

Pupil premium strategy statement – Birches Head Academy

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	947
Proportion (%) of pupil premium eligible pupils	45.9%
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	October 2025
Date on which it will be reviewed	October 2026
Statement authorised by	Mr P Masher
Pupil premium lead	Mr G Baxendale
Governor / Trustee lead	S Finlay

Funding overview

Detail	Amount
Pupil premium funding allocation this academic year	£467,625
Pupil premium funding carried forward from previous years (<i>enter £0 if not applicable</i>)	£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>	£467,625

Part A: Pupil premium strategy plan

Statement of intent

At Birches Head Academy, our mission is rooted in the belief that **social justice can be achieved through excellence in education**. We recognise that improving educational outcomes is the most powerful way to positively impact the lives of our disadvantaged pupils. Our strategy is underpinned by the **Frank Field Education Trust's Values Charter**, which promotes integrity, humility, compassion, and respect—principles that guide every aspect of our work.

We are committed to delivering a **Curriculum for Social Justice** that not only enables pupils to achieve life-changing qualifications but also equips them with the **cultural capital, life skills, and moral compass** needed to lead choice-filled lives. Through our **Be More Curriculum**, pupils are challenged to develop key attributes such as **leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative, and communication**, which are embedded across all stages of their five-year journey at the Academy.

Our approach is holistic and inclusive. We aim to:

- **Close the attainment gap** through high-quality teaching, targeted interventions, and adaptive learning strategies.
- **Raise aspirations** by providing enriching experiences, careers guidance, and opportunities for pupil leadership.
- **Improve attendance and engagement** through proactive pastoral care, mentoring, and family partnerships.
- **Promote positive behaviour and wellbeing** by fostering a culture of mutual respect, consistency, and high expectations.
- **Empower families** through structured learning conversations, transparent communication, and inclusive events.

We believe that every pupil deserves to be **seen, heard, and supported**. Our staff model the highest standards of professional conduct and are guided by the **Trust's Wellbeing Charter**, ensuring that our school is a nurturing and collaborative environment for all.

To **Aspire to Be More** is not just a motto—it is a lived experience at Birches Head Academy. Through our pupil premium strategy, we will continue to remove barriers, unlock potential, and ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Challenges

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

Challenge number	Detail of challenge
1	Achievement: Disadvantaged pupils on average attain lower and make less academic progress at the academy than their peers, especially in English, maths and EBacc subjects including science.
2	Attendance: Average attendance rate for disadvantaged pupils is lower than that of other pupils, and Academy target for all children of 97%. This reduces their learning time and diminishes progress.
3	Aspirations: Some disadvantaged pupils do not benefit from experiences or opportunities to help them have high aspirations for their future career
4	Behaviour and attitudes: Some disadvantaged pupils need additional support to ensure their attitudes and behaviour are conducive to good progress

5	Parental engagement: Some parents/carers need additional information, support and guidance to help their child to learn and make progress
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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
Improve achievement: through consistently high standards in every classroom and adaptive teaching, effective feedback and appropriate challenge in every lesson, together with targeted academic interventions that address knowledge gaps and improve confidence, attainment and progress.	GCSE and vocational outcomes indicate increasing attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils, with the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in line with that of all pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is improving in each year group, with additional interventions showing positive impact. All disadvantaged pupils enter further education, training or employment post-16.
Improve attendance: through the deployment of our Attendance Officers and external partner, embed strategies to improve PP attendance and punctuality, and address the attendance gap between PP and non-PP pupils.	Attendance figures show that the gap between PP and non-PP pupils is diminishing. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is in line with the national average for all pupils.
Build aspiration and positive engagement: by providing a range of opportunities for pupils to access learning opportunities outside the classroom, build cultural capital and provide appropriate careers guidance.	Pupils speak positively about the academy and feel safe and happy at BHA. There is a very high level of engagement in wider curriculum opportunities by disadvantaged pupils and effective careers provision ensures they are well prepared for each transition stage in our academy.
Promote positive behaviour and attitudes to learning: to embed strategies to promote and support positive attitudes and behaviours for learning and break down individual barriers to progress.	The behaviour and attitude to learning of disadvantaged pupils is in line with other pupils or shows an improving trend across all year groups. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are suspended is below the national average for secondary schools and is reducing year on year.
Parental Engagement: by being proactive and persistent in building relationships that provide parents/carers with the opportunity to be more effective in supporting their child's learning journey.	Parents/carer voice is positive regarding their child's education, and they will feel that they are more able to help/support their child to achieve. Attendance and engagement by the parents/carers of disadvantaged pupils at school events is in line with that of other pupils.

