

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS BARRIERS & SUPPORT

Who are our disadvantaged students?

The UK Government defines disadvantaged students as those who are eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant. These students are commonly from families with a lower socio-economic background than their peers.

The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) was first introduced in 2011; it provides schools with additional funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged students of all abilities to increase their potential.

The Pupil Premium is used to support students who are recorded on our January school census and who are known to be:

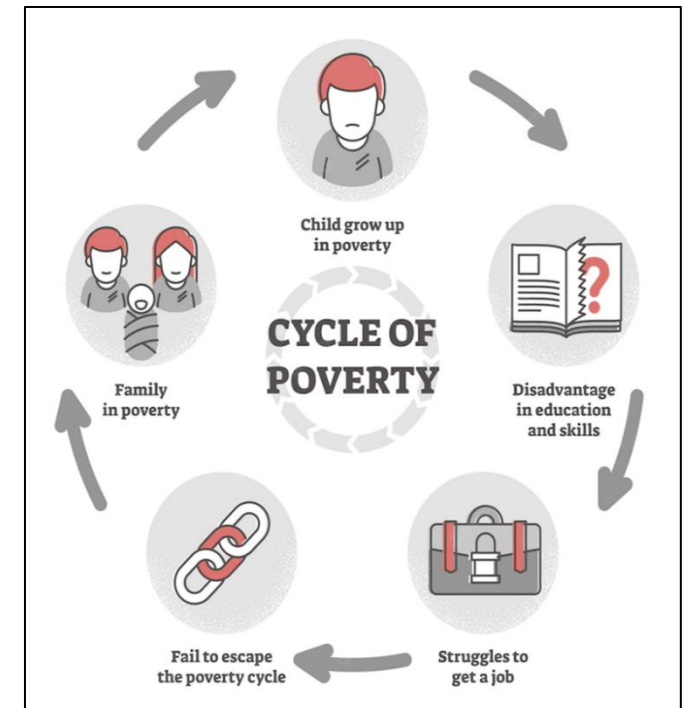
- **Ever 6 FSM.** This includes students who have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years, as well as those who are currently eligible.
- **Looked After Children (LAC) and Post-LAC.** This includes students who are on the alternative provision census who were looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order).
- **Ever 6 Service.** This includes students who have had parents in the regular armed forces or whose parents are in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence at any time in the last six years.

Typically, 20% of the Dorothy Stringer School cohort are eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant. 18% are entitled to free school meals and 2% are LAC or Post-LAC.

Is the Pupil Premium Grant the only indicator of disadvantage?

No. Based on national data, we can assume that an additional 1 in 3 of our students live in relative poverty, but are not in receipt of free school meals. (*Child Poverty Action Group, June 2022*). Form Tutors, Heads of Year and our Financial Support Office are vigilant and pass on requests for financial support to our Diamond Fund panel. This means that even more of our students can access financial support for items like stationery, bus fares, laptops and uniform, along with the wider range of opportunities that our school has to offer.

