

Local Authority School Improvement Partner Report 2025 – 2026

Name of School			
Headteacher	Michael Jackson		
Chair of Governors	Tim Chrissp		
School Improvement Partner	Lynn Watson		
Dates of meetings	Autumn: 20th Nov 2025	Spring:	Summer:
Focus	Curriculum, teaching, leadership and management, Post16	X	X

Last inspection: (month/year)											
Overall Effectiveness	<input type="radio"/>	Quality of Education	<input type="radio"/>	Behaviours and Attitudes	<input type="radio"/>	Personal Development	<input type="radio"/>	Leadership and Management	<input type="radio"/>	Early Years/Sixth form	<input type="radio"/>
Inspection AFIs											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 											
Link to the school's Ofsted page: https://report.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/25/122382											

The school currently regards its strengths to be:

- Cleaswell Hill continues to drive improvement at the forefront of SEND best practice. Governors and leaders remain highly ambitious, and all share the vision and values in creating a culture of excellence which is being sustained despite a multitude of challenges including finance and the changing needs of the school's population.
- Building leadership capacity in support of the mounting pressure on the sector to meet the needs of highly complex cohorts of SEND pupils is a strength. The Headteacher (Ht) is considering realigning roles and responsibilities across the leadership team. This will support external quality assurance/Ofsted and sustain school improvement beyond the retirement of key leaders.
- 'Professional conversations' with all leaders as part of the school's appraisal system have proved highly beneficial in mapping strengths and utilising leaders' areas of interest in driving standards further. Phase leaders have thrived as part of the Hts plan to build strategic capacity.
- Partnership with Northumbria University has resulted in the production of an evaluative report that will be published in national academic journals. This collaboration has supported exceptional professional development for teachers by further embedding reflective practice, which in turn has had a positive impact on pupil attainment.
- Partnership with Sunderland University has provided opportunities for key personnel to critically analyse the evolving role of the SENDCo within the changing educational landscape. Teachers' contributions will be captured and reflected in the revised SENDCo Handbook, ensuring that practitioner voices shape future guidance and practice.
- Evaluation of written output for Entry Level, post-16 students has led to changes in teaching approaches, with a greater emphasis on personalising key skills. This initiative has actively involved the school's occupational therapist in assessing individual needs and identifying priority skills for development. The collaboration of therapy and teaching has proved highly beneficial as the post-16 lead and class teacher have already seen measurable progress within the first two weeks of implementation, highlighting the effectiveness of this targeted and interdisciplinary approach.
- Exceptional teaching in over 70% of lessons observed during this SIP visit. Exemplified by consistently applied therapeutic approaches that support pupil's access to purposeful learning, staffs understanding of the needs of pupils and tailored support that ensures best outcomes.
- A child-centred approach that values pupil voice and promotes partnership working with parents and carers. The SIP spoke to some parents regarding school provision and all were highly positive. One mentioned 'having a life as school support enables me to relax knowing my child is cared for so well'.
- Pupils feel safe and a sense of belonging as they are included in all aspects of school life. Staff work hard to engage pupils, and relational practice is a strength of the school.
- Understanding the importance of safeguarding vulnerable learners and ensuring a culture of safety in school at a time when external agency support is reduced. The lead DSL has established a process of supervision for all DSL in school in support of best practice.

The school currently regards the areas for development to be:

- The school is currently navigating an unprecedented challenge related to staff absence, which has significantly impacted operations at Cleaswell Hill. In response, leaders are actively supporting staff wellbeing and assessing the effects of absence on pupil attendance, well-being and progress.
- Covering classes with highly complex learners has proven particularly difficult, placing additional strain on capacity and continuity. A key leader has undertaken a thorough evaluation of the underlying causes and has developed a strategic plan to mitigate risks and maintain stability as far as possible.
- Meeting intentions within the Year 4 Horizon is a priority. These include reviewing and remodelling the Core curriculum to meet the changing complexity of pupil need. Assessment requires review in line with the changing curriculum provision.
- Succession planning as one of the Deputy Headteachers (DHT) retires in July 2026 and the Ht in 2027.
- Developing outdoor space suitable for all year-round access in support of learners who require this facility to remain regulated.
- Constant review and need to adapt space to optimise pupils access to high quality learning experiences. The school is not fit for purpose in many respects and space is limited.
- Website development.