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

Budgeted cost: £264,180

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Bespoke CPD offer for all staff ensuring every member of staff has access to the training and support needed to be the best that they can be.</p> <p>Deployment of Lead Practitioners to drive up standards in teaching and learning across the academy.</p> <p>Access to the FFET network meetings to allow appropriate professional development opportunities.</p> <p>All staff wishing to take part in NPQ/SSAT courses are allowed access to these to gain accreditation as experts in their field.</p>	<p>Supporting high quality teaching is pivotal in improving children's outcomes. Indeed, research tells us that high quality teaching can narrow the disadvantage gap. It is therefore hugely encouraging to see a host of new initiatives and reforms that recognise the importance of teacher quality such as the Early Career Framework and the new National Professional Qualifications.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-professional-development</p>	1, 3, 4
<p>Purchase of standardised diagnostic assessments.</p> <p>Training will be provided for staff to ensure assessments are interpreted correctly.</p>	<p>Standardised tests can provide reliable insights into the specific strengths and weaknesses of each pupil to help ensure they receive the correct additional support through interventions or teacher instruction:</p> <p>Standardised tests Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p>	1, 3, 4
<p>Improving literacy in all subject areas in line with recommendations in the EEF Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance.</p>	<p>Acquiring disciplinary literacy is key for pupils as they learn new, more complex concepts in each subject:</p> <p>Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools</p> <p>Reading comprehension, vocabulary and other literacy skills are heavily linked with attainment in maths and English:</p> <p>word-gap.pdf (oup.com.cn)</p>	1, 4
<p>The continual review of curriculum design through INSET, SDT and PPM sessions in all subjects to ensure all learners, including disadvantaged pupils, are explicitly taught the knowledge and cultural capital that they need to succeed in life.</p>	<p>High quality teaching, which includes curriculum planning, is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment:</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/The_EEF_guide_to_supporting_school_planning_-_A_tiered_approach_to_2021.pdf</p>	1, 3, 4

<p>Curriculum design will be quality assured through whole-school monitoring and evaluation systems.</p> <p>Staff to be given time to plan and implement their curriculums and link retrieval practice in a way that makes good pedagogical sense and to help pupils know and remember more.</p> <p>FFET network meetings for all subject leaders to offer further opportunities to evaluate and improve curriculum design.</p>	<p>Curriculum as a progression model: Developing a curriculum for progression so that pupils know and remember more considering types of knowledge to ensure appropriate sequencing. <i>Ashbee, R (2021) Curriculum: Theory, Culture and the subject specialisms</i></p> <p>Ofsted research reviews which collate currently available research evidence. We have considered what the evidence tells us about a high-quality education in each subject and ensured that our curricula reflect this.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/curriculum-research-reviews</p>	<p>1, 3</p>
<p>Refine formative and summative assessment practice through staff CPD so that assessments help teachers to identify what pupils remember from the taught curriculum and identify the missing building blocks in pupils' learning.</p> <p>A range of formative and summative approaches to be used as vehicles for pupils to demonstrate their learning, ensuring the time taken to mark correlates with successful pupil outcomes.</p>	<p>EEF Toolkit suggests that the provision of high-quality feedback can lead to an average of eight additional months' progress over the course of a year.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/assessment-feedback</p> <p>The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group published a report following the Department for Education's (DfE's) workload challenge. The three principles from this report stated that marking should be meaningful, manageable and motivating.</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511256/Eliminating-unnecessary-workload-around-marking.pdf</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Further improve the transition process from primary to secondary so the school and class are more thoroughly prepared for the arriving learner. Increase communication with 26 feeder primary schools to help foster curriculum continuity, make intelligent use of diagnostic assessment, and plan to address specific pastoral needs and academic support.</p>	<p>Several studies have shown a dip in attainment, especially in literacy and numeracy, coinciding with transition.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-improvement-planning/3-wider-strategies</p>	<p>2, 3, 4, 5</p>