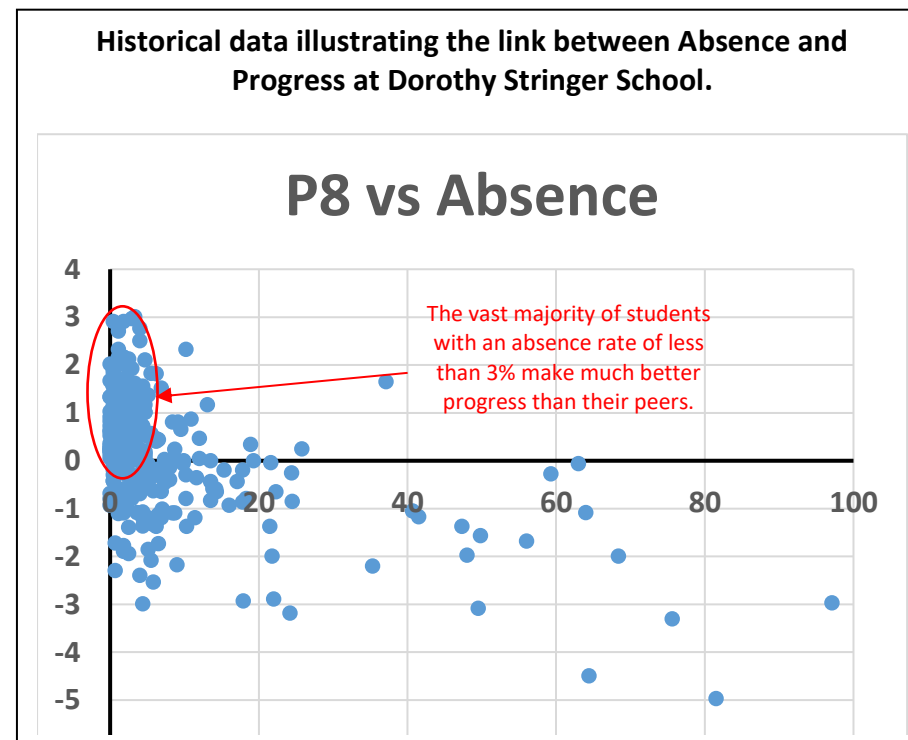
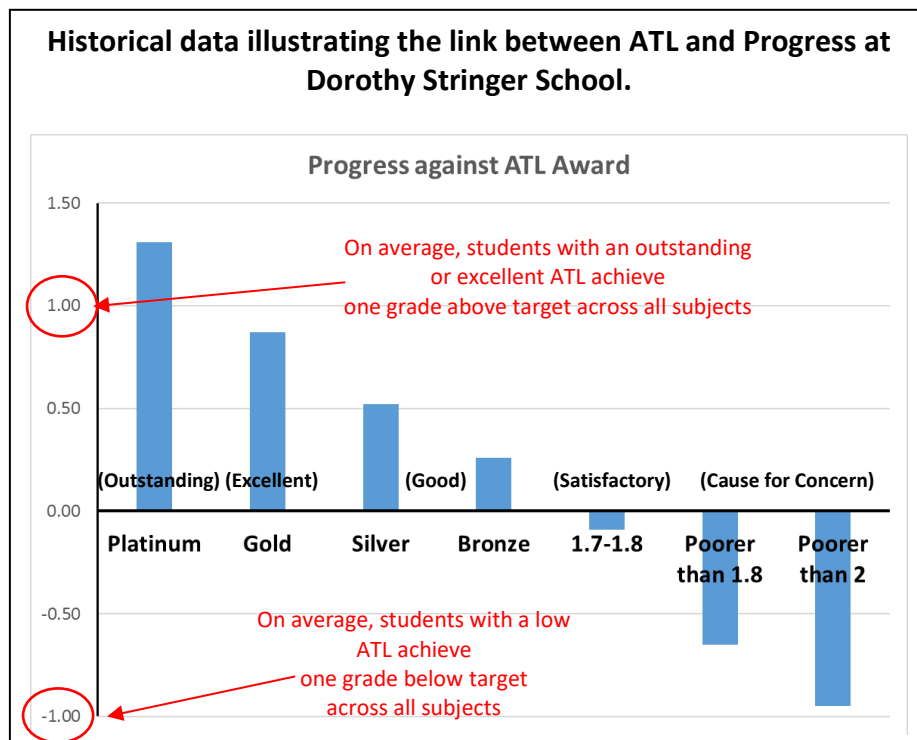
Some students struggle to make good progress in class for a variety of complex reasons, some of which could be linked to relative poverty. In Years 10-11, class teachers, Heads of Departments and the Senior Leadership Team monitor student progress via GCSE target grades which are based on prior performance. In Years 7-9, we monitor student progress using percentiles. This means we are quickly able to focus on students of any ability who are struggling or coasting. **Class teachers will identify the 2-3 students in their class making the lowest rates of progress. We class these students as 'educationally disadvantaged'.**



'First-generation scholars' is a term often used to refer to students whose parents/carers do not have a university degree but can also mean students from a wide range of backgrounds which are significantly underrepresented in UK higher education. (*Experiences of first-generation scholars at a highly selective UK university. Bergham Journals Summer 2021*). We collate data about our FGS students so that we can provide targeted support for university outreach programmes.

What are the barriers to learning for disadvantaged students at Dorothy Stringer School?

There are many barriers that our disadvantaged students face compared to their more advantaged peers. By tracking and analysing disadvantaged student data, we have identified our two largest barriers to disadvantaged student progress as **high absence rates** and a **diminished attitude to leaning (ATL)**. These two barriers are closely linked and, if not addressed, can result in a negative spiral.