Contextual data

	National 2024- 2025			Autumn	Spring	Summer
	Primary	Secondary	Special			

Current number on roll	272	1062	156	261	number	number
Overall attendance	94.8%	91.4%	87.1%	90.3%	%	%
% Persistent absentees	13.5%	24.3%	35.8%	26% (67)	% (number)	% (number)
FSM attendance	92.1%	86.3%	85.1%	88.67% (119)	% (number)	% (number)

EHCP attendance	89.5%	82.3%	87.4%	90.3% (261)	% (number)	% (number)
SEN Support attendance	92.8%	86.2%	65.5%	90.3% (261)	% (number)	% (number)
% and number of EHCPs	3.5%	3.1%	99.3%	100% (261)	% (number)	% (number)
% and number of SEND Support	14.8%	13.4%	0.5%	100% (261)	% (number)	% (number)
% and number of FSM pupils	24.7%	25.8%	49.2%	51.34% (134)	% (number)	% (number)

Length of the school week	xx hours xx minutes	Guidance: Length of the school week - non-statutory guidance
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Reminders for the Headteacher

The SIP reminded the headteacher of the following statutory duties and recommendations:

- Have Governors read [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(updated September 2025\)](#)? YES
- Have all staff (including volunteers) have read at least Part 1 of [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(updated September 2025\)](#)? YES
- Does the published school accessibility plan meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, is it implemented effectively and is it reviewed regularly? YES- The school is redesigning the website, and this includes updates on all statutory/guidance information.
- Are current equality objectives SMART? YES
- Can all staff and governors articulate what the current equality objectives are and how close the school is to achieving them? YES

- Is the school website compliant with the most recent statutory guidance? ([maintained schools](#)) ([academies/free schools](#)) YES, under review.
- Has [Parent view feedback](#) been reviewed? YES
- Are [Ofsted 'requested' documents](#) in place? YES

Inclusion

- The curriculum remains ambitious, and a key priority is to review the Core Pathway to ensure it is more closely tailored to the evolving needs of the cohort. This is particularly important as the Core now includes a greater number of pupils with increasingly complex needs. The review will focus on maintaining high aspirations while adapting provision to secure meaningful progress and engagement for all learners.
- Teaching and learning are highly effective. The focus of the SIP visit has involved observing 20 lessons over two days in partnership with Phase and Senior leaders. There is synergy between all observers regarding key areas for further development. However, overall, teaching is rooted in high expectations.

Shared judgements include:

- Pupils are supported to achieve meaningful outcomes, including independence and Preparation for Adulthood. The Post 16 Lead is influencing outcomes within KS3 and 4 and this is impacting on pupil readiness for the next step in their education and beyond.
- Lessons are carefully scaffolded, with highly responsive staff supporting differentiation to ensure learning is optimised.
- There is strong evidence of therapeutic approaches supporting pupils sensory and emotional regulation.
- Staff use evidence-based strategies -Zones of Regulation, Blank language assessment, Colourful Semantics, Non-Aggressive, Psychological, Intervention behaviour techniques to support access to learning.

