

# Culture, Creativity and Narrowing the Gap – using pupil premium to enrich cultural education

St Philomena's Catholic High School for Girls is a secondary voluntary aided comprehensive school in the outer London borough of Sutton. The school has an intake of 1400 with 139 students (11%) eligible for pupil premium funding. The London average of secondary school pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in 2016–17 is 39.7%. The school was awarded an Outstanding Ofsted rating in 2008 and was ranked within the top 5% of schools nationally for Progress 8 with a score of 0.52 in 2016. The school was awarded a pupil premium High Aspiration award in 2015 for progress at KS4.

## Key insights

- The need to understand the complexity of disadvantaged children's backgrounds and barriers to future attainment so to ensure opportunities and interventions are tailored to their specific and diverse needs.
- Measuring and monitoring participation is a useful tool in understanding the impacts of arts and cultural activity, specifically widening access to opportunities and cultural inclusion.
- Pupil premium activity can be used to support career aspirations and highlight pathways into creative and cultural careers and industries.

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## CASE STUDY

St Philomena's Catholic High School

## How does the school aim to support disadvantaged pupils?

St Philomena's has developed a pupil premium policy in consultation with students, staff, governors and parents and carers. Their strategy is underpinned by the school's commitment to reduce inequalities in outcomes and promote the inclusive nature of the work they do at the school.

"The culture is one of aspiration, one of success and one of if you work hard you will succeed. It's irrespective of background and ability".

**Headteacher, St Philomena's**

An important focus of the school is to remove barriers for disadvantaged students to ensure they can reach their potential academically as well as developing key life skills in terms of their confidence and ability to fit into society and lead successful lives.

"We put a lot of funding into them being academically successful but also in their wellbeing and extracurricular opportunities, arts and music. It makes them a rounded human being and someone that can function well in real life situations".

**Director of Learning, St Philomena's**

The main proportion of the school's pupil premium funding is directly targeted at interventions and activities for students eligible for pupil premium funding and other identified disadvantaged pupils. This includes a range of support aimed to narrow the gap in behaviour and internal exclusions between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students; address an attainment gap in KS4 pupil premium outcomes in maths; narrow the gap in literacy levels in Years 7 and 8; support pupil premium students with special educational needs (SEN) effectively; and, offer a wider curriculum experience to pupil premium students.

"There should be no pupil premium child who hasn't been on a trip, student leadership activity, received an intervention and have had their personalised needs identified in some way".

**Head Teacher, St Philomena's**

The Headteacher and Director of Learning are responsible for implementing the pupil premium policy. Allocation of the overall budget is agreed at the Senior Leadership

Team Development Planning day and signed off by the Governing Body. The school has a solution based approach to allocating pupil premium funding. Decisions are made based on what the data is indicating about attainment progress across the curriculum subjects and the feedback on the needs of pupil premium students in each year group. A bespoke tracker is updated for every student eligible for pupil premium monitoring what opportunities and interventions have been accessed to support that student. Activities and interventions are suggested by staff or through external agencies who approach the school directly. Some activities will continue from previous years if they have been reviewed and considered successful in meeting specific outcome indicators. There is also flexibility for staff to develop specific ideas for interventions and activities throughout the academic year if approved via the Head Teacher and Director of Learning.

## How is narrowing the gap strategy aligned with providing access to arts and cultural opportunities for disadvantaged students?

St Philomena's offer a rich and extensive arts and cultural programme both in curriculum and enrichment activities and opportunities. Just under 25% of the pupil premium budget (£30,500) is spent on widening curriculum experiences. A proportion of that budget is allocated to a range of arts and cultural opportunities. Its inclusion has been championed by the Headteacher who feels it is important that students have access to a broad range of arts and cultural opportunities to pursue their specific interests and support future aspirations. The main rationale for this focus has been the varying levels in access to cultural opportunities. Pupil premium students are more likely to have less opportunities because their parents and carers may have less financial resource available to access this.

"Although parents have a good understanding of academic success and do support academic achievement, they don't always have the financial means to support [pupil premium] students to experience things that other students experience. A number of students have not been to central London or haven't been to places like the Natural History Museum".

**Director of Learning, St Philomena's**



*Funding has contributed to; music tuition for pupil premium students and the costs of instruments, extracurricular cultural trips in London, choir events and residential trips, African drumming workshops; and the provision of art materials and equipment.*

The financial support of pupil premium aids cultural inclusion and encourages participation in the wider curriculum. Funding has contributed to; music tuition for pupil premium students and the costs of instruments to support their progress; extracurricular cultural trips in London (e.g. Kew Gardens, Natural History Museum, National Gallery and Hampton Court Palace); choir events and residential trips; African drumming workshops; and the provision of art materials and equipment at Year 7 and Year 10 to support homework and study.