High absence to or within school means that students...

fall behind in their school work, which affects their confidence in school, can result in poor motivation and has a negative impact on their attitude to learning. Absence also affects student's ability to have or keep positive friendships, the most frequently given reason for disadvantaged students coming to school. All of these factors can affect the desire to attend school regularly, which means they will miss out on the life experiences that Dorothy Stringer School has to offer and are likely to perform less well in examinations, reducing their professional choices in later in life.

Our data shows that disadvantaged students at Dorothy Stringer School who have low absence are likely to make the same rate of progress as students of similar abilities across the country. The lower their absence, the better they do. This means they are just as likely as their peers to get into the college, university or job of their choice. Students with an absence rate of more than 10% are likely to make significantly less academic progress and are likely to earn significantly less than peers of equal ability over their lifetime. *(GCSE attainment and lifetime earnings. DfE Research Report, June 2021)*



Our current priorities to improve disadvantaged student progress are:

- To reduce the number of disadvantaged students who have a school absent rate of 10% or more by engaging with parents/carers and helping students to engage more with school life.
- Improving disadvantaged student self-regulation, to increase the time that they spend in the classroom (reducing lateness, out of class incidents and suspensions).
- To support disadvantaged students with their literacy, so they do not remove themselves from lessons (either physically or mentally) to avoid learning which they find challenging.

To remove the barriers to good attendance, we have undertaken disadvantaged student voice activities and analysed potential causes which will enable us to provide appropriate bespoke interventions.

Most common reasons given by disadvantaged students for absence

- Feeling really unwell / Feeling a little unwell
- Too tired (often linked to going to bed after midnight)
- Being at school makes me anxious (often linked to previous absence)
- There is a lesson I don't like / There is a lesson I find really hard
- I am menstruating or expecting my period

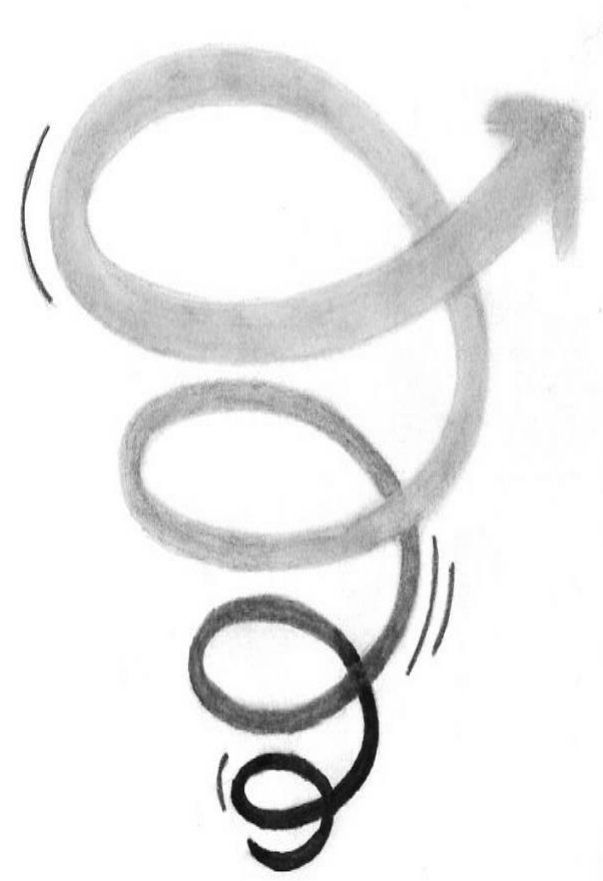
Other reasons given by disadvantaged students for absence

- I don't always have the bus fare
- I have to look after someone at home
- I haven't done my homework / If I know I have a test
- Friendship issues

Examples of ideas proposed by students to improve their attendance

- Give me more support in the classroom
- Help me feel part of the school community
- Give me a free breakfast
- Send an alarm call to my phone
- Make me feel valued / safe

Details of our strategies and progress towards our targets can be found in the 2022 Pupil Premium Statement.



What support is provided to disadvantaged students at Dorothy Stringer School?

While the analysis of disadvantaged student data is important in identifying trends and common barriers to learning, we know that all our disadvantaged students are unique. Many of our disadvantaged students are fully engaged in school life and sustain excellent rates of progress. Others may present challenges that need to be addressed to support student progress. We know that our disadvantaged student cohort is not an homogenous group, so **we strive to 'be experts in our pupils, not experts in labels.'** (*Margret Mulholland in ROWLAND M (2021) Addressing Educational Disadvantage.*) We pride ourselves in developing positive relationships with students, so they feel safe, nurtured and welcome in school.

