

Local Authority School Improvement Partner Report 2025 - 2026

Cleaswell Hill School

Headteacher	Michael Jackson		
Chair of Governors	Tim Chrisp		
School Improvement Partner	Lynn Watson		
Dates of meetings	Autumn: 20th Nov 2025	Spring: 17 th March 2026	Summer:
Focus	Curriculum, teaching, Leadership and Governance, Post16	Ofsted preparation-case sampling, Inclusion, Safeguarding, Leadership and Governance	x

Last inspection: (month/year)

Overall Effectiveness	○	Quality of Education	○	Behaviours and Attitudes	○	Personal Development	○	Leadership and Management	○	Early Years/ Sixth form	○
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Inspection AFIs

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Link to the school's Ofsted page: [Cleaswell Hill School](#)

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.

Spring Term

- Cleaswell Hill continues to build and strengthen links with a wide range of external partners. This work supports families effectively and enhances the school's capacity to meet complex needs. School leaders have ensured that multi-disciplinary collaboration is more robust, holding external agencies to account for their responsibilities regarding EHCP outcomes. The lack of respite services/social care support for families has led Cleaswell Hill leaders to become increasingly involved in supporting families. This is well managed but is impacting upon capacity.
- The Headteacher has implemented structured 'professional conversations' as part of the professional development cycle. These discussions include all leaders and therapists and are being used to inform succession planning and potential changes to roles and responsibilities. Staff report feeling valued through this process, which has contributed to improved morale.
- Leaders are actively engaging with external discussions about Ofsted changes, and the White Paper. This awareness is shaping their strategic planning to ensure Cleaswell Hill sustains exceptional standards during significant change.

- A review of progress towards meeting priorities within the 4-Year Horizon indicates progress is in line with expectations. The plan is ambitious and links to Cleaswell's developing partnerships as a civic leader within the sector. The Fusion training provision is supporting SENDcos across the region, and feedback from CPD events is highly positive. An increasing number of regional leaders, as well as the local authority, are seeking support from Cleaswell to improve inclusive practice in the mainstream sector.
- The Head teacher continues to drive ethical, relational leadership, setting uncompromising expectations for pupil well-being, safeguarding, and curriculum ambition.
- Strategic alignment across pathways ensures improvement priorities, curriculum intent, and therapeutic approaches are coherent and consistently implemented. The therapy 'Horizon' for Years 4 and 5 of the Five-Year Strategy is highly ambitious, rooted in a deep evaluation of need within the national and local context.
- Deep expertise in SEND pedagogy, behaviour support, and therapeutic practice enables leaders to coach staff with credibility and impact. Phase leaders have recently been involved in a programme of monitoring with a strategic focus, and this work has influenced teaching and learning effectively.
- The distributed leadership culture, where middle leaders innovate, lead teams confidently, and contribute meaningfully to whole-school strategy, is impacting on classroom practice. The Head teacher has invested time in growing middle leaders, and this is influencing the cycle of improvement significantly.
- Highly adaptive teaching rooted in evidence-informed practice and deep knowledge of each pupil's needs was evidenced during SIP and Phase Leaders Learning Walks. This includes the Early Career Teachers programme, which is exceptional in supporting growing talent.
- Consistent therapeutic approaches are embedded across the school. Therapists work as a close-knit team to inspire and support high-quality interventions. Outcomes include improved access to learning, and a deep understanding of pupil need that leads to bespoke approaches that enable complex learners to attend school.
- Exceptionally positive relationships between staff and pupils, underpinned by trust, predictability, and emotional safety.
- A highly vigilant safeguarding culture, with staff confident in identifying concerns and acting swiftly to support pupils' well-being. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is highly experienced and proactive, and this instils confidence and trust.
- Governors provide rigorous challenge and support, grounded in a deep understanding of SEND provision and statutory responsibilities.
- There is a strong culture of reflective practice, where staff are encouraged to question, refine, and innovate. The work with Northumbria University has emphasised that the model of classroom-based enquiry at Cleaswell has significantly impacted professional growth and innovative practice. Developments include the potential for a professional training hub to co-deliver accredited courses across the region.

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. Staff absence has improved this term and the Assistant Head teacher continues to develop strategies to support staff

- 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.
Key staff have clear priorities and accountability systems ensure priorities are met, and an evidence base is established. This remains a priority.
- Succession planning as one of the Deputy Headteachers (DHT) retires in July 2026 and the Ht in 2027.
A Deputy Head teacher post has been advertised, and interviews are scheduled for March 2026.
- Developing outdoor space suitable for all year-round access in support of learners who require this facility to remain regulated.
Plans are underway to begin enhancing outdoor learning in the summer term. An 'Environments Development Team' has been established to enhance outdoor provision and ensure the school is as accessible as possible.
- 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. This remains a priority.
- Priorities identified this term include:
Embedding changes to the Core curriculum using evidence-based approaches. A clear rationale for change has been identified, and leaders are driving improvements at pace.
Consideration of a fifth pathway in support of complex learners.
Consideration of a whole school Inclusion Strategy document to include contextual information, intentions for 2026/7 and expected impact.
Ensuring there is a clear value-driven vision for inclusion understood and articulated by staff with clear links to an evidence base.
Preparation for inspection.
Leadership transition and the alignment of roles and responsibilities. Appointment of a Deputy Headteacher.
Robust evidence of achievement, over time and from baselines using the new Earwig system.
Accounting for progress with stakeholders.
Transition of the Lead DSL role on the retirement of the Deputy Headteacher.
Capturing parents/caregivers' views on school standards.
Creating a system that ensures relevant case sampling information is efficiently retrievable.

Contextual data

	National 2024- 2025			Autumn	Spring	Summer
	Primary	Secondary	Special			
Current number on roll	272	1062	156	261	263	number
Overall attendance	94.8%	91.4%	87.1%	90.3%	89%	%
% Persistent absentees	13.5%	24.3%	35.8%	26% (67)	14.83% (39)	% (number)
FSM attendance	92.1%	86.3%	85.1%	88.67%	88.8%	% (number)
EHCP attendance	89.5%	82.3%	87.4%	90.3%	89%	% (number)
SEN Support attendance	92.8%	86.2%	65.5%	90.3%	89%	% (number)
% and number of EHCPs	3.5%	3.1%	99.3%	100%	100%	% (number)
% and number of SEND Support	14.8%	13.4%	0.5%	100%	100%	% (number)
% and number of FSM pupils	24.7%	25.8%	49.2%	51.4%	51.34% (134)	% (number)

Length of the school week	30hours 25 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, this requires an update.
- 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 absences 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, and this includes the equality objectives and accessibility plan.
- The SEND Code of Practice emphasises identifying needs early, adaptive teaching, and ensuring provision is consistent and inclusive, Cleaswell Hill are exceptional at ensuring all pupils achieve well commensurate to their ability and inclusion is optimised in every child's best interests.
- Cleaswell Hill is a highly inclusive provision within the context of pupils' presentation of need and diagnosis of SEND. A small cohort of pupils attend on a part-time basis because this is currently the maximum they can safely tolerate in relation to their emotional regulation, sensory processing, and overall capacity to engage. Parents, the Local Authority, and in some cases health professionals support these arrangements, recognising that without this highly individualised approach, these pupils would be unable to sustain any school attendance at all.
- The school works proactively and incrementally to increase each pupil's time on site, but this is undertaken with great care. Risk is continually assessed and managed to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils, staff, and families. These children present with highly complex and severe needs; their tolerance for change, ability to accept adult direction, and capacity to regulate in a busy environment are significantly affected by their profiles of need. This group is closely monitored through robust multi-agency processes. Families are active partners in planning, reviewing, and supporting the most appropriate provision. Leaders ensure that each pupil's programme is responsive, safe, and designed to secure the best possible outcomes over time.
- Case study information is documented, and evidence of increased engagement and improvement is robust. Staff can describe, discuss and provide detailed accounts of progress made from pupils' starting points commensurate with ability. Case sampling was a focus of this SIP visit, and it is clear from discussions and the presentation of data that staff know pupils exceptionally well, and this supports personalised provision plans.
- The school is coordinating an inclusion strategy to detail the vision, definition of inclusion and interventions taking place to ensure pupils have a sense of belonging. The complexities of detailing inclusion within a highly dynamic, responsive environment in relation to capturing all aspects of this culture are difficult, as all approaches are designed to ensure pupils can thrive.
- It is a challenge to capture the full breadth of the inclusive practice at Cleaswell within the structure of the Ofsted toolkit, because the school is intentionally designed so that pupils experience inclusion not as an intervention, but as the foundation of their daily personal development, learning, and relationships. Inclusion is embedded in every aspect of the school's culture, curriculum, and environment. Work is underway to succinctly evidence this practice.

Emerging questions

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

- A senior leader has coordinated strong evidence of inclusive practice, working with middle leaders to ensure a shared understanding across the curriculum pathways. Work on a whole school strategy will begin in the summer term.

Curriculum and teaching

- 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.
- Pupils with the most complex needs have access a curriculum that is ambitious, highly personalised, and coherently sequenced to meet need. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and adapt teaching with precision so that every pupil can engage meaningfully and make progress from their starting points. This is a significant aspect of accounting for progress and providing sound evidence in readiness for inspection.
- The Extended Pathway Phase Lead and Deputy Headteacher presented a detailed account of the pupil's progress from baseline, demonstrating an analytical approach to triangulating complex information to secure the best possible outcomes. Their analysis was both precise and ethically grounded, with the child's fragile mental health a clear priority for change.
- The provision in place for this pupil is highly personalised and reflects deep professional knowledge of their needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities. The rationale for adaptation is robust and evidence-informed, illustrating a commitment to ensuring the pupil can engage, achieve, and thrive within a safe and supportive framework.
- The impact of this approach is clear. The pupil has excelled within the Extended pathway, and the examples of their work provided compelling evidence of meaningful progress over time. This is a strong illustration of leaders and staff working with integrity, using professional judgement to design provision that enables the child to be the very best they can be.
- There is a continued emphasis on adapting the Core curriculum offer for pupils to ensure it reflects assessed need. Teachers are significantly involved in shaping change to meet the needs of this growing cohort who present with highly complex needs. This is a priority for the school.
- Professional development opportunities at Cleaswell Hill are rich and include clear parameters rooted in research- building knowledge, motivation, development of techniques and embedding practice (Education Endowment Fund). Cleaswell's approach emphasises that the growth of expertise must be ongoing and sustainable to meet the growing complexity of pupil need.

Emerging questions

- How will leaders further utilise the expertise of highly effective teachers to develop pedagogy and support less confident colleagues?
- Leaders are discussing how to provide compelling evidence of exceptional teaching and learning in school. During the autumn term SIP visit 70% of teaching was considered highly effective by Phase leaders and there is a clear strategy involving coaching and mentoring to improve further. This includes a strategy of peer-to-peer support.
- 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?
- Phase leads are involved in a programme of development led by the HT to ensure the impact of their work is grounded in evidence and impact. Senior leaders work closely with middle leaders to provide opportunities for growth and development.

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.
- Personalised Learning Intention Maps (PLIMs) are structured to break down long-term EHCP outcomes into smaller achievable steps. Across the autumn term, within the Core and Extended pathways, 75% of PLIM targets were met. Communication and Interaction -80% of targets achieved, Cognition and Learning-74%, Social, Emotional, Mental Health- 69% and Sensory and Physical-77%. This data has been deeply analysed in each Phase to ensure targeted support where needed. Cleaswell ensure validity of data through systematic moderation.
- Pupil Premium data results show 74.5% of PLIM targets were met by this cohort. This is in line with whole school data.
- Cleaswell are piloting a more sensory approach to phonics teaching for pupils who cannot access a formalised approach. 67 pupils access the Essential Letters and Sounds phonics programme;22 of this group will be included in piloting a bespoke approach. Progress data will inform next steps.
- All pupils are making progress from their starting points in terms of whole child development, personal, social, emotional and academic. If a child is at risk of underperforming, intervention strategies, deep analysis and triangulation of need ensue to enable pupils to thrive. Fifteen pupils received highly structured academic interventions in the autumn term, and all have maintained expected levels of achievement as a result. So far, nineteen children have accessed specific, measurable intervention this term. Data will be tracked to inform next steps.

Emerging 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?
- Earwig is the chosen assessment tracking system utilised in school. This was piloted prior to implementation across the school. As a result, staff are confident in using the system.

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 and speech and language) supports academic progress and personal growth, resilience, and self-esteem. The four school-based therapists provide an integrated education/therapy model that addresses 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
- Personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are supported to build confidence, resilience, communication, independence, and self-advocacy through a rich offer that is fully accessible and responsive to their needs. Inclusion is not an add-on; it is the mechanism through which pupils experience success and belonging, and as a result, they thrive.
- This term, pupils have engaged in opportunities to understand democracy, commensurate with their ability. As part of the school's partnership with the Local Authority's Participation team, pupils had opportunities to take part in Northumberland's Youth Elections. This experience deepened understanding as part of active citizenship.
- Leaders have strengthened the systems used to capture and analyse pupil voice, ensuring it meaningfully shapes curriculum design and provision. As a result, the curriculum has been further adapted to enhance pupils' personal development and ensure it reflects what matters most to them. For example, life-skills teaching and opportunities to demonstrate understanding through practical, real-life experiences have been significantly expanded. These adaptations ensure that pupils develop the confidence, independence, and functional skills they need to thrive beyond school.
- Case sampling information presented during this SIP visit included a 'mind map' of information on the outcomes for one pupil who requires high levels of support to maintain engagement. It is clear from the evidence that the pupil concerned has made good progress.

Emerging questions

- Pupils' views are sought daily, and this influences teaching strategies. How does the latest pupil voice survey inform curriculum personal development priorities?
Pupil voice has informed strategies to increase real-life experiences in readiness for life beyond school and to support exploration of identity, build positive relationships and develop resilience.

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.
- Cleaswell's work to promote emotional regulation and relational safety enables pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning and to sustain engagement over time. For some pupils, this includes carefully planned part-time attendance as a reasonable and necessary adjustment. These arrangements are co-produced with families and the Local Authority, ensuring that pupils can attend safely and successfully while their capacity to cope increases.
- Leaders are prepared for the April 2026 update from the DfE on restrictive physical intervention and reasonable force and policy has been updated.
- Within the context of the increasing complexity of pupil need and the school's highly ambitious approach to attendance and learning there is an upward trend in relation to the number of behavioural incidents. Week 1 this term, the total number of incidents recorded was 53. Week 6, the number has increased to 81. The Lead discussed reasons for the increase, one child's change in medication, an increase in academic demand, expectation to increase time in school. Low-level incidents have lessened over time, and analysis reveals this is a result of the staff's ability to manage and support dysregulation. Cleaswell continues to have robust, relevant and reliable systems for capturing information, and this informs actions.

- Leaders are fully informed of Ofsted’s approach to judging attendance through the lens of inclusion. Cleaswell has an exceptionally well-defined approach to attendance and a full understanding of the implications of non-attendance. Termly meetings with Phase leaders and the Attendance and Behaviour Lead ensure these crucial aspects of school performance receive a high profile.
- Current overall attendance is 89% this is above the national standard and an improvement from 88.57% last term.
- Persistent absence is an area of constant review, as there are pupils who cannot attend school due to adverse trauma. Cleaswell has up-to-date information on tracking these pupils and liaising with external agencies, which is ongoing to ensure the safety and well-being of this vulnerable small cohort.
- Eight pupils receive reduced timetable provision within the context of safety, health and well-being and in agreement with the local authority and families. This is monitored with a view to increasing on-site contact.
- One pupil receives support through short-term alternative provision. This is under review and is robustly monitored by a school leader.
- Therapy provision continues to be a significant strength of Cleaswell School. The highly experienced therapy team promote trauma informed approaches in support of attendance.

Emerging questions

- How are leaders monitoring and supporting staff to adapt strategies to meet changing cohort needs over time?
- Therapy provision has a lasting and significant impact on supporting the management and understanding of dysregulation. Risk assessments and a deep understanding of pupils need informs strategies.

Early years

NA

Emerging 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.
- The Post 16 lead has organised revision sessions for students undertaking accreditation next term. This has improved outcomes as students require high levels of support to understand examination protocols. All students are on track to achieve expected outcomes.
- Accreditation pathways include- BTECHS, GCSE Entry Level, Functional Skills qualifications, Duke of Edinburgh scheme and catering and horticulture accreditation. A member of staff has undertaken CPD to provide a horticulture accredited course, and off-site kitchen/cafe facilities are planned for September.
- Leaders are discussing provision for complex learners longer-term as the Appleby Centre does not have the capacity needed to support Engagement and Engagement + students. The Local Authority are involved in provision discussions to ensure students have access the support they need beyond school.

Emerging questions

- The headteacher 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?
- The Leadership review is ongoing, and the appointment of a Deputy Headteacher will enable the Head teacher to further develop leadership capacity. The expertise of the newly appointed DHT will inform the designation of roles and responsibilities across middle leadership, strengthening the school's ability to meet future priorities. This includes the Post 16 Lead, who has been instrumental in supporting off-site provision for this cohort.

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.
- Civic leadership initiatives remain a driver for positive change in schools and beyond. Partnerships within the sector have developed this term within the context of the White Paper and SEND providers' support of mainstream settings.
- Year 4 Horizon outcomes are on track, and a continuous in-depth evaluative approach informs priorities. In discussion with leaders, ambition and aspiration are drivers for school priorities. There is evidence of innovative, ambitious ideas to strengthen outcomes, including collaboration across the sector.
- Phase leaders have increased opportunity to develop following the 'professional conversations' with the Head teacher. When the senior leadership appointment is finalised in March 2026, roles and responsibilities will be considered.
- Leadership and governance ensure that inclusion is strategic, evidence-informed, and rigorously quality-assured.
- Systems for monitoring safeguarding are highly robust and a priority within the context of the vulnerabilities of pupils. Working practice includes the involvement of multi-agencies. However, school leaders are increasingly concerned about their level of responsibility in supporting vulnerable families. Reduced access to respite services is impacting pupils' and families' quality of life, and staff are being asked to provide support beyond school.
- Governors know the school exceptionally well and provide robust support and challenge to secure strong outcomes for pupils. This term, seven Governor Link Visits have taken place, including two focused on safeguarding, alongside visits scrutinising inclusion and specific curriculum pathways. These visits are purposeful and well-structured, enabling Governors to triangulate evidence from leaders, staff, pupils, and documentation.
- The resulting reports are detailed, evaluative, and clearly identify next steps. Actions are incorporated into the school's improvement priorities, ensuring that Governance insight directly influences strategic development.
- This SIP visit has involved reviewing standards through pupil provision. Specific pupils were chosen as case samples, and the ensuing evidence reinforces a highly personalised and strategic approach to meeting needs, which is effective and yields exceptional outcomes.

Emerging questions

- How is leadership capacity being built at middle leadership level to support succession?
A review of roles and responsibilities is underway to ensure skills and talents are utilised fully in support of best practice.
- What contingency plans are in place to ensure continuity during leadership transitions? Are risks identified?
A risk assessment is in place and has been discussed with the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors. Plans are in place to support sustainable improvement.

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: