

Pathways School

Disadvantaged & Vulnerable Pupils Strategy

Policy Monitoring

Date policy last reviewed: March 2026

Signed by:

Neil Jones Headteacher

Date: March 2026

Saima Ali Chair of governors

Date: March 2026

Date of next review: March 2027

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any concerns and/or updates to national/local guidance or procedure.

1. Purpose

Pathways School is an independent special school committed to ensuring that all pupils, particularly those facing socioeconomic disadvantage and additional vulnerability, receive equitable access to high-quality education, personal development and preparation for adulthood (PfA).

Although Pathways does not receive statutory Pupil Premium funding in the same way as maintained schools and academies, we recognise our moral and professional responsibility to:

- Identify disadvantage
- Remove barriers to learning
- Target resources effectively
- Monitor impact
- Ensure strong governance oversight

This strategy sets out how we do so.

2. Our Context

Pathways School is an independent special school in Harrow supporting pupils aged 11–19 with complex learning needs, autism and associated needs.

Many pupils attending Pathways:

- Have EHCPs
- Are known or previously known to children's social care
- Experience socioeconomic disadvantage
- Have experienced disrupted education
- Face barriers related to mental health, family stress, housing instability or trauma

We therefore operate on the principle that vulnerability and disadvantage are often overlapping and cumulative.

3. Definition of Disadvantage at Pathways

In our context, a pupil may be considered disadvantaged if they:

- Are eligible for or have previously been eligible for Free School Meals
- Are Looked After or Previously Looked After
- Are known to children's social care
- Live in high deprivation postcode areas
- Experience housing insecurity
- Have limited access to enrichment outside school
- Experience significant family financial hardship
- Face intersectional vulnerabilities (SEND + social care + deprivation)

This definition is reviewed annually by senior leaders and governors.

4. Identifying Barriers to Learning

We use a systems-based approach aligned with Behaviour Systems Analysis principles.

Barriers are identified through:

- EHCP review and annual review processes
- Baseline academic assessment
- Functional behaviour assessment
- Attendance and punctuality data
- Safeguarding information
- Family engagement meetings
- Multi-agency reports
- Regulation and behaviour incident data
- Pupil voice

We assume barriers exist and actively seek to identify and reduce them.

5. Targeted Provision

Provision is designed at three levels:

Universal (All Pupils)

- Highly structured Pathways2Independence (P2I) curriculum pathways
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Trauma-informed practice
- Communication-rich environments
- Regulation support embedded into the day
- Personal development curriculum

Targeted (Identified Need)

- 1:1 or small group intervention
- Enhanced therapy input (OT, SALT)
- Bespoke timetable adjustments
- Intensive regulation planning
- Social care liaison
- Targeted attendance support

Specialist / Intensive

- Increased staffing ratios
- Environmental adaptations
- Specialist assessment and external referrals
- Multi-agency safeguarding plans
- Bespoke transition planning

Funding is aligned to need rather than label.

6. Resource Allocation

Although Pathways does not receive ring-fenced Pupil Premium grant funding, we ensure:

- Funding is aligned to individual need

- Staffing deployment reflects vulnerability profile
- CPD focuses on removing systemic barriers
- Budget planning considers access to enrichment, trips and preparation for adulthood

We actively prevent financial disadvantage from limiting participation in:

- Educational visits
- Enrichment activities
- Community access
- Careers experiences

7. Monitoring Impact

Impact is reviewed termly through:

- Progress towards EHCP outcomes
- Academic and functional skill development
- Attendance trends
- Regulation and incident data
- Engagement measures
- Personal development milestones
- Destination and transition outcomes

Data is analysed through a systems lens:

Are barriers reducing?

Is access improving?

Is independence increasing?

Are gaps narrowing over time?

Findings are reported to governors.

8. Governance Oversight

Governors receive:

- Termly pupil data summary
- Safeguarding and attendance updates
- Risk and compliance reviews

Governance challenge focuses on:

- Equity of access
- Resource alignment
- Sustainability of provision
- Impact on long-term outcomes

9. Inspection Readiness Statement

While Pathways is not required to publish a statutory Pupil Premium strategy, we can demonstrate:

- Clear identification of disadvantaged pupils
- Targeted allocation of resources
- Measurable impact on progress and wellbeing
- Strong oversight and review
- Continuous refinement through school improvement planning

We view equity not as an add-on funding stream, but as a core leadership responsibility.

10. Strategic Development Priorities 2025–2026

- Refine disadvantage data dashboard
- Strengthen parent voice in barrier identification
- Enhance preparation for adulthood tracking
- Deepen governor challenge around equity metrics

- Further integrate behaviour systems analysis into impact evaluation