How do we support disadvantaged students in the classroom?

Our aim is to provide high quality teaching for all disadvantaged students, to raise their attainment levels and to develop positive attitudes to learning. This is achieved through a variety of teaching and learning strategies designed to engage disadvantaged students, including collaborative work, active learning and inclusive class discussions. Classroom teachers know their disadvantaged students and consciously engage them in all lessons. We identify which of our students are making the lowest rates of progress and provide these learners with extra support. We are adaptive in our teaching, to make sure that the level of challenge is appropriate for individual disadvantaged students, allowing them to access learning. A range of strategies are used to promote literacy in all classrooms. The Stringer Learning Culture is fundamental to ensuring a positive learning environment for our disadvantaged students; this is a school-wide system which establishes high standards of behaviour. Home learning assignments are carefully set to embed, engage, enrich and extend student knowledge.



What if a disadvantaged student isn't making good progress?

Classroom teachers are vigilant in regard to disadvantaged student progress within their classroom. Regular formal and informal assessment mean that we quickly realise if a disadvantaged student is not making the progress we would expect. If one of our disadvantaged students is struggling in the classroom, the learning experience for that student will be assessed and changes made; this could be as simple as a change in the seating plan, or a more complex intervention involving an individual action plan with clear targets. Classroom teachers identify which parents/carers they would particularly like to meet during parent evenings; these are then individually contacted, giving them access to priority appointments. Heads of Department track disadvantaged student progress against expected standards and will intervene if progress rates are starting to cause concern. Head of Department intervention is likely to include working alongside the classroom teacher and the student to set individual learning targets. If a disadvantaged student is not making expected progress, they will often be identified for targeted academic support, which will run at various times by subject specialists.



Designated members of our Senior Leadership Team have oversight of our disadvantaged student rates of progress, absence, attitude to learning and engagement with school life, to make sure that no student goes unnoticed, and that appropriate intervention is in place, giving our disadvantaged students every opportunity to thrive. Student voice activities are conducted, whole cohort data is analysed for trends and individual students flagged for support.

What if a disadvantaged student has a special educational need or a disability?

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), Inclusion Coordinator (InCo) and some of our pastoral staff visit every primary school that sends us students with identified additional needs. During these meetings we develop a clear picture of the care, support and provision that has been provided to our disadvantaged or vulnerable students. This information is shared with colleagues via our provision maps, so teachers and support staff are immediately effective in their support of newly enrolled disadvantaged Year 7 students. In the first half-term of Year 7, we also undertake a thorough screening assessment in both reading and writing to identify any learning needs that disadvantaged students might have. This information allows us to target specific students for appropriate learning interventions. We regularly ask staff for observational or assessment feedback, to help us meet the needs of our disadvantaged students. We inform parents and carers of the support their child receives via an outward facing provision map. The support of outside agencies is used as appropriate. We run an in-school alternative

curriculum programme for those few students who really struggle with mainstream education. For these students, contact with parents and carers is daily. Relevant information about the challenges some of our disadvantaged students face is shared with staff during briefings, so that all staff have an awareness of some of our most vulnerable students and know how to support them, even if they don't teach the student.

What happens if a disadvantaged student struggles with life at school?

Disadvantaged students come from a range of backgrounds and respond to life at school in different ways. The teaching and support staff at Dorothy Stringer School are very aware of our disadvantaged students; if a student starts to demonstrate unusual or unacceptable behaviour, they would very quickly have a conversation with that student and make contact with a relevant colleague. The first port of call for a disadvantaged student would be their form-tutor; frequently a conversation with a member of staff along with a timely phone call home can help discover the reasons for their behaviour. The form-tutor will closely monitor the student for a period of time to make sure that the problem is resolved. If the problem is more complex and

a student does not settle, a Head of Year or Pastoral Manager will be asked to assist. Pastoral Managers do not have a teaching timetable so are available help to resolve friendship issues, support students to become more confident or have in-depth structured conversations to help students improve their behaviour for learning. Heads of Year are given a lighter teaching timetable, so they have more time to organise meetings with parents or carers during school hours and have oversight of individual student progress, attainment and attendance. Where appropriate, Heads of Year will involve members of the Senior Leadership Team and refer students for bespoke interventions ranging from counselling to forest school. The support of outside agencies is used as appropriate; however, we know from experience that interventions led by our own staff are usually more successful because they build on existing positive relationships.