<p>Enhancement of our EBACC teaching and curriculum planning in line with Ofsted Research papers and EEF guidance. Designated curriculum time given for the development of teaching and time to embed the key elements of the EEF/Ofsted documentation. Quality assurance programme used to evaluate effectiveness of new approaches undertaken</p>	<p>There is strong evidence of a link between economic disadvantage and attainment in science, which in turn is a significant barrier to further participation in science subjects. The school will use the EEF recommendations to identify approaches which successfully boost attainment and remain this barrier.</p> <p>Science EEF Research review series: science</p> <p>In schools, the teaching of geography gives pupils an understanding of the world around them, its environments, places near and far, and the processes that create and affect them. This is a core part of high-quality teaching and learning in geography at Weatherhead and highlighted as best practice in the Research review series: geography</p> <p>At BHA, teaching and curriculum design in history reflects the relationship between substantive and disciplinary knowledge. Teaching develops pupils' historical knowledge and their historical analysis simultaneously. This is highlighted as best practice in the Research review series: history</p> <p>In 2020, 'Language trends' shone a spotlight on disapplication. Disapplication is when a school removes all or part of the curriculum for a pupil or group of pupils as evidenced in Curriculum research review series: languages</p> <p>At BHA, every pupil at KS3 studies a language and all pupils are given the opportunity to gain a languages qualification at KS4. The careful curriculum design engages all learners irrespective of background or ability.</p>	<p>1, 3</p>
<p>Whole school numeracy development.</p> <p>Implement EEF trial of Peer to Peer Coaching to support our lowest Maths attainers in year 7, providing them with coaching via high attaining year 10 pupils</p>	<p>EEF IMPROVING MATHEMATICS IN KEY STAGES TWO AND THREE Guidance Report states:</p> <p>Ensure that pupils develop fluent recall of number facts. Quick retrieval of number facts is important for success in mathematics. It is likely that pupils who have problems retrieving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts, including number bonds and multiples, will have difficulty understanding and using mathematical concepts they encounter later in their studies.</p> <p>OFSTED's research review for Mathematics states that: Based on the above, high-quality maths education may have the following features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide approaches to calculation and presentation in pupils' books. • School-wide approaches to providing time and resources for teachers to develop subject knowledge and to learn valuable ways of teaching from each other. This is a focus for development around our Use of Mathematics Across the Curriculum at a whole school level to ensure consistency and appropriate training for all staff teaching 	<p>1, 3,</p>

<p>Whole school Literacy development</p> <p>Implement Flash Academy to support EAL pupils who have a low level of English competency and require additional support to access the curriculum.</p>	<p>Reading is fundamental to education. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils' success. Through these, they develop communication skills for education and for working with others: in school, in training and at work. Pupils who find it difficult to learn to read are likely to struggle across the curriculum, since English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching</p> <p>The importance of talk and stories, and the critical links between these, especially the role stories play in developing young children's vocabulary and language</p> <p>Those who cannot read are also excluded from most social media. Crucially, being unable to read significantly narrows the range of work and life opportunities a person can access. Reading benefits society, too, both economically and socially. Although estimates of the cost of low levels of literacy vary and the methods are often opaque, the costs to the UK are estimated to be very high.</p>	<p>1, 4</p>
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Targeted academic support

Budgeted cost: £60,640

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>A whole school intervention plan in place, using information from Additional Intervention Meetings to devise and implement a bespoke, small group intervention plan where gaps in learning are identified.</p> <p>Use 'Aim a Little Higher' to support disadvantaged pupils across the school to develop their confidence and raise aspirations.</p>	<p>Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both one-to-one: One to one tuition EEF And in small groups: Small group tuition Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p>	1, 3, 4,
<p>Adopting targeted literacy intervention for disadvantaged pupils who need additional help to comprehend texts and address vocabulary gaps and key mathematical concepts, using local dyslexia and dyscalculia specialist intervention provider and the school's teacher of intervention.</p> <p>FFET Trust wide Literacy Network established to evaluate and improve the literacy offer.</p>	<p>Reading comprehension strategies can have a positive impact on pupils' ability to understand a text, and this is particularly the case when interventions are delivered over a shorter timespan: Reading comprehension strategies Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p> <p>Tuition targeted at specific needs and knowledge gaps can be an effective method to support low attaining pupils or those falling behind, both one-to-one: One to one tuition EEF And in small groups: Small group tuition Toolkit Strand Education Endowment Foundation EEF</p>	1, 3
Contingency fund for acute issues.	Based on our experiences and those of similar schools to ours, we have identified a need to set a small amount of funding aside to respond quickly to needs that have not yet been identified.	All

Wider strategies

Budgeted cost: £144,174

Activity	Evidence that supports this approach	Challenge number(s) addressed
<p>Embed principles of good practice set out in DfE's Improving School Attendance advice. Staff will receive training to implement new procedures.</p> <p>Continue to use the services of an external agency to reduce absence and reduce PA and SA.</p> <p>Use of Aspire Centre to support pupils with securing regular attendance.</p>	<p>The DfE guidance Improving School Attendance has been informed by engagement with schools that have significantly reduced persistent absence levels.</p>	All
<p>Enhanced homework support in school for all pupils.</p> <p>Teachers, teaching assistants and pastoral and academic support workers provide daily homework support to pupils to help them get back into good learning and study habits.</p> <p>Introduce SPARX Maths and Science to allow all pupils access to high quality homework and revision resources.</p>	<p>Homework that is linked to classroom work tends to be more effective. In particular, studies that included feedback on homework had higher impacts on learning.</p> <p>Homework has a positive impact on average (+ 5 months), particularly with pupils in secondary schools.</p> <p>Some pupils may not have a quiet space for home learning – it is important for schools to consider how home learning can be supported (e.g. through providing homework clubs for pupils).</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/homework</p>	1, 3, 4, 5
<p>As part of the Be More curriculum, offer a wide range of high-quality extracurricular activities to boost wellbeing, behaviour, attendance and aspiration. Activities (e.g. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award), will focus on building life skills such as confidence, resilience, and socialising.</p>	<p>There is a small positive impact of physical activity on academic attainment (+1 month). However, physical activity has important benefits in terms of health, wellbeing and physical development.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/physical-activity</p> <p>Research has shown that arts participation is valuable in and of itself and can have a positive impact on academic outcomes in other areas of the curriculum.</p> <p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation</p>	1, 2, 3, 4
<p>Pupils to have access to life changing cultural exchanges and visits. (China visit to partner</p>	<p>Research has shown that arts participation is valuable in and of itself and can have a positive impact on academic outcomes in other areas of the curriculum.</p>	1, 3, 4

<p>school in Chengdu, Spain visit, India visit in 2026). Funding will not be a barrier to accessing these experiences for pupil premium pupils.</p>	<p>https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/arts-participation</p>	
<p>Learning Coaches, Attendance Officers to support disadvantaged pupils who show low engagement with or have low expectations of schooling. Mentoring to be offered to pupils who are deemed to be hard to reach or at risk of educational failure or exclusion.</p>	<p>Mentoring appears to have a small positive impact on academic outcomes. Studies have found more positive impacts for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and for non-academic outcomes such as attitudes to school, attendance and behaviour: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring</p>	<p>2, 3, 4</p>
<p>Use School Synergy whole school parent communication app to improve PP parental engagement to improve attendance, behaviour and pupil achievement by implementing the recommendations in the EEF Parental Engagement Guidance Report</p> <p>Staff will be trained on structured learning conversations with parents of disadvantaged pupils. Learning conversations to take place termly during Academic Review time.</p> <p>Throughout Spring and Summer term, Transition leads to meet with Year 6 parents in feeder primary schools to foster positive relationships, discuss transition concerns and remove barriers prior to the pupil's arrival at BHA.</p>	<p>Parental engagement has a large and positive impact on children's learning. This was the single most important finding from a review of studies of interventions aimed at supporting and improving parental engagement in the education of children: DfE Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement</p> <p>Evidence from the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that effective parental engagement can lead to learning gains of +3 months over the course of a year: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/supporting-parents</p>	<p>2, 4, 5</p>

Total budgeted cost: £468,994

Part B: Review of the previous academic year

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

We have analysed the performance of our school's disadvantaged pupils during the previous academic year, drawing on national assessment data and our own internal summative and formative assessments.

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils who attain a strong or standard pass in English and Maths has risen from 23-24 to 24-25. At a strong pass it has gone up from 8.99% to 10.59% and at a standard pass it has increased from 24.72% to 25.88%. The A8 score has also risen from 25.04 to 25.5. The progress 8 score (estimated via SMID) has improved from -1.0 to -0.88 which has narrowed the gap to the national figure of -0.57.

In 24-25, the data demonstrates that the GCSE A8 score for disadvantaged pupils is 1.04 lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils which indicates that the disadvantaged pupils perform over a grade below non-disadvantaged. The A8 gap in English is larger than that in Maths. Progress in EBacc and 'other' buckets also show there is a gap of over 1 GCSE grade between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged. The number of disadvantaged pupils gaining a strong or standard pass in English and Maths remains lower than for non-disadvantaged pupils.

For pupils with attendance above 80%, progress for disadvantaged pupils in English, Maths was in line with non-disadvantaged and in the Ebacc Strong Pass disadvantaged pupils outperformed non disadvantaged pupils. Between 23/24 and 24/25 the average grade for PP pupils in English and Maths rose by half a grade. The SMID estimated progress 8 score in English, Maths and Ebacc all improved for PP pupils.

Disadvantaged EBacc entry for 2024-25 academic year was 37%, which is just below the national average of 40.5% from 2024-25 for all pupils, and broadly in-line with the national average for non-pupil premium pupils.

At KS3 across 24/25 the internal data shows an increase in the number of pupils achieving either secure or mastering across the year. At KS3, the percentage of pupils (all) 'securing or better' in KS3 is greater than 60% in most subjects and across all years. The impact of quality first teaching and intervention (specifically reading) is evident in the percentage of pupils securing+ in English from year 7 to Year 9. In Year 7, PP are all above 50% for securing+. In Year 9, the percentage of pupils securing + in all subjects is above 50% for PP.

We have also drawn on school data and observations to assess wider issues impacting disadvantaged pupils' performance, including attendance, behaviour, and wellbeing.

Disadvantaged pupils' attendance for the 2023-24 academic year was 81.90%. As of 2024-25, we have further strengthened the strategy by continuing to engage with external partners who are conducting regular home visits, taking the opportunity to engage with our hardest to reach families to offer support. The impact of this is that the disadvantaged attendance concluded on 86.59%. An improvement of 4.69% compared to the previous academic year. YTD for 2025/2026, disadvantaged attendance stands at 89.12%, highlighting a positive upward trajectory.

In 2024-25, the ratio of positive to negative points for disadvantaged pupils was 5:1, compared with a 5:1 ratio for non-disadvantaged pupils. This has been addressed at the start of the academic year, and current figures are showing a 6:1 ratio for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.

In the 2024-25 academic year, 68% of suspensions were disadvantaged and 32% non-disadvantaged. 64% of PEX were disadvantaged and 36% of PEX were non-disadvantaged pupils. The suspension days for disadvantaged pupils have decreased to 197, compared to 217 at this time last year—a 9.3% improvement. 56% of internal suspensions were for disadvantaged compared to 44% non-disadvantaged.

We offer a comprehensive package of extra-curricular activities. In 2025, 24% of our pupils regularly took part in. Of those, 102 were disadvantaged and 115, non-disadvantaged. This means that of those who attend extra-curricular activities 47% of our disadvantaged pupils attend regularly compared to 53% of our non-disadvantaged pupils. We also had 15 pupils complete their Bronze DofE award, 11 of these pupils were non-disadvantaged whereas 4 pupils were disadvantaged.

Our Monitoring for Achievement Cycle and feedback to parents fully supports our intent that all children can learn. We hold review 'drop down' days for Y7, Y8, Y9 and Y10 pupils where pupils, parents and carers are invited into school to discuss and review pupil progress and individual targets to improve their learning. The intent of our review days is to offer the opportunity for parents/carers to discuss their child's progress at a suitable time throughout the day and evening. We hold 2 x Review Evenings for Y11. Pupils where parents are invited to make appointments with relevant subject teachers, HOL, SENDCO and attendance officers. These follow a more traditional parents evening format but still allows the opportunity for face-to-face contact with staff at school. Last year, 54% of disadvantaged parents across all years attended a review day/evening. Attendance in KS3 is significantly better than KS4 with 56% of disadvantaged parents attending compared with Year 10, which was 45%.

In 2022, 96% of pupils continued with structured learning, post 16.

Based on all the information above, the performance of our disadvantaged pupils and the gaps with attainment did not meet expectations. However, there are strong indicators that as cohorts move through, both academic and cultural capital targets are improving.

Our evaluation of the approaches delivered last academic year indicates that:

- Embedding of 'Consistency Across The Academy'
- Bespoke literacy catch - up timetabled sessions for disadvantaged pupils who are below functional reading age of 9.5yrs and chronological reading age
- Embedding the Inclusion provision (ISC/Bungalow) so disadvantaged pupils can continue to learn in school utilising remote learning.
- AIM and GAS meetings share strategies for targeted pupils

Externally provided programmes

Programme	Provider
My Pupil Brand	Aim a Little Higher
Team Building	Wise Up
Higher Horizons	Keele University
Improving Attendance	VIP Education
EAL Support	Flash Academy

Dyslexia Gold	GL Assessment
Embedding Formative Assessment	SSAT
Homework	SPARX
Outward Bound Trust	Outward Bound
Careers Service	