- Assessment is ongoing and informs immediate adjustments to teaching, however, this is under review to further tailor assessment to curriculum outcomes particularly for Core pathway learners.
- There is an adaptive pedagogy which has been strengthened through classroom-based teacher led enquiry. Partnership work with Northumbria University has resulted in an impact report on the outcomes for pupils because of this CPD
- The level of personalisation is exceptional. In every class observed, staff demonstrate a deep knowledge of each pupil, enabling them to motivate learners by connecting teaching to individual interests and needs. This results in highly engaged pupils and the optimisation of progress and outcomes.
- PLIMS-personalised, learning, intention, maps, detail targets taken from priorities in EHCP. This enables teachers to focus on agreed individual targets and report progress accordingly.
- All pupils at Cleaswell Hill school make progress from their assessed starting points. Baseline assessments are moderated to ensure subsequent targets are aspirational.
- Pupils respond well to highly structured routines, expectations, and rewards. As a result, engagement in learning is positive.
- Attendance is monitored daily and all absence is followed up with proactive support for pupils at risk. There are no exclusions this half term.
- Resources meet need and support pupil's access to learning opportunities. Outdoor facilities require further adaptation; however Forest School provision is supporting learning effectively.
- Safeguarding systems and processes ensure pupils are protected and supported. Leaders understand that safeguarding is linked to inclusion, ensuring no child is overlooked.
- The school is reviewing its website to ensure information is updated. This includes the equality objectives and accessibility plan.
- The SEND Code of Practice emphasises identifying needs early, adapting teaching, and ensuring provision is consistent and inclusive. Cleaswell Hill are exceptional ensuring all pupils achieve well commensurate to ability and inclusion is optimised in every child's best interests.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

- How are leaders ensuring staff can define 'inclusion' within the context of the local community and Ofsted criteria?

- This SIP visit focused on evaluating the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Phase and Pathway Leads participated in joint observations alongside the SIP, enabling collaborative reflection and shared professional dialogue. The Headteacher provided opportunities for leaders to contribute insights into teaching practice and to evaluate its impact. The SIP supported this evaluative process, which led to the identification of whole-school strategic priorities as well as specific Phase and class-level areas for improvement. Phase Leaders were also encouraged to reflect on their own confidence in judging the effectiveness of lessons, strengthening their evaluative skills and leadership capacity.
- Strategic areas for consideration included: effective deployment of teaching assistants in facilitating best outcomes, classroom management/organisation, sharing best practice across the school and strengthening links between lesson intentions and individual pupil targets, cross-Phase moderation.
- Phase department priorities include using modelling effectively in class to reinforce high expectations, strengthening links in Preparation for Adulthood and optimising opportunities for pupils to develop independence and maintaining the right balance between levels of teacher talk and pupil input,
- Class-level support includes providing training opportunities to revisit questioning techniques, revisiting the arrangements for transitions between tasks, provide team teaching opportunities to improve practical maths planning and delivery.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

How will leaders further utilise the expertise of highly effective teachers to develop pedagogy and support less confident colleagues?

Considering the SIP's input over two days, how will senior leaders ensure that Phase leads build strategic capacity by setting priorities for action at whole-school, pathway, and class-based levels?

What systems will senior leaders establish to hold Phase leads accountable for the implementation and impact of these agreed priorities?

Achievement

- High-quality teaching at Cleaswell Hill is fundamental for pupils as they benefit most from clear explanations, scaffolding, and adaptive teaching.
- Achievement is measured against personalised targets rather than only national benchmarks, recognising progress from individual starting points, commensurate with ability. Data from the analysis of PLIMS (personalised targets) has proved that all pupils are on track to achieve outcomes. Some cohorts have received personalised interventions in support of achieving targets as this is an evidenced-based approach which has proved beneficial to the school.
- Building confidence, resilience, and independence is a vital aspect of achievement and staff know this goes hand in hand with effective teaching.
- Developing communication skills, emotional regulation, and self-advocacy are viewed as important as academic outcomes for Engagement, Engagement + and Core learners, and as such the school works productively on assessing areas for development to optimise pupils' ability to access learning.
- Social inclusion is measured by the extent to which pupils participate in school life, including clubs and school trips. The Personal Development Lead has established a robust system to ensure equality of opportunity in accessing community activities. This provision encompasses the use of public transport, leisure facilities, and learning opportunities beyond the school gates.
- A small cohort of Engagement+ pupils, who previously found it extremely challenging to tolerate any adult direction, have successfully travelled independently on local buses to a range of destinations. This represents a significant achievement. Tracking their progress over time has provided a strong evidence base for the school's approach to teaching highly complex individuals. This achievement is linked to improving the quality of pupils and family life and goes beyond the academic which is not a justifiable measure for Cleaswell's increasingly challenging cohort of complex needs learners.
- Leaders know that emotional wellbeing is closely linked to educational outcomes, and as such the school works hard on creating enabling environments in support of achievement.
- Extended pathway pupils are achieving phonics targets.
- The school is strengthening its data tracking systems, and the new assessment lead is working highly productively with the Core Pathway and Phase leads to ensure assessment aligns with the changes to the Core curriculum.
- Progress and achievement remain robust, but systems development will ensure new assessment arrangements are valid, reliable and relevant. Priorities for assessment are included in the school's Horizon 4 Improvement Plan.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

- Leaders recognise the significant changes that are required to meet the changing needs of Cleaswell's population of SEND pupils. Is the assessment system development taking account of best practice models beyond Cleaswell? Is support from partner schools supporting system development?

Personal development and well-being

- Although this was not a specific focus of the SIP visit, conversations with leaders make it clear that there is a shared understanding of the importance of developing pupils' character, resilience and capacity to learn. Leaders recognise that these elements are fundamental to securing achievement and underpin the school's wider improvement priorities.
- Pupils are supported to develop confidence, perseverance and independence. This is inspiring considering the baseline for some pupils in not being able to tolerate any adult direction.
- Strategies such as restorative practice, mentoring, and resilience-building activities are embedded within a relational practice approach utilising the work of Paul Dix. Monitoring is in place and so far, evidence of staff empathy, understanding and ability to engage with pupils is supporting well-being, progress and achievement.
- Pupils have equal access to clubs, trips and enrichment opportunities designed to meet specific needs and interests.
- Therapeutic support (e.g., occupational therapy, speech and language, counselling) supports academic progress and personal growth, resilience and self-esteem. The four school-based therapists provide an integrated education/therapy model that addressing underlying needs that impact learning.

- The school has a strong focus on emotional regulation, self-advocacy, and positive mental health and this is supported by key personnel, including therapists and the mental health lead highly effectively.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

- Pupils' views are sought daily, and this influences teaching strategies. How does the latest pupil voice survey inform curriculum personal development priorities?

Attendance and behaviour

- This areas of the school's work was not a focus of this SIP visit. However, the SIP knows the school well and in conversation with key leaders it is evident that Cleaswell continues to ensure that attendance is rigorously monitored through daily tracking and swift follow-up of absences.
- Personalised support plans are in place for pupils and risk assessments are reviewed regularly in support of safety.
- Within the Engagement and Engagement + pathway safety was a significant priority in the first half-term of this academic school year. The changing nature of pupil's presentation of need resulted in significant concerns regarding safety and emphasised leaders' awareness of their duty of care to staff and pupils. The schools NAPPI-non-aggressive, physical, psychological, interventions, CPOMs and cloud –based recording system are used comprehensively in recording incidents. Subsequent analysis of data informs strategies for improvement. This term school has reviewed its systems and processes, provided support and guidance for staff and worked relentlessly with therapists to create safe, enabling environments.
- It is important to understand the presentation of pupils needs to reflect upon and provide any judgement on effectiveness. Some pupils cannot tolerate adult or peer proximity due to sensory processing differences, anxiety or trauma-related responses. This manifests as extreme avoidance behaviours, distress and or physically aggressive responses, or withdrawal when others are nearby.
- School understand that this is a significant barrier to social interaction and engagement. Pupils within the Engagement, Engagement + and increasingly Core pathway have complex co-occurring needs that require increasingly more specialist approaches to learning. These pupils often present with multiple overlapping needs: cognitive, sensory, physical, and emotional. As a result, pupils require highly personalised environments with reduced stimuli, predictable routines, and carefully structured adult interaction.