The benefits of these opportunities are that they broaden access to arts and cultural education. Students can learn new creative skills which support connections and socialisation with others and develop an interest outside their academic study. In addition, students can find out how easy it is to access culture in London and develop greater independence to go and visit the theatre and exhibitions. A specific added value to subject based learning in art has been that many pupil premium students would be unable otherwise to purchase the same quality and variety of materials on their own. The art packs enrich and enhance students' art work and support them to produce more successful work.

"By GCSE we would expect them to have experience of using a wide range of materials and without access to these materials they would be at a disadvantage academically when we are assessing their work".

**Head of Art, St Philomena's**

Numbers have grown in participation for both music instrumental lessons and choirs. The extra-curricular activities also help support the music curriculum because students have a clear and better conceptual understanding of music through these additional opportunities.

Students felt that these activities had made a difference to their confidence, allowing them to develop new friendships and sparking an interest in arts and culture. Some students had become interested in pursuing creative subjects in higher education and employment and felt they had gained good awareness of related future pathways. Other students had gone on to learn new instruments outside of school and/or felt it was an interest they would continue to pursue in the future.

"I think I will always do something musical. It's something I really enjoy".

**Pupil, St Philomena's**

"I think I have more knowledge and it's nice to talk to people who share the same interests and you talk about your music lessons. You get more diversity and more friendships because it is an interest that you both share".

**Pupil, St Philomena's**

## Evaluation, monitoring and reporting

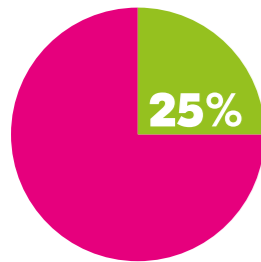
Overall St Philomena's have effective structures and monitoring systems in place to effectively use pupil premium which is supported by the underlying clear vision and leadership of the Head teacher.

"It comes from the head teacher, a clear vision and direction given. If she wasn't asking for documents to be prepared and questioning what was happening the emphasis wouldn't be on pupil premium".

**Director of Learning, St Philomena's**

St Philomena review their pupil premium strategy four times a year based on internal data monitoring of a range of indicators including assessment levels, attendance and punctuality, homework achievement rates and behaviour points. A final review is conducted at the end of every academic year once KS4 attainment results are in. They examine progress between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students within the school and comparatively at a National level. The school will also consider the retention rate of Year 11 into Year 12. As part of their wider data monitoring they also review internal data and progress from one year to another. They consider the difference in attainment between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students within and between subjects and also break down the data by ethnicity, SEN students and Gifted and Talented students.

All future funding allocation decisions are linked to the evidence of outcomes. The Director of Learning looks at what has not had an impact and why, and what has worked well to inform decisions to continue or develop interventions and activities further. The school feels there are challenges to measuring directly the impact of arts and cultural opportunities on cultural inclusion and the narrowing of gaps in attainment, but the value of the provision is monitored by



*Just under 25% of the pupil premium budget (£30,500) is spent on widening curriculum experiences.*

reviewing participation numbers, progression in related subjects and direct feedback from teachers and students. The school is currently developing a new system to track participation in all extra-curricular trips and activities so they can robustly review whether or not pupil premium students are less likely to attend extracurricular activities and educational visits than non-pupil premium students.

The school has a strong and dedicated governing body who underpin the evaluation by reviewing progress in narrowing the gap between pupil premium students and non-pupil premium students each term. In looking at the evidence of impact they consider the data on progress and attainment, pastoral and wellbeing and discipline of pupil premium students, case studies, and views from questionnaire data. The school also keeps parents informed on how the funding has been used and delivers a pupil premium parental engagement evening where evaluation data is shared. Parents are given the opportunity to feedback their views on allocation of the budget and make suggestions for provision they would like to see in the future.

## Key learning for the future

The school plans to continue in making arts and cultural opportunities accessible to all. Headteacher, Ms Noone, feels that there needs to be wider and deeper research on the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium students are a diverse and complex group with different family backgrounds and contexts. She perceives that children can do well when they have aspirational support at home even where there is less financial ability. However, it can be harder to make a difference where there is a lack of engagement, education is not valued and/or there is suspicion around wider authorities.

"I'm not sure there has been enough research on the cohorts of disadvantage. There's a list of strategies and the effectiveness of them via the Sutton Trust – a list of 'this works and this does not work', but I think it's more nuanced than that, the understanding of the families and contexts of these young people".  
**Headteacher, St Philomena's**

She suggests an effective approach is to look further at the success stories from those of similar diverse backgrounds and engage students and parents with non-teaching staff they can relate to and trust to help remove barriers. Next year, the school will be celebrating 125 years and will host a concert in Central London to celebrate. Students will perform alongside alumni who have succeeded in arts and cultural industries. It is hoped the experience will provide opportunities for the students to connect with other performers and widen future aspirations in creative and cultural opportunities.

"If they have the opportunity to connect with somebody and see themselves in that situation then it becomes very achievable. It might be to us a small step but for a disadvantaged young person it can be a real chasm in terms of what they need to get over".  
**Headteacher, St Philomena's**

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