pupils who had experienced significant disruption to their education, including previous placements in Alternative Provision and pupils identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion.

	Leaders recognised these challenges prior to the cohort completing Key Stage 4 and anticipated that disadvantaged outcomes would remain below national and school aspirations. Whilst these contextual factors do not diminish expectations, they reflected barriers which had developed over a number of years and could not be resolved within a single academic cycle. Leaders therefore prioritised improving attendance, behaviour, inclusion and engagement to ensure vulnerable pupils remained in education, accessed qualifications and completed their Key Stage 4 studies successfully. Many disadvantaged pupils achieved outcomes in line with, or exceeding, their individual targets despite significant barriers to learning. Leaders recognise that improvements in culture, attendance and inclusion must now translate into stronger academic outcomes. Early intervention, literacy, numeracy, adaptive teaching and strengthened SEND provision therefore remain strategic priorities.
3	Literacy Levels Linked to outcomes in examinations, levels of literacy are lower, on average, for our PP students. This is a major barrier to achievement and accessing the curriculum or gaining new knowledge. Spending time reading and developing literacy skills is a key priority for the school to ensure this barrier to achievement is removed.
4	Behaviour: Our observations and discussions with students and families have identified social and emotional issues for many students. COVID-19 limited social interactions in critical life stages for children and St Bernard's continues to see consequential behaviour in school that we would not have seen pre-pandemic – this is particularly evident with our new intake every year. The disadvantaged students were no doubt affected to a greater extent than non-PP students. St Bernard's behaviour records show that disadvantaged students are disproportionately represented when looking at serious negative behaviour logs (Isolation, Internal exclusion, suspension). 54% of all behaviour logs are by PP students for the academic year 2024-2025 (this figure is improving from the previous academic year but remains an ongoing issue we tackle). The number of teacher referrals about safeguarding concerns via 'CPOMS' software is also disproportionately high for PP students for the academic year 2024-2025.
5	Access St Bernard's has 30% disadvantaged students and serves varied wards in Barrow in Furness, England. There is a juxtaposition in our town and school community of wards in the highest quintile and in the lowest. This causes challenges in identifying need and working with the right families. The financial circumstances of some families mean that they are not able to afford some of the crucial materials needed for their children to access the curriculum. At St Bernard's, we recognise the importance of students being intentional in their learning and ensure all students are fully equipped regardless of their material wealth or background. Students often struggle to purchase full school uniform and PE kit along with stationery and ICT access and this has been particularly evident throughout the recent cost-of-living crisis.
6	PP and SEND

	A significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils also have identified SEND needs or present with barriers associated with cognition and learning, communication and interaction, SEMH needs and persistent attendance concerns. This overlap contributes to lower attainment outcomes, reduced curriculum access and poorer long-term outcomes. Leaders have therefore invested in specialist staffing, adaptive teaching, targeted intervention and enhanced inclusion provision to ensure disadvantaged pupils with SEND achieve ambitious outcomes and remain fully included within mainstream education.
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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
<i>Improved attainment among PP students across the curriculum by the end of KS4, particularly focussing on Maths and English Outcomes. This will be driven through high quality first teaching in the classroom, informed by regular staff CPD and targeted intervention for underachieving PP students.</i>	• Disadvantaged Attainment 8 improves from 19.8 to at least 28. • The attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrows significantly across all headline measures. • At least 25% of disadvantaged pupils achieve Grade 4+ in English and Mathematics. • At least 10% of disadvantaged pupils achieve Grade 5+ in English and Mathematics. • Disadvantaged pupils are represented proportionately in higher attainment groups throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. • Internal progress data demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils are making progress broadly in line with their peers. • Disadvantaged pupils with SEND demonstrate strong progress from their starting points
Improved literacy amongst PP students across KS3 by further embedding the St Bernard's Canon, Reading Plus programme and targeted Lexonic interventions. Reading age data will become routine in whole-school models and this data is widely communicated and understood by all staff.	Current data shows that Y8 and Y9 students are on average reading in line with their expected reading ages. Use of the reading plus platform to target all of KS3 and ensure that by the end of 25/26 academic year all pupils in KS3 are on average reading in line with their expected reading ages.

	Use of the reading plus platform to accelerate progress in reading ability across all metrics, this progress should exceed expected progress for the year. This will work to improve fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. Reduce the number of pupils in KS3 with a SAS reading score below 80 through targeted interventions using the Lexonic programme. Targeted interventions in Y10 and Y11 during personal development time using the reading plus platform to accelerate the progress of those pupils at KS4 with a reading age below age expected level. Reading data from the reading plus platform updated in arbor termly and readily available to teachers through their marksheets. Continued focus on the explicit teaching of vocabulary through the curriculum. Staff CPD to continue to focus on this with QA at all levels. Staff trained in literacy strategies with focus on: • Reading strategies • Use of curriculum materials to support reading Disciplinary literacy is embedded across the curriculum. This means that literacy is very high on every teacher's agenda for every lesson. • Reading ages improve for identified disadvantaged pupils. • At least 90% of pupils receiving literacy intervention demonstrate measurable improvement. • Literacy gaps reduce between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. • Improved written communication is evident through book scrutiny and assessment. • Increased numbers of disadvantaged pupils read at or above chronological age.
To achieve and sustain improved mental health and wellbeing for all students, including those who are disadvantaged.	Sustained high levels of participation with both internal and external mentoring programmes including Grownds, leading to

	positive teacher and staff survey outcomes but also teacher observed behaviours. Serious behaviour events are reduced for PP students to bring them in line with non-PP students.
To achieve and sustain improved attendance for all students, particularly our PP students. In student surveys (completed biannually), students will voice they are comfortable in school and happy to attend.	• PP attendance improves from 86.84% and continues to exceed national disadvantaged averages • Attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to remain above national disadvantaged averages. • Persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils reduces year on year. • The attendance gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrows. • All disadvantaged pupils below 90% attendance receive targeted intervention and regular review. • Rates of severe absence reduce significantly.

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: £ 100,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>Staff CPD- Improving and Embedding Literacy (£17,846)</i>	The EEF (Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools, 2019) identifies disciplinary literacy and high-quality teaching of reading, writing and oracy across the curriculum as one of the highest impact strategies for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The	2,3

	EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium (2023) states that professional development focused on improving classroom teaching has the strongest evidence base for raising attainment. Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework and Curriculum Research Review (2021) highlight the importance of a coherently planned curriculum with explicit attention to literacy and vocabulary development. Marc Rowlands' work on character and virtue education emphasises that literacy, reflection and language development underpin moral growth, responsibility and belonging, aligning with the school's virtues curriculum and Lenten focus on shared responsibility.	
<i>Recruitment and retention of teaching staff. Over staffing of English and Maths Department (£41,392)</i> <i>TLR posts in all core subjects to ensure stability of staffing in such key faculties. Including recruitment of additional TLR to strengthen teaching staff (£14,718)</i> <i>External professional development courses for middle and senior leaders (NPQSL/NPQML/ELP) £4,963</i>	The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium (2023) states that ensuring access to high-quality teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Stable staffing and subject leadership improves curriculum coherence, reduces disruption and improves behaviour and attendance. DfE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2023) identifies staff stability and workload reduction as critical to maintaining high-quality teaching, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities. EEF evidence shows that effective subject leadership and specialist teaching in core subjects such as English and Maths has a strong positive impact on pupil outcomes (+5 months progress). The DfE Professional Development Standards emphasise that leadership development improves teaching quality and pupil outcomes when focused on curriculum, pedagogy and school improvement.	3

	EEF research shows that well-designed leadership programmes indirectly improve pupil attainment by strengthening teaching practice, school culture and strategic use of evidence-informed approaches.	
<i>Curriculum decisions including the delivery of a knowledge-rich curriculum alongside a virtues curriculum. to ensure that students at St Bernard's are achieving more academically because of a transmission of rich subject knowledge. (£9,534)</i> <i>Creation of academic forms to strengthen achievement. (£9,534)</i>	Ofsted's Curriculum Research Review (2021) and EEF research on metacognition and learning stress that disadvantaged pupils benefit most from explicit teaching of powerful knowledge rather than assuming background cultural capital. Marc Rowlands' work on character education supports the idea that education should cultivate responsibility, virtue and meaning alongside academic knowledge. This aligns with our collective responsibility and the school's mission to develop the whole child. EEF research on behaviour and motivation highlights that structured academic communities and strong belonging improve engagement and reduce disruptive behaviour.	3, 4
Specialist Inclusion Teacher and Internal Inclusion Provision <i>Appointment of a specialist teacher with expertise in SEND and SEMH needs to strengthen provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.</i> <i>This role will:</i> • <i>Deliver personalised intervention.</i> • <i>Reduce reliance on external Alternative Provision.</i> • <i>Support disadvantaged pupils with SEND.</i>	Evidence suggests that high-quality teaching, targeted intervention and inclusive practice have the greatest impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Increasing capacity within school allows vulnerable pupils to remain connected to mainstream education, maintain positive relationships and access an ambitious curriculum.	2, 4, 6

• <i>Deliver targeted literacy and numeracy intervention.</i> • <i>Work with families to improve engagement.</i> • <i>Coach staff in adaptive teaching strategies.</i> • <i>Improve access to the mainstream curriculum.</i>		
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Targeted academic support (for example, tutoring, one-to-one support, structured interventions)

Budgeted cost: £ 75,000

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>Small Group Tuition-English and Maths (£17,428)</i> <i>Subject Support Department intervention and resources plus timetabled lessons of subject support (£9, 764)</i> <i>Period 6 Revision. (£7,693)</i> <i>Library Lessons and ongoing Reading Assessments. £6,219)</i>	EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit identifies small group tuition as having high impact (+4 months) particularly when targeted at specific gaps in learning and delivered by trained staff. EEF Guidance Report on Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants supports structured, well-planned interventions rather than ad hoc withdrawal. Regular reading assessments align with EEF recommendations for diagnostic assessment to inform intervention and track prog	2, 3, 4
<i>Pastoral support staff and teaching assistants (TAs) employed to work with targeted groups of</i>	EEF research notes that disadvantaged pupils are more likely to experience barriers linked to SEND, behaviour and wellbeing. Effective deployment of	4

<i>students, predominantly PP to improve achievement and aspirations as well as behaviour, attendance and wellbeing.</i> (£18,346)	pastoral staff and TAs can improve engagement, attendance and behaviour when linked to structured academic goals. DfE guidance on Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (2022) highlights the importance of trusted adults and early intervention for vulnerable pupils. The effective use of teaching assistants is crucial at St Bernard's. According to the EEF, SEND children are more likely to claim free school meals and so teaching assistants are more likely to be working with students from low income families	
<i>Supporting small numbers of students with the lowest reading ages through a programme of 'direct instruction'. This involves one smaller group of students in each cohort and therefore subsequent staffing costs associated with having a small set.</i> <i>DI support staff and staff training. £10,287</i> <i>DI resources £5,263</i>	EEF Toolkit identifies phonics and structured reading interventions as having strong impact for low-attaining readers (+5 months). The Social Mobility Commission's "State of the Nation 2022" report highlights literacy and numeracy as key drivers of long-term life chances in disadvantaged regions. Research on Direct Instruction (including EEF trials and international studies) shows particularly strong effects for students with significant learning gaps when programmes are intensive and delivered with fidelity.	2, 3, 4

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

Budgeted cost: £ 37,850

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<i>Supporting the learning and behaviour of students through</i>	Understanding the needs of individual students' needs ensures that solutions can be found. The schools' tiered	1, 4, 5

<i>pastoral specialist staff . The contribution of these staff to the work of pastoral leads to ensure behaviour policies are supported alongside individual students being supported, many of whom are PP. This includes training for pastoral staff and salary contribution £12,473</i>	pastoral structure ensures staff are able to provide support for those individual needs and make timely evaluations of next steps and actions. The EEF suggests moderate impact for low cost. The EEF highlight that these 'wider' strategies relate to the most significant non-academic barriers to success in school, including attendance, behaviour, social and emotional support	
<i>Supporting the emotional needs of our students involves a contribution to student services costs, social worker support and the mental health specialists in school. £6,418</i> <i>'Grownds' external provision £8,917</i>	DfE Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools guidance (2022) states that post-pandemic recovery must prioritise emotional health, particularly for disadvantaged pupils who experienced greater disruption. EEF evidence suggests mentoring and social-emotional interventions have moderate impact (+3–4 months) when targeted at specific pupils and integrated with academic support	4
<i>Attendance initiatives involving attendance officer roles, rewards and incentives for students Attendance staff salary contribution. Vouchers given as attendance prizes. £3750</i>	The correlation between attendance and academic achievement is easily understood. However, it is how these attendance issues can be addressed that is more complex. St Bernard's aims to embed the principles of good practice as laid out in the DfE's. EEF research indicates moderate impact for low cost for parental engagement. DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2023) sets out expectations for schools to use a whole-school approach including attendance officers, parental engagement and incentives. EEF research on parental engagement and attendance shows moderate impact for low cost, particularly when combined with pastoral support and consistent messaging.	1, 3
<i>Supporting the individual needs of our students' needs, for example uniform, equipment,</i>	The EEF highlights that there are specific features in a school that should be addressed through PP funding which will support students from low income	4, 5

<i>transport, trips etc St Bernard's Experiences:</i> <i>Year 7: Visit Waterpark</i> <i>Year 8: Visit Waterpark</i> <i>Year 9: Go to the theatre</i> <i>Year 10: Go to the theatre.</i> <i>Year 11: Team building experience</i> <i>£4,297</i>	families. The opportunity to partake in residential and non-residential trips and activities will increase engagement with learning, more important to PP students who have been disengaged through the pandemic more so than their non-PP peers The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium highlights that removing material barriers enables disadvantaged pupils to fully access the curriculum. Research on cultural capital and enrichment shows that educational visits and experiences increase engagement, aspiration and sense of belonging, particularly for pupils from low-income backgrounds who may otherwise miss such opportunities.	
<i>Safeguarding, vulnerable student and LAC provision.</i> <i>Safeguarding team of staff and home visit costings. £1,995</i>	DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) stresses the importance of early intervention and multi-agency working for vulnerable pupils. EEF research on behaviour and attendance shows that strong safeguarding systems contribute to improved attendance and engagement by reducing anxiety and barriers to school participation.	1, 4, 5

Total budgeted cost: £ 212,850

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

Review of Disadvantaged Pupils' Attainment and Outcomes (2024/25)

1. Attainment 8

- *Disadvantaged pupils achieved an Attainment 8 score of 19.8 in 2026. Whilst the school continued to secure improvements in a number of areas, disadvantaged outcomes remained significantly below those of their peers. Leaders recognise this as the school's most significant area for improvement*

2. English & Mathematics – Strong and Standard Pass Rates

- *Fifteen percent of disadvantaged pupils achieved Grade 4+ in both English and Mathematics and no disadvantaged pupils achieved Grade 5+ in both subjects.*
- *Detailed cohort analysis identified a high proportion of pupils with SEND, historical attendance concerns, school refusal, social and emotional needs, previous Alternative Provision placements and pupils who had previously been identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion. Many pupils also entered secondary education with low prior attainment.*
- *Whilst these contextual factors do not diminish the school's responsibility for outcomes, they have informed leaders' evaluation and future strategic priorities.*

3. Progress to Post-16 Pathways

- **88%** of disadvantaged pupils were recorded as staying in education, apprenticeships or employment two terms after KS4, compared with **96% locally** and **94% nationally**.
➤ *While the majority are progressing into further study or training, the gap suggests there is still room to improve post-16 success and destination support for disadvantaged learners.*

4. Exam Entry Patterns

1. *Disadvantaged pupils had **8 entries per pupil for all KS4 qualifications** and **6.8 for GCSE subjects**, broadly in line with local averages but slightly below non-disadvantaged national figures.*

► *This suggests participation levels are relatively comparable, but outcome differences indicate support and attainment disparity.*

5. Attendance

Disadvantaged attendance improved to 86.84%, above national averages for disadvantaged pupils.

This reflects the impact of strengthened attendance systems, improved behaviour, effective pastoral support and a more positive school culture.

Despite this improvement, leaders recognise that attendance remains a significant barrier for a minority of disadvantaged pupils and that further improvement remains necessary.

Summary of Key Disadvantage Gaps

Across key GCSE outcome measures there is a clear pattern of disadvantage:

- *Lower attainment in core subjects and Attainment 8*
- *Significantly reduced rates of strong passes (Grade 5+) in English and Maths*
- *Slightly lower post-16 continuation rates*

These patterns are consistent with national evidence showing that disadvantage is correlated with attainment gaps, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and reduced access to academic pathways.

*The Pupil Premium strategy's focus on **curriculum reform, targeted interventions, reading and numeracy programmes, and pastoral support** is well-aligned with these identified needs.*

Leadership Evaluation of the 2026 Cohort

Leaders' evaluation of the 2026 disadvantaged cohort identified a unique combination of challenges, including low prior attainment on entry, high levels of SEND, attendance concerns, school refusal, previous Alternative Provision placements and pupils who had previously been identified as being at risk of permanent exclusion.

Leaders recognised throughout Key Stage 4 that these factors would likely limit headline attainment measures and that rapid gains in outcomes would be difficult to secure for some pupils.

Nevertheless, leaders maintained high expectations and focused relentlessly on improving attendance, behaviour, engagement and curriculum access. Success for many pupils within this cohort was demonstrated through sustained school attendance, successful reintegration into mainstream education, completion of examination courses and achievement of qualifications aligned with their individual starting points and targets.

For a number of disadvantaged pupils, the most significant success was not simply the grade achieved at the end of Key Stage 4, but their successful engagement in education, completion of qualifications and participation in examinations despite significant historical barriers to learning.

Whilst headline disadvantaged outcomes remain below those of their peers, leaders are clear that the significant improvements made to behaviour, inclusion, attendance and school culture provide a much stronger foundation for future cohorts.

The school's focus now is ensuring that these improvements translate into accelerated academic progress and stronger examination outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

To support this next phase of improvement, leaders have strengthened SEND provision, appointed a specialist teacher with expertise in SEND and SEMH needs, reduced reliance on external Alternative Provision and increased targeted intervention in English, mathematics and literacy.

Despite significant barriers, the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils progressed successfully into post-16 education, employment or training.

Implications for Strategic Actions

The review supports the strategic choices in this year's plan:

- **Targeted academic support for English and Maths** (small group tuition, Direct Instruction, reading diagnostic assessments)
- **Curriculum development** to strengthen access
- **Pastoral support and attendance initiatives** to remove non-academic barriers to learning
- **Leadership and CPD focus** to drive consistent high-quality teaching