- Strong collaboration with families and external agencies supports behaviour for learning as families adopt similar behavioural management techniques at home.
- Overall pupils are consistently present, engaged, and able to access learning and attendance is in line with national and local averages. Three pupils are persistent non-attenders, and the Local Authority are working in partnership with the school in support of a long-term solution.
- Strengths of the school include the use of a clear, consistent behaviour policy which is embedded across the school and adapted for individual needs.
- Staff use restorative approaches and therapeutic strategies to support emotional regulation and from pupil starting points there is strong evidence of provision meeting need.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

- How are leaders monitoring and supporting staff to adapt strategies to meet changing cohort needs over time?

Early years

NA

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

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Sixth form

- Sixth form students are involved in an exciting project to provide purposeful learning opportunities in working environments. A catering kitchen and cafe are planned, and community involvement is strong in support of providing purposeful work-related learning experiences. Students will have the opportunity to generalise learning in functional situations off-site.
- The catering initiative involves a highly experienced chef who has been working in partnership to create an outdoor cafe in the grounds of post 16. This allowed the school to operate as a community cafe in the summer term. Families have welcomed this initiative as a means of supporting independent living skills.

- An off-site cafe facility has been identified for a more permanent provision and local businesses are involved in supporting the set-up.
- Horticulture developments include training staff to provide accreditation options. Students are motivated by the opportunity to enhance their skills in support of life beyond school.
- Observations of teaching and learning identified a strong trend in supporting independence and the provision of Entry level and GCSE accreditation.
- Maths GCSE teaching was observed as part of this SIP visit and the teacher was able to articulate how pupils demonstrate progress against personalised maths targets. He believes there is increased student confidence in applying maths to everyday life (e.g., budgeting, measuring, community life). The teacher differentiates learning to ensure maximum access for students and this includes having to adapt the language used in GCSE maths intentions. All students are on track to reach teacher expectations.
- The SIP discussed with one student his plan for this school year and he articulated his journey from level 4 to 5 in pursuit of a college placement as he wishes to work in the police force as a potential dog handler. School support includes 1:1 help to accelerate outcomes.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

- The Ht is re-evaluating capacity in post-16 as part of a leadership review. How will the post-16 lead have capacity to further develop the 14-18 provision and Preparation for Adulthood?

Leadership and governance

- Governors remain strongly committed to driving school improvement. They are well-informed about recent updates to the Ofsted framework and demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding, aligned with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- The Headteacher has restructured the school's performance management system to incorporate professional dialogues with teachers, supported by external quality assurance. These conversations have engaged all senior and middle leaders in rigorous reflection on priorities, strengths and areas for personal development. This initiative also forms a key part of the school's succession planning, in preparation for the retirement of two senior leaders—including the Headteacher—anticipated in 2026/7.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is taught well and there is a strong evidence base that underpins decisions on curriculum provision. The curriculum is not 'set' but fluid in response to need. A review of the Core pathway framework is evidence of the

school's reflective approach, as evaluation of what children in this Phase were learning and how they were learning has led to change.

- Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the SEND Code of Practice they advocate for identifying needs early, adapting teaching and ensuring provision is consistent and inclusive. Any pupil at risk of underachieving is swiftly identified and structured interventions programmes are put in place to ensure progress is commensurate to ability.
- Leaders work hard to meet the challenges of operating three curriculum pathways and ensuring breadth, balance and tailored learning opportunities within a climate of change at a national and local level.
- The culture at Cleaswell is built upon strong values and an ethos where every child is supported to be the 'best they can be'.
- The Year-4 Horizon, part of a 5-Year strategy is in place and aligned responsibilities are supporting accountability.
- Reporting procedures to Governors will now include Ofsted categories to align expectations.

Emerging questions (please write as questions)

How is leadership capacity being built at middle leadership level to support succession?

What contingency plans are in place to ensure continuity during leadership transitions? Are risks identified?

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEADTEACHER

Other information to note/feedback

Autumn term:

Spring term:

Summer term:

Requests to the LA for further support

Autumn term:

Spring term:

Summer term:

