

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	June 23rd 2026 Ofsted preparation, curriculum, teaching, Leadership, governance, phonic/En, maths, safeguarding, achievement. The summer SIP visit involved an Ofsted inspector who supports the school's improvement strategy.

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

- Cleaswell Hill had no areas for improvement at its last inspection.

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 Headteacher 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.

Summer 2026

- The Headteacher (HT) has implemented a comprehensive and well-sequenced programme of preparation ahead of the forthcoming Ofsted inspection, anticipated from July onwards. This has included an intensive coaching offer for staff at all levels, ensuring that leaders and teachers are confident in articulating curriculum intent, demonstrating typicality, and evidencing the impact of their work on pupils' learning and wider development. External quality assurance has provided Cleaswell Hill with a valuable layer of independent scrutiny, ensuring that the school's highly complex, three-pathway model is understood, evaluated and rigorously validated.
- Presentations to Governors have ensured they are fully aware of the inspection toolkit and the school's approach to self-evaluation and the identification of areas requiring further enhancement. This strengthening of strategic oversight ensures staff and Governors are well-placed to engage with inspectors on matters of curriculum quality, safeguarding, inclusion, and school development. The preparation work has involved the School Improvement Partner (SIP) and an Ofsted inspector, who have worked together to robustly evaluate key standards. The planned approach has created a cohesive, well-informed leadership team with a shared understanding of the school's strengths and the evidence base underpinning high-quality provision.
- This was epitomised at a recent professional development event where staff presented their action research projects to the University and colleagues. The level of reflective practice and key learning points were discussed, and evidence of the impact on pupil outcomes was celebrated. Northumbria University have submitted its evaluation of Cleaswell Hill's teacher enquiry research, and a report will feature in a British Journal. This will impact nationally, as others will be influenced by the strength of evidence.
- The integrated therapy model has developed significantly since the last SIP visit. Therapists – including the Lead Occupational Therapist, Lead Speech and Language Therapist and wider therapy team – have provided compelling evidence of the impact of their work in reducing barriers to learning for a wide range of pupils. Their contribution strongly reinforces leaders' view that inclusion is an exceptional aspect of Cleaswell Hill's provision.
- The Engagement Pathway continues to be a standout strength. It was singled out during the 'SIP day' for enabling pupils with profound and complex needs to access meaningful learning through the specialist knowledge, therapeutic expertise and finely tuned practice of staff. This reflects a deeply embedded culture of communication-rich, regulation-informed and highly personalised pedagogy.
- Therapy-led initiatives have also had demonstrable impact across the school. The **'Chatterbugs' programme** has strengthened early communication, interaction and joint attention. The **'Shhh' programme** has enabled staff to analyse their own use of voice, reduce unnecessary verbal load and create calmer, more regulated learning environments – an approach that has been monitored, refined and evaluated through staff voice and observational data.
- The Oracy Project now has real traction. It is ensuring that pupils have structured, intentional opportunities to develop the spoken-language skills that underpin thinking, reasoning, social interaction and access to learning. Following evaluation, involving speech and language therapists, leaders have driven the oracy project with a clear understanding that pupils will have the best opportunities to be included in society if they have strong oral communication skills.
- The Fusion Learning Hub continues to operate as a genuinely outward-facing model of civic leadership. Leaders have evaluated its work in terms of both internal impact—how it strengthens practice, pedagogy and professional confidence within Cleaswell Hill—and external impact, including the benefits experienced by partner schools, MATs and community organisations. Strong testimonials from mainstream partners, specialist settings and external agencies provide clear evidence of the value and influence of Cleaswell Hill's expertise across the region and beyond.

- The Three Rivers Initial Teacher Training Partner has praised the approach at Cleaswell Hill, noting that the school's contribution has significantly grown the capacity and confidence of trainee teachers beyond the expectations of the training programme. The school's approach is influencing practice in other schools.

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. Staff absence has improved significantly through strengthening systems and processes and utilising a highly relational approach.

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. This has proved highly beneficial, and staff report feeling well supported in their work. They feel they gain job satisfaction from knowing the highly vulnerable children in their care are making substantial progress from their starting points.

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. The Year 4 Horizon has been evaluated and information presented to Governors. The evaluation is informing Year 5 targets.

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. A Deputy Head has been appointed. He has worked at the school previously as an Assistant Head and is a Cleaswell Hill Governor; consequently, he knows the school well and will be able to continue the drive for sustained excellence.

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. Plans are in place to enhance outdoor learning spaces further in September. The Forest school, MUGA and Post 16 outdoor areas are of a very high standard.

Constant review and need to adapt the space to optimise pupils' access to high-quality learning experiences. The school is not fit for purpose in many respects, and space is limited. Cleaswell Hill optimises its physical environment to enhance learning for all pupils. As the complexity of pupil need has increased, leaders have ensured that adaptations to the building remain ongoing and responsive.

Website development. This remains a priority. Changes to the website have been identified, and work is ongoing.

Priorities identified in the Spring 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. Leaders have articulated a strong vision for ensuring the Core curriculum effectively meets need.

Foundation subject assessment has been strengthened alongside assessment in PHSE.

Consideration of a whole-school Inclusion Strategy document to include contextual information, intentions for 2026/7 and expected impact. This is in place, coherent and provides strong evidence of the school's success as a community-based learning hub.

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. Cleaswell Hill has taken a strategic, evidence-informed approach to preparing for its forthcoming Ofsted inspection. Leaders have ensured that all aspects of the school's work – curriculum, therapy, safeguarding, governance and inclusion – are aligned and coherent. Further work over the summer will ensure all documentation is inspection-ready.

An Inclusion Strategy is in place and sets out a compelling rationale for preparing pupils for life beyond school. It identifies the barriers to learning experienced by pupils with complex needs and outlines the school's approach to mitigating these through:

- high-quality risk assessments
- personalised intervention plans
- therapy-led provision
- adaptive teaching
- a curriculum that is responsive to need

This strategy is not static; it is reviewed regularly and will be updated again once the full suite of school improvement documentation – including Self-Evaluation and Horizon 5, is updated.

Leadership transition and the alignment of roles and responsibilities. Appointment of a Deputy Headteacher.

A Deputy Head has been appointed, and discussions regarding roles and responsibilities have begun.

Robust evidence of achievement, over time and from baselines using the new Earwig system.

Cleaswell Hill has established a clear and well-articulated rationale for its holistic approach to achievement. Leaders recognise that pupils' progress is multi-dimensional and cannot be captured through academic measures alone. As a result, the school uses a triangulated model that draws on both qualitative and quantitative information to build a rich, accurate picture of each pupil's development over time.

This includes systematically capturing data across all aspects of school life – curriculum engagement, therapy outcomes, personal development, behaviour, safeguarding, and attendance. The wider context of attendance is analysed carefully, with leaders considering patterns, barriers and protective factors to ensure that attendance information contributes meaningfully to the overall understanding of achievement rather than being viewed in isolation.

Through this approach, leaders can:

- identify barriers to learning with precision
- plan personalised interventions and risk-reduction strategies
- evaluate the impact of therapy and specialist provision

- understand how pupils are developing socially, emotionally and academically
- demonstrate progress that is valid, triangulated and aligned to pupils' individual needs

This holistic model ensures that achievement at Cleaswell Hill is understood in a way that reflects the complexity of pupils' profiles and the breadth of the school's provision. It provides a strong, coherent evidence base for inspection and supports leaders' confidence in articulating how well pupils are doing across all pathways.

Transition of the Lead DSL role on the retirement of the Deputy Headteacher.

The transition is being managed with clarity, oversight and professional rigour, ensuring the school remains inspection-ready and continues to operate a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The 'incoming' DSL has attended relevant training; she has worked one session per week with the present DSL and been involved in external quality assurance, including monitoring the single central record. The HT will include a safeguarding briefing after senior leadership meetings every week; a DHT will provide supervision of the DSL as well as continuing with external supervision sessions. The SIP will include safeguarding in all visits from September.

Capturing parents/caregivers' views on school standards.

The school has received 33 Parent View responses. These are overwhelmingly highly positive.

Creating a system that ensures relevant case sampling information is efficiently retrievable.

Leaders have taken advice from an inspector regarding culminating evidence for case sampling. The Core pathway leaders presented triangulated, robust evidence of a child's journey through school from starting points to the present day. This included attainments, baseline information and progress, attendance and the 'pen portrait' of needs. There is clear evidence that this looked-after child has made significant progress.

Summer term priorities 2026

- Website development.
- Enhancing systems for evidencing achievement in all pathways to ensure leaders can verify that evidence is valid and reliable. Assessment is strong, as teaching was highly effective in the ten lessons observed. Teachers used formative assessment well in establishing gaps in learning.
- Supporting key staff in the narrative to explain the complexity of provision at Cleaswell, where there are, in essence 3 schools within a school.
- Final check on school improvement documentation to strengthen alignment. Ensuring the SEF reflects the dynamics of a school that offers so much to pupils, families and the community.
- Ensuring leaders can provide compelling evidence of the attendance 'story' at Cleaswell Hill.
- Provide opportunities for the 'new' lead DSL to strengthen the CPOMS evidence base.

Contextual data

	National 2024- 2025			Autumn	Spring	Summer (to date)
	Primary	Secondary	Special			
Current number on roll	272	1062	156	261	263	261
Overall attendance	94.8%	91.4%	87.1%	89.6	90.1%	89.7%
% Persistent absentees	13.5%	24.3%	35.8%	35%	34.1%	33.1%
FSM attendance	92.1%	86.3%	85.1%	87.1%	87.7%	88%
EHCP attendance	89.5%	82.3%	87.4%	89.6%	90.1%	89.7%
SEN Support attendance	92.8%	86.2%	65.5%	89.6%	90.1%	89.7%
% and number of EHCPs	3.5%	3.1%	99.3%	100%	100%	100%
% and number of SEND Support	14.8%	13.4%	0.5%	100%	100%	100%
% and number of FSM pupils	24.7%	25.8%	49.2%	50.95% (134)	51.14% (135)	51.14% (135)
Length of the school week	30hours 25 minutes			Guidance: Length of the school week - non-statutory guidance		

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.

- Cleaswell Hill is an outstanding SEND provider, and this is reflected in its culture of ensuring inclusion and equality of opportunity for every pupil. The school's Inclusion Strategy sets out a clear and compelling rationale for this work, defining the *golden thread* of inclusion that runs through all aspects of the school's practice – curriculum, therapy, personal development, safeguarding and leadership.
- The strategy is aspirational and ambitious. It establishes the expectation that every pupil, regardless of complexity of need, will have access to high-quality learning, meaningful communication, and opportunities to be the best they can be. Leaders ensure this is lived out daily through adaptive teaching, personalised pathways, therapeutic support and a curriculum designed around dignity, independence and engagement.
- This coherent approach strengthens the school's identity as an inclusive community and provides a strong evidence base for inspection, demonstrating that inclusion is not an additional function but the defining feature of Cleaswell Hill's work.

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.

An Inclusion Strategy is in place that reflects the strong culture at Cleaswell, epitomised by equality of opportunity, Preparation for Adulthood and an 'interventions model' that breaks down barriers to learning.

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.

Recent quality assurance work focused on curriculum provision at Cleaswell Hill. Curriculum provision is genuinely 'live' and responsive to the complex, changing needs of pupils.

Leaders treat the curriculum as a live document. This means:

- Curriculum intent, sequencing and assessment are continuously refined
- Pathways (including the Engagement Pathway) evolve in response to pupil need. Leaders present a compelling narrative regarding how the curriculum meets need and how well they adapt learning to ensure it continues to be meaningful, representative of pupils' interests and linked to building knowledge and skills in support of inclusion.
- Therapy insights directly shape curriculum design
- Staff are confident in articulating typicality and impact. This was evident on learning walks during the summer term SIP visit.
- Pupil voice shapes curriculum content; staff focus on pupils' interests to 'bring the curriculum alive' supporting motivation to learn.

This dynamic approach ensures the school can clearly demonstrate how the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with highly complex and diverse profiles.

The integrated therapy model has developed significantly since the last SIP visit. Therapists have produced strong evidence of impact, including

improved access to learning for pupils who cannot access 'traditional learning' pathways. Therapy- regulation and communication underpin curriculum access.

How intent differs across pathways (Engagement, Core and Extended) while maintaining coherence has been part of the coaching programme in readiness for inspection. This work will be ongoing into the autumn term.

The integration of therapy goals, EHCP outcomes and personalised learning plans provides a strong basis for delivery within a pedagogy that includes incremental stepped progressions and a range of learning frameworks. (SCERTS, Launching into, ELS phonics programme)

Cleaswell Hill has been supporting several local schools in the development of an inclusive curriculum, and this has consolidated their knowledge and confidence in their approach.

The curriculum prioritises core skills in spelling, handwriting and mathematics, ensuring pupils develop the foundations needed for functional literacy and numeracy. It is intentionally designed to maximise opportunities for pupils to generalise learning, particularly vocabulary, spoken language, listening and communication. This reflects leaders' understanding that communication is central to inclusion and long-term independence.

The phonics lead has strengthened provision further by adapting the Essential Letters and Sounds programme to meet the needs of pupils who are not yet ready for a formal phonics approach. Her 'launching into phonics' model provides a developmentally appropriate pathway that builds readiness through communication-rich, sensory-supported and highly structured early literacy experiences. As a regional leader for Essential Letters and Sounds, her expertise is influencing practice by shaping national thinking around phonics teaching for pupils with SEND.

Recent external quality assurance has involved working closely with Phase Leaders to evaluate the typicality, sequencing and impact of curriculum delivery across pathways. These sessions have validated the strength of the school's approach, confirming that adaptations to phonics, communication and core skills are both relevant and robust for a highly complex cohort. The cumulative nature of this QA has provided leaders with precise feedback that reinforces confidence in the curriculum's ambition and effectiveness. Strengthening links between each pathway will be in place in September.

During the recent learning walk, ten lessons were observed across pathways. Phase Leaders were able to articulate typicality with confidence, describing the context of each class, pupils' starting points and the impact of the school's curriculum and therapeutic approaches. Their depth of knowledge was compelling and demonstrated a secure understanding of how highly vulnerable learners experience teaching over time.

What was seen in classrooms was both powerful and humbling. Pupils with significant barriers to learning were observed engaging, contributing and attending to tasks with purpose. For some of the most complex pupils, this represents profound progress: several began their journey unable to tolerate transport or access the school environment at all. To see these pupils now participating meaningfully in learning is a testament to the precision of staff practice, the strength of the curriculum and the school's unwavering commitment to inclusion.

The school's CPD programme is underpinned by national best-practice models of enquiry-based professional learning. This is epitomised by the classroom-based research model that has been embedded for five years, with demonstrable and profound impact. Teachers identify aspects of practice that could strengthen pupils' learning and use research, structured enquiry cycles and observational data to evaluate what works best for their learners. Kevin Ardron, an Assistant Professor of Education at Northumbria University, stated at a recent event that Cleaswell Hill are the only school in the north that has embraced 'professional curiosity' as a driver for best practice. The school's approach will feature in a National Research Journal, and Cleaswell Leaders are now engaged in writing modules for master's degrees at the University. A Trust is engaging with Cleaswell to establish this approach and is involving Sunderland University.

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. There is further evidence supporting developments in teaching and learning and integrating therapy into classroom practice. All lessons observed during the SIP/Ofsted inspector visit were highly effective, with some magical teaching taking place in many classrooms.
- 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. Cleaswell has a reputation for growing great people, and this has supported sustained excellence over time. All Phase leaders reported highly positive impact from the work undertaken by the Ht. This is evidenced in Phase leaders' ability to clearly articulate standards in their areas of responsibility.

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 before implementation across the school. As a result, staff are confident in using the system. The school is data-rich, and there is a drive to ensure coherence across pathways. Phase leaders in the Core pathway will finalise the key aspects of the Earwig assessment system in September, ensuring full alignment with all three curriculum pathways, PLIMs and the wider inclusion strategy.



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.

- 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.

Personal Development provision at Cleaswell Hill continues to be a strength of the school.



Personal development (PD) encompasses a coherent offer of PSHE, RSE and Preparation for Adulthood. Together, these strands provide pupils with the knowledge, skills and personal attributes they need to thrive socially, emotionally and academically, and to move towards increasing independence with dignity and confidence.

Personal development is a golden thread running through the school's work and is delivered through a coherent, ambitious and expertly-sequenced offer encompassing many aspects: discrete teaching and continuous work, i.e. in all aspects of the school day. Leaders have ensured that all strands of personal development are fully aligned with pupils' complex profiles, therapeutic needs and curriculum pathways, resulting in a model that is both inclusive and aspirational.

There is evidence of spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning where appropriate and commensurate with need.

There is a compelling drive from all school staff to optimise pupils' personal development, in supporting wellbeing, resilience, and perseverance, and to enable them to be respectful, responsible adults who can make safe choices.

Pupil voice is a strong feature of all work undertaken in school. For non-verbal or pre-verbal children, staff use observation and information from families to support well-being and ensure all pupils can contribute to the life of the school as far as they are able.

The school's Personal Development lead has successfully secured grant funding to ensure pupils have equitable access to enrichment opportunities beyond school, removing financial and logistical barriers that might otherwise limit participation. This work reflects the school's commitment to, inclusion and widening pupils' experiences of the world.

Cleaswell Hill staff have collaborated with the Tyne and Wear Museum service to design innovative 'access passports' that identify the information, adjustments and communication approaches pupils need to engage confidently with community resources. This co-produced model exemplifies the school's civic leadership: it not only enhances pupils' access to cultural spaces but also builds sector understanding of how to welcome learners with complex needs. As a result, pupils experience enriched cultural, social and community opportunities that strengthen independence, confidence and preparation for adulthood. This work is a clear marker of outstanding practice.

Leaders are working to ensure the breadth of the work undertaken in school is coherently presented in external QA processes.

The PD lead is fully aware of the DfE's new enrichment guidance (published 15 June 2026) that sets out a national framework for designing, delivering and evaluating high-quality enrichment. It is non-statutory, but Ofsted will consider a school's enrichment offer as part of Personal Development from September 2026. Pupils' needs have been carefully evaluated, and within the context of parental preference and EHCP targets, the school will focus its enrichment offer on life skills development, which will support the optimisation of inclusion.

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.

Leaders are aware that inspectors access the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) before and during inspections. Mainstream IDSRs are updated termly, but special schools (including SEND) only receive a full IDSR update annually. This is because SEND schools do not have termly national assessment cycles feeding into the IDSR in the same way mainstream schools do. The current IDSR for Cleaswell Hill presents a downward trend in persistent absence, which does not reflect the school's validated internal attendance data. Leaders hold accurate, up-to-date information demonstrating that persistent absence has not deteriorated and, in fact, shows improved patterns for key cohorts. This discrepancy creates a vulnerability because inspectors are required to treat the IDSR as a national data source. In considering a high number of recent inspection reports Cleaswell Hills data reflects a strong pattern of continued improvement in identifying children at risk and working tirelessly to improve attendance.

This presents a significant inspection-readiness risk. When national datasets do not accurately represent the context or trajectory of a special school, the narrative in the IDSR can inadvertently frame the inspection conversation before leaders can present their evidence. For Cleaswell Hill, this means that despite strong attendance practice, robust monitoring, and clear case-study evidence, the school may be judged against a national dataset that is out of date- Autumn term national audit information will reflect a more accurate picture of attendance, and the school will continue to capture the complexity of SEND attendance patterns and the school's current performance.

Leaders are ensuring:

- Internal attendance evidence is triangulated, quality-assured and immediately accessible during inspection.
- Case studies clearly demonstrate the impact of personalised attendance strategies for pupils with complex needs.
- Trend analysis is presented visually to show the difference between national datasets and real-time school data.
- The school's contextual narrative explains why national datasets may lag or misrepresent SEND attendance patterns.
- Governors are fully briefed so they can articulate the school's position with confidence and accuracy.
- Qualitative and quantitative data are aligned.

This proactive stance will help ensure that inspectors understand the limitations of the IDSR for specialist settings and recognise the school's current, accurate performance picture.

From their starting points, pupils' behaviour is excellent. Any external QA exercise must include information about pupils' starting points. This exemplifies the school's ambitious and exceptional work it undertakes to support pupil outcomes. The systems used to collate and evaluate information are robust and relevant. The work of the therapists in support of emotional and social regulation epitomises the outstanding impact of the school's approach.

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.

Leaders ensure a highly responsive approach to supporting pupils' behaviour, as they have robust systems in place to capture and monitor incidents, risk assessments for every child, debrief sessions for staff to identify that supports the identification of trends, health and safety policies that reflect current pupils' needs, CPD for staff reflective of current trends, and safeguarding approaches to ensure everyone remains safe.

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.

There have been four recent external QA sessions with Post-16 leaders, including observations at the Appleby Centre, the off-site provision for the oldest pupils who are able to learn with some independence. Evidence from these sessions confirms that Appleby offers a strong, well-sequenced curriculum for learners in the Extended Pathway and a cohort of students from the Core Pathway. The Appleby Centre offers a wide range of accreditation opportunities that promote independence, employability and community participation. A new commercial kitchen facility will open in the autumn term. This is off-site and involves a chef delivering accredited training for students.

Leaders are clear, however, that the Appleby Centre is not suitable for highly complex learners. The physical space and staffing model cannot provide the therapeutic, sensory and communication-rich environment required for pupils on the Engagement Pathway and a cohort of Core learners. These pupils are taught on the main site, where they access highly specialist provision that enables regulation, communication and personalised PfA pathways. This distinction is well-reasoned and reflects leaders' secure understanding of need, curriculum access and safeguarding.

A significant strength is the newly devised Horticulture accreditation, developed in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). The Appleby Centre lead-initiated contact with the RHS and co-created an accreditation specifically designed for SEND learners. This work has national impact, providing a model of curriculum innovation that broadens accreditation routes for pupils with complex needs and demonstrates sector-leading practice in inclusive curriculum design.

All school leavers will access FE or social care from September. Following deep analysis and in consultation with families, leaders have contacted two further education providers to ask if they can change their admission arrangements and curriculum offer to support more SEND learners. Local FE colleges offering a wider range of entry-level qualifications will enable more Cleaswell Hill students' opportunities to attend college. The Post 16 lead works closely with the LA on developing practice and access arrangements for students leaving school.

Developing opportunities for work experience is a current driver for Post 16.

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 Headteacher 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.

The HT has strengthened leadership and governance readiness for inspection in a way that is both disciplined and supportive of colleagues' workload and wellbeing. This approach has reinforced an already exceptional culture in which staff place pupils at the forefront of all decision-making and work collectively with clarity, integrity and purpose.

Leaders have implemented a comprehensive programme of preparation, including:

- Targeted coaching and rehearsal for leaders to refine their inspection narrative and articulate impact with confidence. When at its best (En discussion), a strong, riveting narrative and clear examples of where the curriculum has transformed the outcomes for pupils are evident.
- Structured evidence-gathering cycles, ensuring that curriculum, safeguarding and inclusion documentation is coherent, aligned and inspection-ready. This will be strengthened further over the summer break.
- Governor CPD, strengthening strategic oversight and enabling Governors to speak authoritatively about the school's strengths, priorities and evidence base
- Leadership walks and focused questioning have sharpened leaders' ability to describe typicality, contextual need and the rationale behind curriculum decisions
- Workload-sensitive planning, ensuring staff feel supported, valued and protected throughout the preparation period.

This measured, thoughtful preparation has strengthened collective efficacy and reinforced the school's culture of professional pride, reflective practice and unwavering commitment to pupils. All staff at Cleaswell Hill are committed to ensuring children can be the 'best they can be'.

Arrangements for the transfer of DSL responsibilities to a Phase leader on the retirement of the present Lead DSL are being managed with clarity, oversight and professional rigour, ensuring the school continues to operate a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. (See earlier comments re plans to ensure the highest standards) The incumbent Lead DSL will strengthen monitoring of CPOMS, as there have been over a thousand reported incidents over the past two terms. This approach will strengthen the systems and ensure no logged information is missed. This will support the culture of vigilance within school. The supervision of DSLs is undertaken by an Ofsted inspector/systems leader in safeguarding, and monitoring will continue to be robust in the autumn term and beyond.

Given that the school effectively operates as *three schools within one*—each with distinct curriculum pathways, therapeutic inputs and pedagogical approaches—leaders have been intentional in securing external QA that is both relevant and robust. The visiting reviewers have engaged in several sessions across the year, enabling them to build a secure understanding of the school's structures, typicality and the lived experience of pupils. This cumulative approach has allowed external partners to test the strength of provision over time, triangulate evidence and provide informed challenge that reflects the school's complexity rather than oversimplifying it. As a result, leaders have gained high-quality feedback that affirms strengths, identifies areas for refinement and ensures the school remains inspection-ready with a well-substantiated evidence base.

The school's estate is used flexibly and creatively, with spaces continually reviewed and reshaped in line with new cohorts, emerging presentations of need and therapeutic requirements.

This dynamic approach means the environment evolves alongside pupils. Specialist areas are redesigned to support regulation, communication and sensory processing; classrooms are adapted to meet pathway-specific expectations; and shared spaces are configured to maximise accessibility and independence. Leaders demonstrate a strong understanding that the physical environment is a core component of inclusion, and they act decisively to ensure the building remains fit for purpose for a highly complex population.

There is a strong evidence base to support leaders' view that inclusion is an exceptional feature of the school.

Leaders have ensured that school improvement documentation is aligned and accessible including:

- Updated SEF sections, these will be updated over the summer break.
- Horizon 5 strategic targets will follow the deep analysis of the impact of the Year 4 Horizon
- The Inclusion Plan, which will be updated following a final review of school improvement documentation
- Therapy impact reports are already in place, as is the Therapy 3- Year Strategy.
- Curriculum pathway overviews/Implementation plans provide clear evidence of forensic evaluation linked to SEF judgements to provide further rigour in leaders analysis and identification of areas of the schoolwork that require further enhancement.
- Safeguarding and behaviour evidence will be strengthened further with additional monitoring of CPOMS
- Governor monitoring and action logs ensure that all relevant observed recommendations from Governor visits are systematically followed up.

Leaders' investment in therapy provision has resulted in transformational improvement in the quality of children's lives. There is strong evidence from staff, parents and pupils that reinforces the impact of therapy on learning, access to the curriculum and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable and complex learners in society.

The curriculum is aligned with the Inclusion Strategy and Horizon 5 priorities. Through a highly personalised approach pupils EHCP priorities are targeted, and reporting systems (PLIMS) are well established over time. Monitoring and moderation of PLIMS targets ensures these are challenging and aspirational. Leaders ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life beyond school. They work closely with parents to ensure theirs and pupil voice influence outcomes.

Leaders model the vision that every pupil is entitled to meaningful learning, communication, independence and preparation for adulthood. They ensure the "golden thread" of inclusion is woven through all pathways.

The HT, with support from Governors, has worked proactively in support of partner schools and establishments.

This includes

- Setting up the Northumberland SENDco hub
- Delivering Great North Inclusion Hub input to a wide number of schools
- One of the DHTs is seconded to Northumberland LA as a Lead SENDco in support of schools across the borough
- Partnership working with three MATS
- Supporting to set up a regional ELKLAN, Higher Level Communication hub to provide speech, language and communication training for staff.
- Cleaswell is the NEN-was Autism Education Trust lead local authority training provider
- Partnership working with Northumbria University in the development of evidence-based CPD and in co-creating master's programmes in education.
- Influencing local FE colleges in their provision for SEND students
- Co-creating a Horticulture accreditation with the Royal College of Horticulture.
- Delivery training and support through the schools Fusion training hub
- Influencing the national Essential Letters and sound training programme and provision for SEND children

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.
Phase leaders have developed a highly strategic approach to evaluating their areas of responsibility through a targeted coaching approach.
- 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.

A DHT who has worked at Cleaswell has secured a role in school. This will support continuity. Governors are aware of the risk associated with a change of leadership, and a contingency plan is in place- evident in DSL transition.

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:

