HEADTEACHER'S
REPORT TO GOVERNORS

AUTUMN 2026

Cleaswell Hill School

Inspire the child

Discover your future

Empower the community

Mike Jackson
Autumn 2026



Introduction

The Sword of Damocles



For those of you unfamiliar with stories from ancient Greece, the Sword of Damocles is an allusion to the ever-present peril faced by those in positions of power. Damocles sits on the king's throne with a sword hanging above his head, suspended by a single horsehair.

If only it were as easy as sitting on a throne in a toga. This term has felt like we've had to sprint a marathon-length obstacle course whilst carrying a large rock, with the Sword of Damocles hanging over us. On the positive side, at least we're more than halfway through the term.

We've been in the Damocles (Ofsted) 'window' all term and the anticipation is extremely tiring for staff. Don't get me wrong, it's the waiting that's wearing us down. Every Monday morning this term, I've come into work (after waking up extremely early) ready for the 'call'. When it hasn't come, there's a definite sense of deflation after being on high alert. I think a lot of staff have felt the same and I hope that by the time we meet, we'll either have been inspected or be in the middle of an inspection.

We've spent a lot of time aligning what we do with the new framework. Much of the work has been getting to grips with another framework that doesn't fit our setting particularly well. My worry is the inconsistency in how schools are judged and the lack of inspectors with special school experience. When inspectors are asked to judge provision outside their areas of expertise, that's a risk we can't control. Perhaps that's the horsehair holding the sword in place. We've prepared as much as we can whilst running an extremely complex organisation. I can see the toll that both the anticipation and the inspection itself can take on the mental health of staff. I hope that we can find a better way to inspect schools. Otherwise, more people who would make excellent school leaders may choose a different career path.

Alongside the Ofsted preparation, we're in the middle of a leadership transition. We need to plan carefully for September 2027 so that Patrick has a strong team around him for the next stage of the school's development. Change brings a degree of uncertainty and this year's handover gives us the chance to work through some of that in advance and build on what's already working well. We're discussing who will do what from January and how those responsibilities will look from September 2027.

We've made a very strong start to the year despite the increasing complexity of pupils' needs. That's a real testament to the provision the team has put in place. The new leadership team and governors will need to keep planning for that rise in complexity, but we know how to adapt our provision and overcome obstacles. It's an extension of what we've been doing for years.

As leaders, there'll always be a sword of some sort hanging over us. Our job is to build strong teams and prepare them well enough to metaphorically replace the horsehair with a steel cable. This report gives a good sense of how the team continue to achieve this.

Mike Jackson



Ch, Ch, Changes…

At the end of this term, we'll be saying goodbye to Rachael Howitt and Emma Dunn.

Rachael has worked with Cleaswell Hill for many years, first as an independent speech and language therapist and then as our Lead Speech and Language Therapist from June 2021. She has played a crucial role in establishing integrated therapy at Cleaswell Hill, working with colleagues to make therapy a part of pupils' everyday experience in school. She also leads our Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN) training, coordinating and delivering sessions for staff and colleagues in other settings. I'd like to thank Rachael for all her hard work over the years and wish her all the best for the future

Emma has worn a number of hats in her 19 years at Cleaswell Hill, most recently as Deputy Headteacher. In that role, she has led our work on SEND and inclusion and helped develop our post-16 provision, creating more opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications and prepare for adulthood. One of Emma's biggest contributions has been setting up the Fusion Learning Hub. Through its training and specialist outreach, Emma has helped staff in other schools develop their SEND practice and made sure that what we've learned at Cleaswell Hill is shared more widely.



Emma in one of her many hats

Emma is taking up the post of Director of SEND at Northern Leaders Trust. She has made a massive contribution to Cleaswell Hill and will be greatly missed. I'd like to thank her for everything she's done for the school over the past 19 years. I'm sure she'll flourish in her new role.

Mike Jackson

Section 1 – School Development

Whole School Targets (WSTs)

Leadership and Governance

To secure the sustainability of exceptional provision through leadership succession, distributed accountability, evidence-informed professional learning, strategic capacity planning and increasingly precise evaluation of Cleaswell Hill's civic and system impact.

Curriculum and Teaching

To refine the coherence, ambition and distinctive pedagogy of Engagement, Core and Extended pathways so that curriculum, therapy and Preparation for Adulthood remain precisely matched to changing need while expectations continue to rise.

Achievement

To strengthen longitudinal evidence of exceptional achievement from individual starting points by embedding proportionate pathway assessment, the EHCP-to-

adulthood golden thread and systematic recognition of academic, functional and wider achievement.

Attendance and Behaviour

To sustain strong attendance and increasingly preventative behaviour practice by identifying individual barriers earlier and evaluating precisely which relational, therapeutic, curricular and family-based strategies work for whom and over time.

Inclusion

To deepen an exceptional neuroinclusive, therapy-informed model in which barriers are identified early, provision is adapted precisely and pupils, families and professionals shape decisions that improve access, participation, independence and achievement.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

To make the sustained impact of personal development and wellbeing increasingly visible through stronger longitudinal assessment, Preparation for Adulthood, accessible pupil voice and equitable community and careers experiences.

Post 16

To strengthen the breadth, progression and evaluated impact of Post-16 programmes so work-related learning, pathway-specific Preparation for Adulthood and transition planning are tightly matched to each young person's intended adult destination.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains the basis for all school improvement. Leaders will secure a smooth transition in safeguarding leadership, implement KCSIE 2026 fully and strengthen assurance around online, contextual and Prevent risks.



Ofsted and External Quality Assurance

Still waiting…

As part of our Ofsted preparation we have worked extensively with Lynn Watson. Lynn will present an overview of the autumn SIP report at the full governing body meeting. We have also had considerable support from David Bailey (Educational consultant and Ofsted inspector) in preparing us for inspection and school improvement; we hope to build on this partnership in the future. Helen McIntyre (DSL)

continues to receive monthly safeguarding supervision from Sharon Ballinger (Educational consultant and Ofsted inspector).



Section 2 – Teaching and Curriculum

Curriculum coherence, ambition and progression

Leaders have continued to refine the curriculum across the Engagement, Core and Extended Pathways, ensuring that provision remains ambitious and responsive to the changing complexity of pupils' needs. A particular focus has been strengthening the links between pathways so that pupils experience a coherent curriculum from Key Stage 1 through to Post-16.

The Core Pathway has been further refined to reflect the increasing complexity of pupils' needs and strengthen curriculum coherence across all three pathways. Leaders have reviewed curriculum content and sequencing to develop clearer connections between the developmental learning within Engagement and the subject-specific curriculum within Extended. This ensures that prerequisite knowledge and skills are developed progressively, while maintaining high expectations and ambition for every pupil. The three pathways work as a coherent, flexible model, enabling pupils to access learning appropriate to their developmental stage alongside age-appropriate experiences that support independence and preparation for their next steps.

Regular meetings with pathway leaders have strengthened the shared understanding of curriculum intent, progression and ambition. Updated curriculum documentation and pathway rationales are available through the school website, providing a clear explanation of the school's offer. Pathway decisions are informed by assessment, EHCP and PLIM outcomes, therapy recommendations and professional knowledge of pupils, with provision reviewed as needs change.

Subject leadership development has also focused on how knowledge and skills progress across pathways and how learning prepares pupils for life beyond Cleaswell. Leaders have strengthened links between subject curricula, personal development, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, fundamental British values and the four areas of Preparation for Adulthood. Particular attention has been given to the functionality of learning, independence, accreditation and future destinations.

This work reflects the school's commitment to a curriculum that develops the knowledge, communication and independence pupils need for their next stages of education and adult life.

Developing teaching expertise and leadership

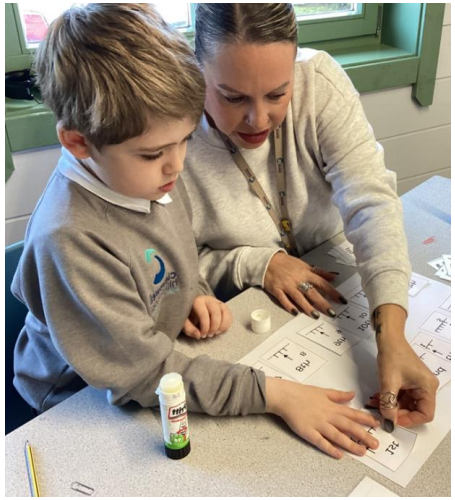
The school continues to invest in professional development that combines specialist SEND pedagogy with subject knowledge. Building on the established Early Career Teacher mentoring programme, a new coaching programme has been introduced. Three teachers are currently participating voluntarily, with support focused on phonics implementation, developing confidence within a different pathway and strengthening curriculum leadership.

Professional development this term has also focused on subject leaders' understanding of curriculum progression and teaching across the three pathways. Collaborative sessions have enabled leaders to consider how subject content is adapted for pupils with different developmental profiles, while maintaining clear learning intentions and appropriate challenge.

This builds on the school's established culture of classroom-based enquiry. Over five years, teachers and class leads have completed 95 action research projects, examining how changes to classroom practice influence pupils' learning. The partnership with Northumbria University has provided external evaluation of this approach and opportunities to share findings more widely.

The School Improvement Partner's evaluation provides further assurance. During the summer visit, over 70% of observed lessons were identified as demonstrating exceptional teaching. The report particularly recognised staff knowledge of individual pupils, highly responsive teaching and the consistent use of therapeutic approaches to secure access to purposeful learning.

The next stage is to use this expertise more systematically across the school. Coaching, professional conversations, subject moderation and joint observations will enable leaders to address variation, strengthen the deployment of teaching assistants and evaluate the impact of professional development on classroom practice and pupil achievement.



Transformational impact on pupils

A distinguishing feature of Cleaswell's curriculum and teaching is the extent to which provision can change the educational experience and future opportunities of pupils with significant and complex needs.

For some of our most vulnerable pupils, the starting point is not access to formal learning. Significant barriers involving communication, sensory processing, emotional regulation, mental health or previous educational experiences can prevent pupils from attending school or engaging meaningfully with adults and learning activities.

The school's integrated approach brings together specialist teaching, therapeutic assessment, personalised curriculum planning and sustained partnership with families and external professionals. These approaches enable pupils to establish trust, develop regulation and communication skills, increase engagement and progressively access more ambitious learning.

The impact can be substantial. Pupils who previously struggled to tolerate a school environment are now participating in learning, communicating more intentionally, developing greater independence and accessing experiences that were previously beyond their reach. For other pupils, carefully adapted approaches support progress in literacy, mathematics, functional skills and accreditation, improving their preparation for further education, employment, meaningful activity and adult life.

These outcomes are evaluated through evidence of curriculum achievement, EHCP and PLIM progress, therapy outcomes, attendance, behaviour and regulation, alongside pupil and family views and external professional scrutiny. Individual case sampling enables leaders to establish how starting points, provision and progress connect over time.

This is central to the school's understanding of transformational impact. The significance lies in the extent to which pupils overcome substantial barriers, sustain improvements and develop skills that change what is possible for them, both within school and beyond.

External quality assurance has recognised the effectiveness of this personalised approach, particularly for pupils with the most complex needs. Cleaswell also continues to contribute to wider SEND practice through the Fusion Learning Hub, university partnerships, phonics development and support for other schools.



Leadership evaluation and next steps

The evidence supports leaders' view that Curriculum and Teaching demonstrates exceptional features, particularly the sustained quality of specialist pedagogy, responsiveness to changing pupil need, integration of therapy and the transformational progress evident in individual pupils' journeys.

The priority is to demonstrate the consistency and reach of this impact across all subjects, phases, pathways and pupil groups. Leaders will continue to strengthen cross-pathway moderation, evaluate the implementation of Core curriculum refinements, improve the links between individual targets and classroom learning, and use the expertise of highly effective practitioners to support colleagues.

This will ensure that our evaluation reflects the sustained impact of teaching on pupils' achievement and readiness for the next stage, rather than relying on the quality of provision alone.



Inclusion and Pupil Premium

Strategic overview

Inclusion is central to Cleaswell Hill's identity and ambition: every pupil should experience belonging, an ambitious education and meaningful progress from their individual starting point. National SEND policy has a strong focus on inclusion and an express direction to develop inclusion strategies. Although a separate strategy is not specifically required of specialist settings, Cleaswell considers it pertinent as pupil needs and cohort complexity change.

This year's focus is to make inclusion consistently visible across environments, ensuring recognisable approaches to communication, regulation, relationships, adaptive teaching and enabling environments, tailored to each pupil. Built upon NEN principles, we aim for equitable access for all.

How inclusion is understood and delivered

The whole-school framework connects the vision Inspire, Discover, Empower with four foundations: understanding the individual, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development. EHCPs sit at the center through Assess–Plan–Do–Review. Universal specialist provision is every pupil's entitlement; targeted and specialist support build on it and do not replace it.

Vulnerability is understood holistically, not through diagnosis alone. Staff identify changing and intersecting barriers using starting points, EHCP/PLIMs, pupil and family voice, observation, attendance, engagement, regulation, wellbeing, safeguarding, therapy and professional dialogue. Behaviour is considered as communication or a possible expression of anxiety or distress.

Pathway	Universal provision - examples	Additional support where needed
Engagement	Total Communication/AAC, Intensive Interaction, experiential learning, predictable low-arousal environments, co-regulation and independence.	Targeted communication/sensory programmes and therapeutic review; specialist multidisciplinary PBS, SaLT/OT and individualised support.
Core	Functional literacy/numeracy, explicit multisensory teaching, visual supports, scaffolds, communication, life skills and community participation.	Targeted phonics, reading, numeracy, communication and regulation; specialist SaLT/OT, assistive technology and MDT support.
Extended	Subject-specific teaching, adapted qualifications, metacognition, anxiety-aware practice, executive-functioning support, careers and transition planning.	Targeted study/organisation, literacy/numeracy and social communication; specialist therapeutic, mental health and access-arrangement support.

Across pathways, outcomes include EHCP progress, accreditation, holistic achievement, communication, wellbeing, independence and Preparation for Adulthood.

Seven inclusion principles

Principle	School commitment
High ambitions for all	Ambitious personalised pathways and meaningful progress.
Whole-school responsibility	Shared staff understanding and consistent practice across roles.
Early identification	Notice changes early and use the graduated response.
Family partnerships	Use pupil/family voice in planning, review and transitions.
Evidence-informed practice	Triangulate assessment and lived experience; refine provision.
Workforce development	Use CPD, coaching, specialist expertise and Fusion Learning Hub.
Accountability and impact	Review whether barriers reduce and improvements are sustained.

2026–27 implementation: next steps

- Embed a shared staff narrative of inclusion and vulnerability across all pathways.
- Use learning walks, coaching and dialogue to strengthen visible consistencies in communication, regulation, relationships plus teaching and learning environments.
- Review pupils and cohorts to identify early signals and intersecting barriers; align EHCP/PLIMs, therapy and classroom practice.
- Strengthen family partnership and pupil voice, including at transitions.
- Use case studies and triangulated evidence to test sustained impact and refine practice termly.

Pupil Premium aligned strategy

Pupil Premium is an integral lever in the Inclusion Strategy: identify barriers, match provision, evaluate impact and adjust. It extends access and opportunity for disadvantaged pupils, not replace provision ordinarily available through the specialist offer or an EHCP. 51.18% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding; £185,020 for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Strand	Allocation	Connection to inclusion
High-quality teaching	45% | £83,259	Adaptive teaching, environments and staff expertise.
Targeted support	20% | £37,004	Additional intervention/therapies for identified barriers.
Wider strategies	35% | £64,757	Enrichment, community access, cultural capital and PfA.

- Analyse disadvantaged pupils' progress, participation, attendance, regulation and access to opportunities.
- Align funded actions with inclusion priorities and review impact against starting points, EHCP/PLIM outcomes and pupil/family voice.
- Review in February and July 2027; adjust expenditure where evidence indicates greater impact.

Governors' assurance

Governors are asked to monitor the link between strategy, implementation and Pupil Premium. The key test is not simply whether provision exists, but what changed for pupils, which barrier was reduced, what evidence shows the difference and whether improvement is sustained. By July 2027, inclusion will be consistently visible in everyday practice, with pupils experiencing improved access, participation, communication, regulation, independence, wellbeing and achievement.

Emma Dunn



Phonics and Spelling Provision – Whole-School Overview

Phonics and spelling are delivered through a well-sequenced and systematic curriculum across the school. Pupils access phonics sessions four times per week and spelling sessions three times per week. Provision is carefully matched to pupils' needs through the use of termly assessment information, enabling leaders and staff to identify gaps in knowledge and ensure that learning is appropriately targeted. Pupils transition to their designated groups at the start of the school day, ensuring that learning time is maximised.

All staff delivering phonics and spelling have received comprehensive training in Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), the ELS Year 2 Spelling Programme and the Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge programme. This ensures consistency in delivery, high expectations and fidelity to programme requirements across all groups.

The school currently operates six phonics groups and eight spelling groups, alongside bespoke provision for a small number of pupils within the Engagement Pathway who have demonstrated an emerging interest in reading. The ELS Year 2 Spelling Programme is used to deliver the Year 2 National Curriculum content, while the Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge Programme supports pupils working within the Year 3–6 curriculum. During this academic year, the school has delivered the Year 3 and Year 4 programmes and began implementation of the Year 5 programme this term.

During the spring and summer terms, four Junior Core classes (24 pupils) engaged in an adapted version of the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme. Leaders demonstrated strong curriculum insight by adapting delivery to better meet the needs of pupils using multisensory approaches, adjusted pacing and modified lesson structures. Monitoring activities, including learning walks, lesson observations and staff feedback, indicate that these adaptations have resulted in increased pupil engagement and participation. Pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to rehearse and apply a range of phonological and early reading skills.

Assessment information demonstrates the positive impact of this approach. During the spring term, 88% of pupils participating in the adapted programme made progress in phoneme recognition and blending skills, increasing to 96% during the summer term. Lessons are carefully planned to provide an immersive and progressive learning experience, with each session focusing on specific aspects of phonics learning, including recognition, oral blending, decoding and reading fluency.

Leaders have ensured strong links between morning phonics sessions and afternoon written output activities. Skills taught during phonics, such as oral blending, segmenting and blending are systematically revisited and applied through carefully designed tasks that develop auditory discrimination, visual perception, eye tracking and fine motor skills. This enables pupils to transfer and consolidate their learning across different contexts using integrated therapeutic approaches.

The school's approach demonstrates a highly effective understanding of adaptive teaching. Leaders and staff make thoughtful and informed decisions about how learning is delivered, ensuring that curriculum content remains ambitious whilst being accessible to all pupils. The phonics curriculum is well planned and implemented effectively, with responsive teaching supporting pupils to develop the knowledge and skills required for future success.

Assessment of Phonics and Spelling

Assessment procedures are robust and embedded across the school. Phonics and spelling assessments take place two weeks prior to the end of each term, providing leaders and staff with timely information regarding pupils' progress and next steps and ensuring any gaps are addressed prior to a holiday. Staff demonstrate confidence in using assessment information to identify and address gaps in learning swiftly, preventing misconceptions from becoming entrenched.

Assessment outcomes directly inform planning and enable teachers to make precise decisions about curriculum delivery. As a result, learning builds effectively over time and pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points. Teachers maintain a purposeful pace within lessons, present information clearly and check pupils' understanding regularly. Frequent opportunities for practice and retrieval support pupils in securing and applying their knowledge.

Assessment information is also used to review and refine groupings, ensuring pupils receive provision that best supports their progress while taking account of age, developmental stage and readiness to learn. Furthermore, assessment identifies pupils requiring additional intervention, including support with grapheme-phoneme correspondence, oral blending and decoding skills.

During the summer term, 56 pupils accessed daily phonics provision. Of these, 24 pupils participated in the adapted multisensory ELS approach and 32 pupils accessed the structured ELS programme with fidelity.

Within the adapted phonics provision:

- 23 of 24 pupils (96%) made progress in at least one assessed area.
- 21 pupils (88%) made progress in two or more assessed areas.
- 16 pupils (67%) made progress across all three assessed areas (phoneme knowledge, blending and high-frequency word recognition).

One pupil did not make measurable progress during the term due to significant medical needs.

Within the structured ELS programme:

- 28 of 32 pupils (88%) made progress according to assessment outcomes.

Of the four pupils who did not demonstrate sufficient progress, two will transition to the adapted multisensory provision in the autumn term to better meet their learning needs. The remaining two pupils have achieved approximately 95% completion within phonics and will move to the Year 2 spelling programme while receiving targeted phonics intervention to address identified gaps.

A total of 33 pupils accessed the ELS Year 2 Spelling Programme during the summer term, with 32 pupils (97%) making measurable progress.

50 pupils accessed the Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge Programme at Year 3 and Year 4 levels. All pupils demonstrated progress within the programme. Although rates of progress and retention varied between individuals, those identified as

requiring additional consolidation are receiving targeted spelling intervention delivered by a trained teaching assistant throughout the autumn term.

Overall, pupils achieve well within phonics and spelling. Leaders ensure that any emerging gaps in knowledge are identified and addressed promptly, enabling pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Current Provision (Autumn 2026)

Currently:

- 63 pupils access the ELS Phonics Programme:
- 29 pupils attend structured ELS sessions.
- 30 pupils access the adapted multisensory SSP approach.
- 4 pupils receive one-to-one phonics support.
- 42 pupils access the ELS Year 2 Spelling Programme.
- 43 pupils access the Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge Programme:
- 12 pupils working within Year 3 content.
- 11 pupils working within Year 4 content.
- 20 pupils working within Year 5 content.

Leaders maintain a strong focus on ensuring that phonics and spelling provision is matched effectively to pupils' needs. Assessment information, staff expertise and responsive curriculum design are used to secure strong outcomes and ensure that pupils continue to develop the literacy knowledge and skills necessary for future learning.

Helen Moulton

Academic Interventions – Summer 2026 and Autumn Term 2026

Summer Term Intervention Impact

During the summer term, 5 academic intervention programmes were delivered to 24 pupils. Interventions were led by the school's intervention teaching assistant and took place within the designated intervention provision. Sessions were delivered either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, with pupils accessing between two and three sessions per week according to identified need.

The impact of these interventions has been positive overall. Of the 24 pupils who participated, 19 made measurable progress towards their individual learning targets. Of the 5 pupils who did not demonstrate expected progress, 4 experienced barriers to learning, including inconsistent engagement and less positive attitudes towards learning during both classroom and intervention sessions. Leaders have reviewed these pupils' needs and adapted intervention approaches and provision arrangements to better support engagement and accelerate progress from September.

Autumn Term Provision

During the autumn term, 6 intervention programmes will be delivered to 15 pupils. These will include ELS Progress (Key Stage 2), ELS interventions, Year 3 and Year 4 spelling and word knowledge interventions, and Visual Models and Images (VMI) interventions to support mathematical development. Provision has been carefully planned to address identified areas of need and to ensure pupils receive targeted support to help them achieve their potential.

Helen Moulton



Early Career Teacher (ECT) Programme

Developing Expert Teachers Through High-Quality Induction and Professional Development

Leaders at Cleaswell Hill School have established a highly effective Early Career Teacher (ECT) programme that reflects the school's commitment to developing a skilled, reflective and resilient workforce. The programme is carefully designed to ensure that early career teachers receive the support, challenge and professional

development necessary to become highly effective practitioners within a complex specialist setting.

There are currently two ECTs in their second year of induction. Leaders ensure that these staff members benefit from a comprehensive programme of personalised support, professional dialogue and practical experience. ECTs are encouraged to engage critically with research-informed practice and are supported to develop confidence in making professional decisions that improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, they develop secure pedagogical knowledge and a growing understanding of how to adapt teaching effectively to meet the diverse needs of pupils across the school.

The quality of the school's ECT provision was recognised during the annual quality assurance visit conducted by The Three Rivers Teaching School Hub. The review highlighted the school's exemplary commitment to delivering the Early Career Teacher Entitlement and identified significant strengths in leadership, mentoring and professional development.

Reviewers noted that leaders have successfully created a culture characterised by high expectations alongside a strong commitment to staff wellbeing. Induction arrangements are both rigorous and supportive, enabling ECTs to develop professionally within an environment where they feel valued, nurtured and appropriately challenged. Leaders ensure that statutory induction requirements are implemented effectively while also responding thoughtfully to the specific demands of a specialist setting.

A particular strength identified through the review was the school's implementation of a high-quality instructional coaching model. Mentors utilise evidence-informed approaches, supported by the Ambition Institute framework, to provide precise and purposeful coaching. Through regular team teaching, live modelling, co-planning and structured feedback, ECTs are supported to refine their practice and deepen their understanding of effective SEND pedagogy. This approach enables teachers to translate professional learning into classroom practice successfully.

Mentors demonstrate strong expertise and a clear understanding of their role. Weekly observations and developmental discussions are closely linked to the Early Career Framework and are informed by classroom evidence. This ensures that feedback is specific, focused and responsive to individual need. The school's investment in mentor training has ensured consistency and quality across the induction process, strengthening the impact of professional development on classroom practice.

Leaders have adapted the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Frameworks thoughtfully to reflect the specific context of Cleaswell Hill School. ECTs receive targeted guidance in areas that are particularly relevant to specialist education, including sensory communication approaches, personalised learning strategies and complex risk assessment procedures. This ensures that professional development is meaningful, relevant and immediately applicable to practice.



Professional development opportunities are carefully aligned with wider school improvement priorities. Leaders make effective use of external expertise, including resources provided through the Fusion Learning Hub, to broaden ECTs' professional knowledge and understanding. Consequently, ECTs benefit from a rich programme of learning that extends beyond statutory requirements and contributes positively to their professional growth.

Leaders place considerable emphasis on mentoring, professional dialogue and reflective practice. As a result, ECTs feel well supported and develop confidence quickly. They are increasingly able to apply their training effectively, contribute to whole-school improvement priorities and meet the needs of pupils with increasing independence and expertise.

The school's commitment to developing early career teachers is a significant strength. Leaders have established a culture of continuous professional development that supports staff retention, builds professional capacity and contributes positively

to the quality of education across the school. As a result, ECTs are well equipped to become highly effective practitioners who make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and development.

Helen Moulton



Achievement and Assessment

Since June, our focus has been on evaluating the 2025-2026 academic year's achievement, strengthening assessment and moderation and ensuring leaders can explain the progress pupils make across the Engagement, Core and Extended Pathways. This includes what pupils know, understand and can do, alongside improvements in communication, regulation, independence and readiness for the next stage of learning.

Considerable work has taken place to strengthen how we evaluate achievement from individual starting points. Leaders are bringing together curriculum assessments, EHCP-linked Personalised Learning Intention Maps (PLIMs), therapy outcomes, attendance, behaviour and individual pupil progress records. This provides a more complete picture of achievement, particularly for pupils whose progress is developmental, non-linear or dependent on overcoming substantial barriers to learning.

Pupil Progress and Achievement

The final summer 2026 assessment showed that 74% of EHCP-linked PLIM targets were met, with a further 18% working towards their intended outcomes. This is broadly in line with the 75% reported in autumn, although below the 81% achieved in spring. Leaders have analysed this variation by pathway and EHCP area to identify where further support and curriculum refinement are required.

Preparation for Adulthood was a particular strength, with 86% of targets met. Communication and Interaction achieved 75%, Cognition and Learning 74%, Sensory and/or Physical 74%, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) 68%. When targets assessed as working towards are included, outcomes range from 91% to 94% across these areas.

Further analysis identified strengths in Core Preparation for Adulthood (88%), Extended Communication and Interaction (85%) and Appleby Preparation for Adulthood (88%). Areas requiring closer attention include Core Cognition and Learning (65%), Extended SEMH (74%) and Appleby SEMH (59%). These findings are informing pathway discussions, teaching priorities and targeted support.

Within the Engagement Pathway, the transition to annual developmental targets continues to provide a more appropriate assessment of small-step progress. In the summer, 46% of targets were assessed at the Developing stage. Cognition and Learning was a strength, with 67% assessed as Developing or above, alongside 62% for Preparation for Adulthood. Assessment also considers pupils' increasing initiation, communication, engagement, regulation and independence, including their ability to demonstrate skills consistently and in different contexts.

Qualifications and Accreditation

The summer examination results demonstrate the academic and vocational opportunities available to pupils across the Extended Pathway and Appleby Centre. Pupils achieved qualifications from Entry Level through to GCSE, with accreditation selected to reflect their learning, individual aspirations and intended destinations.

At GCSE, 11 pupils achieved English Language qualifications, including seven at grade 5 or above. One pupil achieved grade 5 in English Literature, five achieved Mathematics qualifications, one achieved grade 4 in Statistics, four achieved Biology qualifications, including two at grade 4, and five achieved Physical Education qualifications.

In mathematics, seven pupils achieved AQA Entry Level 3 and five achieved Entry Level 2. A further four pupils achieved Functional Skills Mathematics at Entry Level 3 and three at Entry Level 2.

Science outcomes included one AQA qualification at Entry Level 3, seven at Entry Level 2 and one at Entry Level 1.

In English, six pupils achieved AQA Step Up to English Gold at Entry Level 3 and seven achieved Silver at Entry Levels 1 and 2. A further three pupils achieved Functional Skills English at Entry Level 1.

Digital Skills outcomes included three Essential Digital Skills qualifications at Entry Level and one at Level 1. Vocational achievement was also positive, with seven pupils gaining BTEC Home Cooking Skills Level 1 and nine achieving BTEC Pre-Vocational Skills Entry Level 2.

These outcomes demonstrate the breadth of accreditation available and the school's commitment to maintaining appropriate academic challenge alongside practical and vocational learning. The English Language results are particularly pleasing, with seven pupils achieving grade 5 or above. The range of qualifications also supports progression into further education, vocational learning and greater independence.



Progress in Foundational Learning

Assessment of phonics and spelling provides further evidence of how adapted teaching is improving access to learning. Within the school's adapted systematic phonics programme, 23 of the 24 pupils assessed made progress in at least one area during 2025/26. Of these, 21 progressed in two or more areas and 16 progressed across phoneme recognition, blending and high-frequency words.

In spelling, 32 of the 33 pupils following the Year 2 programme made progress, while all 50 pupils assessed in the Year 3/4 Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge programme progressed.

These outcomes are particularly important for pupils who have experienced difficulties accessing conventional phonics teaching. The adapted approaches provide access to foundational knowledge and support progression towards increasingly independent reading, spelling and written communication.

Targeted intervention remains part of our graduated approach. During the summer term, 19 of 24 pupils receiving identified academic interventions made measurable progress. Where progress was less than expected, leaders reviewed engagement, teaching strategies and the suitability of interventions to inform subsequent support.

Assessment, Moderation and Quality Assurance

Assessment has been a significant focus since September, with leaders working to strengthen the accuracy, consistency and usefulness of assessment across all pathways.

Senior leaders have completed moderation of PLIM targets, examining whether targets are appropriately challenging, sufficiently specific and clearly linked to longer-term EHCP outcomes. Phase leaders subsequently worked with class leads to share findings and support greater consistency in target setting and evaluation.

Subject moderation has also focused on mathematics. Within the Core Pathway, this has strengthened the links between higher benchmarks within the Launching Into framework and the early stages of the National Curriculum. Within Extended, moderation has focused on consistency between the main school and Appleby Centre, particularly progression from curriculum learning to accreditation.

External moderation has been arranged with two North East mainstream primary schools. This will provide additional scrutiny of National Curriculum assessment judgements and opportunities for teachers to compare expectations and pupil work with colleagues teaching at corresponding curriculum levels.

Classroom conversations, pathway reviews and pupil strategy meetings are also strengthening how assessment informs practice. Where pupils are not making expected progress, leaders consider curriculum access, teaching, regulation, communication, attendance and therapeutic needs before agreeing appropriate adaptations or targeted interventions.

Recent external quality assurance and governor monitoring have provided further assurance that leaders understand pupils' individual starting points and can explain how provision is influencing achievement. Particular strengths identified include the integration of therapy into teaching, personalised assessment, high expectations and the school's ability to support pupils with substantial barriers to education.

Achievement for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Pupils

Summer assessment shows that pupils eligible for Pupil Premium met 76% of their PLIM targets, compared with 74% for non-Pupil Premium pupils. Communication and Interaction (77%) and Cognition and Learning (76%) were particular strengths for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders continue to analyse outcomes across pupil groups, including those known to children's social care and pupils experiencing additional barriers associated with attendance, regulation, communication or medical needs. Although overall Pupil Premium outcomes are positive, differences in Sensory and Physical development and Preparation for Adulthood remain areas for further analysis.

Our approach is to understand the individual pupils behind the data and check whether the support provided is improving access to learning and achievement.

Wider Achievement and Readiness for the Next Stage

The school's understanding of achievement extends beyond accreditation and recorded targets, while maintaining clear expectations for curriculum progress.

Longitudinal pupil evidence demonstrates how specialist teaching, integrated therapy and carefully planned support have enabled pupils who previously struggled to attend or engage in education to access increasingly ambitious learning. For some, this has meant moving from significantly reduced attendance to full-time education. For others, progress includes functional communication, greater independence, reduced adult support, participation in community activities and progression towards recognised qualifications.

These changes are particularly significant for pupils whose needs and previous educational experiences have restricted their opportunities. Their progress is considered through assessment evidence, pupil work, therapy reviews, attendance and regulation information, family views and external professional scrutiny.

Preparation for Adulthood remains central to achievement across the school. This is reflected in progression from early communication and independence skills through to functional learning, accreditation, community participation and vocational opportunities. School destination tracking records positive onward destinations for all 2025/26 leavers.

Next Steps

The priority for the remainder of the academic year is to ensure that assessment continues to inform teaching and improve pupil outcomes. Leaders will further strengthen Core curriculum assessment, moderate the quality and ambition of PLIM targets, extend external moderation and use classroom conversations to identify pupils requiring additional support.

We will also continue to refine how curriculum, EHCP, therapy and Preparation for Adulthood outcomes are evaluated together, ensuring that achievement is evidenced through what pupils retain, apply and can increasingly do independently.

This work builds on established strengths while improving the consistency and accuracy with which we evaluate achievement across the school.

Patrick Ford Hutchinson, Jamie Wheadon

Qualifications and Accreditation

Qualification outcomes for 2025–26 demonstrate continued success across Cleaswell Hill School's 14–19 provision, reflecting the ambition of our curriculum and the range of accreditation opportunities available to pupils. The school achieved a 100% success rate across all GCSE subjects entered, including English Language, English

Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Statistics and Physical Education. This is a particularly pleasing achievement and demonstrates the high expectations we have for our pupils, alongside the personalised teaching and support that enables them to achieve recognised qualifications.

Outcomes across Entry Level and vocational qualifications were also strong, with 100% achievement in AQA Entry Level Mathematics, Entry Level Science, BTEC Home Cooking Skills and BTEC Pre-Vocational Skills. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of providing a range of qualification pathways that recognise pupils' different starting points, abilities and aspirations. GCSE success across Years 10–13 also highlights the flexibility of our approach, allowing pupils to work towards qualifications when they are ready rather than being restricted by traditional age-related expectations.

There remain some areas for development, particularly in Functional Skills English and Mathematics at Level 1, Essential Digital Skills and Step Up to English Gold. In response, we are strengthening the progression between Entry Level 3 and Level 1, with a greater emphasis on examination preparation, mock assessments and the application of skills. Essential Digital Skills has also been replaced by a unit-based BTEC IT qualification, which better reflects how our pupils learn and demonstrate their understanding. Feedback from AQA regarding Step Up to English was positive, recognising the quality of provision and pupils' achievements. Those who did not achieve the Gold Award will continue to receive targeted support to complete the qualification.

Overall, these outcomes reflect the strength and flexibility of our curriculum, particularly within the Extended Pathway and Post-16 provision at the Appleby Centre. They demonstrate our commitment to ensuring pupils achieve meaningful qualifications that recognise their progress, build confidence and support their preparation for adulthood, further education and employment

Professional Development and Action Research

Building on five years of professional enquiry, including our previous work around metacognition and self-regulated learning, we are developing our classroom-based action research further this year.

Working in pairs, staff will have greater autonomy to identify an area of practice they want to explore, linked to the needs of their pupils, classroom or curriculum. They will develop a research question, trial an approach, gather evidence and evaluate its impact.

This represents an important development in our approach. Rather than following one whole-school research focus, we are empowering staff to investigate what matters most in their own context, supported by collaboration, peer observation and professional dialogue.

Our ongoing work with Northumbria University will continue to strengthen the link between educational research and classroom practice, supporting staff to become increasingly confident in using evidence to inform their teaching.

Findings will be shared through end-of-year presentations in Summer 2027, allowing colleagues to celebrate successes, reflect on learning and share approaches that could benefit others. The longer-term goal from this is to share research and practice with colleagues in other settings and build a network within the school community.

Ultimately, we want to develop a culture where everyone is a learner, expertise is shared and professional development leads to meaningful improvements in pupils' experiences and outcomes.

Our CPD priorities reflect our values of Inspire, Discover and Empower by inspiring staff to continually develop, encouraging curiosity and discovery through research and professional enquiry, and empowering colleagues to share their expertise, grow their confidence and make a meaningful difference to outcomes for every learner.

Emma Dunn



Section 3 – Staffing and Finance

Pupil Statistics

Main School	F	M	Total
Core - AM	2	7	9
Core - AT	3	6	9
Core - CN	4	6	10
Core - ET	4	6	10
Core - GL	3	7	10
Core - LM	0	10	10
Core - LTa	4	6	10
Core - LTh	5	8	13
Core - TG	3	6	9
Core - TMc	4	6	10
Engagement - AMB	0	9	9
Engagement - BB	1	8	9
Engagement - CS	3	5	8
Engagement - GJ	0	6	6
Engagement - LBi	1	5	6
Engagement - LF	6	0	6
Engagement - MC	2	5	7
Engagement - VWh	1	6	7
Extended - DM	5	11	16
Extended - HR	5	10	15
Extended - JL	3	9	12
Extended - MCh	2	10	12
Total	61	152	213

Appleby Centre	F	M	Total
Extended - AJ	0	12	12
Extended - KH	4	9	13
Extended - LS	2	10	12
Core - JBr	0	5	5
Total	6	36	42
Total No. on Roll			255

	F	M	Total
Year 2	4	5	9
Year 3	3	8	11
Year 4	2	5	7
Year 5	9	14	23
Year 6	5	16	21
Year 7	7	16	23
Year 8	10	27	37
Year 9	10	30	40
Year 10	7	20	27
Year 11	4	27	31
Year 12	5	13	18
Year 13	1	7	8
Total	67	188	255
Post 16	6	20	26

Staffing

As of 2 November, Cleaswell Hill School employs 182 staff, including four fixed-term staff and five bank staff. During the autumn term, one member of staff has left and seven new colleagues have been successfully recruited, reflecting continued investment in staffing capacity.

Staff absence has increased compared to the previous term, resulting in 26 days lost among class leads and 339 days among support staff. This continues to present both operational and financial challenges through increased supply staffing costs and reduced continuity for pupils. Staff absence therefore remains an area of ongoing monitoring and school improvement focus.

To strengthen organisational resilience, the school continues to expand its internal bank of supply staff, reducing reliance on external agency staff and improving its ability to respond effectively to short-term absence.

Julie Brown

Budget Overview

The 2026-2027 pay award for support staff included an increase of 3.3% for all pay points 3 to 43 and applicable allowances, pro rata'd for term time only and part time employees. This pay award was backdated to 1 April 2026 and implemented within the September 2026 payroll.

The 2026-2027 pay award for teachers featured an increase of 3.5% across all pay scales and allowances (including SEN and TLR payments), with the exception of

unqualified teachers. The 2026-2027 pay award for unqualified teachers included an increase of 5%. The pay award for all teachers will be backdated to 1 September 2026 and processed for the November 2026 payroll. A further increase of 3% has been agreed from 1 September 2027 as part of a two year pay deal for all teachers.

The annual appraisal process for teachers is complete and the relevant pay progression changes have been submitted to payroll. The annual headteacher appraisal meeting was completed on 22 October 2026.

An onsite financial audit review was undertaken by Northumberland County Council Internal Audit and Risk Management on 21 October 2026. The audit report will be circulated to Governors upon receipt.

The indicative budget meeting for the remainder of this financial year is scheduled for 17 November 2026 with Northumberland County Council at Cleaswell Hill School.

The current Cleaswell Hill School staffing structure is scheduled to be reviewed by the resource management committee on 17 November 2026.

A recent school report summary sheet has been circulated with the additional papers for the autumn term full governing body meeting.

Lauren Caisley



Fundraising

Following the last report to governors, Cleaswell Hill Foundation (registered charity number 1000697) has continued to initiate and promote fundraising opportunities whilst developing strong links with parents, carers, pupils, staff and members of the local community.

The Cleaswell Hill Foundation charity trustees met on 12 June, during which Bell Tindle Williamson LLP presented the final audited accounts for 1 September 2024 – 31 August 2025, prior to their submission to the Charity Commission.

Cleaswell Hill School pupils admirably participated in an interactive one mile sponsored walk along Newcastle Quayside on 17 June. The event raised £70 in aid of The Chronicle Sunshine Fund (registered charity number 1133293) and £338 for Cleaswell Hill Foundation.

Cleaswell Hill Foundation was delighted to receive £2,000 from the Catherine Cookson Trust during the month of June, as a result of a successful grant application for the redevelopment of an outdoor area.

We were delighted to support Piramal Pharma Solutions Morpeth's Family Fun Day on 20 June in aid of Cleaswell Hill Foundation, which generated an amazing £816.74 to facilitate lots of exciting resources and experiences for the children that attend Cleaswell Hill School.

A Cleaswell Hill Foundation community coffee morning was held at The Appleby Centre on 20 June and raised a fantastic £604.94 towards new performing arts resources and equipment.

Cleaswell Hill School pupils were selected as 'Runner Up' in the 'Best Young People's Project' category at the Love Northumberland awards in June and received a prize of £150 to support the purchase of horticultural resources and equipment.

The summer raffle and fundraising event on 10 July were a tremendous success and raised an incredible £3,740 in aid of Cleaswell Hill Foundation. A further £182.18 was gratefully received in donations at the leaver's assembly and BBQ held at The Appleby Centre on 13 July.

Our links with Just Giving, Your School Lottery, Stikins, Paypal Giving, Easy Fundraising, our onsite clothing bank and local community collection boxes continue to generate essential funds for our charity. Our local community collection box at The Cherry Tree Bar and Grill raised £109.81, our link with Easy Fundraising raised £31.02 and our lottery generated £269.60 from June – August 2026.

Our future planned fundraising events for this term include the Great North Run on 13 September, a staff coffee and cakes morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support (registered charity number 261017) on 25 September, a non-uniform day in aid of BBC Children in Need (Registered Charity No 802052) on 13 November and a non-uniform day in aid of Cleaswell Hill Foundation on 18 December.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Lauren Caisley

Section 4 – Specific Issues

Safeguarding

Since September 2026, a number of significant national developments in safeguarding, children's social care, online safety and Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RHSE) have further reinforced expectations that schools play a central role in promoting children's safety, wellbeing and resilience. Collectively, these developments continue the national shift towards earlier intervention, prevention and child-centred practice.

For Cleaswell Hill School, the priority is not simply maintaining statutory compliance, but ensuring that these developments strengthen our safeguarding culture, enhance our curriculum offer and improve outcomes for our most vulnerable learners.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

The latest edition of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* strengthens expectations around early identification of vulnerability, contextual safeguarding and effective multi-agency working. Expanded guidance includes child-on-parent abuse, financial exploitation, harmful online ideologies, misogyny, modern slavery, mental health and the safe use of artificial intelligence. There is also a stronger focus on peer-on-peer abuse, information sharing and online safety.

These developments align closely with our existing safeguarding priorities and support our commitment to creating a vigilant culture in which concerns are recognised early and appropriate support is provided promptly. This is particularly important within a specialist SEND setting, where pupils may experience increased vulnerability and require tailored safeguarding approaches.

Online Safety and Digital Resilience

National guidance continues to support clear restrictions on mobile phone use during the school day, whilst placing increasing emphasis on the management of online risks and the safe use of emerging technologies.

At Cleaswell Hill School, our focus extends beyond risk management to developing pupils' digital resilience. Through our curriculum and wider safeguarding provision, we continue to equip learners with the knowledge, understanding and judgement needed to engage safely and independently in an increasingly complex online environment.

Children's Social Care Reform

The implementation of the Family Help model continues to shift children's services towards prevention, earlier intervention and integrated support for families.

For the school, these reforms reinforce the importance of:

- Effective partnership working with families and external agencies.
- High-quality record keeping and information sharing.
- Early identification of emerging need.
- Professional curiosity and restorative practice.
- Evidence-based safeguarding interventions.

The reforms also recognise schools as key partners within the wider safeguarding system, particularly in identifying concerns at the earliest opportunity and helping families access support before difficulties escalate.

Updated RHSE Guidance

The revised RHSE guidance strengthens expectations around teaching healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, online relationships, media literacy, mental health, exploitation awareness and preparation for adulthood.

For Cleaswell Hill School, the revised guidance aligns strongly with our existing curriculum priorities. As a specialist setting, we remain committed to adapting delivery to meet pupils' developmental and communication needs while maintaining ambitious expectations regarding personal safety, independence and safeguarding knowledge.

Strategic Implications

Taken together, these national developments reinforce a preventative and child-centred safeguarding framework. They support our strategic ambition to move beyond compliance towards a model of transformative safeguarding practice characterised by:

- Strong safeguarding leadership and governance.
- Early intervention and preventative support.
- Meaningful pupil voice.
- Effective family engagement.
- Robust multi-agency partnerships.
- A curriculum that actively develops resilience, independence and protective behaviours.

Governors can therefore be assured that the school's existing safeguarding priorities remain well aligned with national expectations and continue to support positive outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding Activity and Impact: Autumn Term 2026

During the autumn term, 851 unique safeguarding-related incidents and actions were recorded. Key themes included attendance monitoring, pupil welfare, parental engagement, early help activity, multi-agency working and behaviour-related concerns.

Notably:

- 70 attendance concerns were identified, resulting in 15 welfare checks and 5 attendance plans.
- 172 causes for concern were recorded, with 3 requiring escalation to Children's Services.
- There was 1 Initial Child Protection Conference, 2 Section 47 enquiries and 3 social care referrals.
- Staff undertook 131 contacts with external agencies and 213 communications with parents and carers.
- 72 pupil conduct concerns were recorded, including incidents relating to sexualised behaviour, online safety and prejudice-based harm.
- 67 pupil voice activities were completed and 6 disclosures of harm were received and appropriately managed
- 12 referrals were made to external support services, including CYPS and Primary Mental Health.

Assurance and Analysis

The data continues to demonstrate a strong safeguarding culture in which concerns are identified early, recorded consistently and responded to proportionately. While safeguarding activity remains high, only a small proportion of cases progressed to statutory intervention. This indicates that vulnerabilities are being recognised and addressed effectively through pastoral support, family engagement, Early Help processes and multi-agency collaboration before concerns escalate.

Overall, the data provides assurance that safeguarding systems are operating effectively and that the school's preventative approach is enabling timely identification of need, appropriate intervention and sustained support for children and families.

Helen McIntyre



Behaviour and Attendance

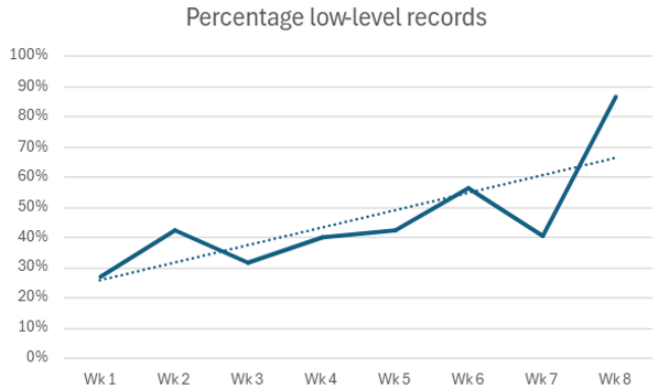
Attendance continues to be a significant strength of the school. Current attendance stands at 91.3%, remaining well above the national average for state-funded special schools (87.1%) and demonstrating the positive impact of the school's attendance strategy.

Attendance is underpinned by robust monitoring and intervention processes, including first-day absence procedures, attendance action plans, weekly attendance reviews and targeted support for pupils whose attendance begins to decline. Importantly, attendance is viewed through both an educational and safeguarding lens, ensuring that barriers to attendance are identified early and addressed promptly.

Attendance outcomes reflect the impact of these arrangements. The strongest attendance rates are seen within the Extended (92.7%) and Core (92.5%) pathways. Attendance within the Engagement pathway (86.1%) remains lower, reflecting the significantly greater complexity of need within this cohort; however, it continues to be a key area of strategic focus.

Behaviour data from the first half of the autumn term indicates that, while overall incident numbers increased following Week 1, analysis shows that an increasing proportion remained within the agitated or disruptive stages of behaviour. Across the first half term, 47% of all incidents were recorded as low-level behaviours, rising to 87% by Week 8. This suggests that staff are increasingly identifying and responding to pupils' needs at an earlier stage, reducing escalation to higher-risk behaviours.

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8	Totals / Combined Average
Total No. Incidents	11	82	85	85	68	83	91	61	566
No. low-level records	3	35	27	34	29	47	37	53	265
Percentage low-level records	27%	43%	32%	40%	43%	57%	41%	87%	47%



This work is supported by the school's relational and therapeutic approach to behaviour, underpinned by NAPPI training, integrated therapy support and individualised consistent approach plans. The impact of this approach can be seen most clearly in individual pupil outcomes. For example, one pupil's attendance increased from 42.3% prior to admission to 97.6%, alongside the successful achievement of Entry Level qualifications. A second pupil's attendance improved from 42.6% to 80.5%, accompanied by significant gains in communication, social interaction and engagement in learning

Overall, the current attendance and behaviour evidence demonstrates that the school's personalised, therapeutic and relationship-based approach is having a positive impact. Pupils with historically significant barriers to education are attending more regularly, engaging more successfully in learning, and experiencing improved outcomes. At the same time, behaviour is increasingly being managed before escalation occurs, contributing to a safer and more positive learning environment across the school.

Julie Brown



Personal Development and Well Being

Overview

This year's Personal Development and Wellbeing priorities are to demonstrate sustained impact, strengthen Preparation for Adulthood and ensure equitable access to enrichment, careers education and pupil participation.

1. Demonstrating Lasting Difference Over Time

A key focus this term has been strengthening how personal development outcomes can be evidenced across the school. Work has begun to refine Personal Development assessment processes, review Enrichment Passports and identify case-study pupils, across pathways. This is intended to strengthen leaders' ability to demonstrate progress from individual starting points and show how our offer is impactful for all, over time.

Wellbeing scale data is now triangulated with attendance data and the safeguarding monitoring list. These indicators are reviewed weekly through DSL supervision and pupil strategy meetings where progress and impact are monitored and recorded. This strengthened approach has improved the quality of information available when reviewing individual pupils' needs and has supported more targeted decision-making. Early evidence indicates improved outcomes for pupils discussed through these forums.

2. Preparation for Adulthood and Pupil Voice

PfA principles are embedded throughout all areas of learning and are also delivered as a discrete subject from year 9. Students have participated in a wide range of community-based learning opportunities, developing independence, confidence and life skills. This term, students have accessed public transport and visited a variety of destinations including shopping centres, gyms, restaurants and local attractions such as zoos. These experiences are carefully planned to support the development of social communication, travel training, money management and decision-making skills. The breadth of community engagement opportunities will continue to expand throughout the year, ensuring students are exposed to a range of environments and experiences which will prepare them effectively for further education, employment opportunities and adult life.

Students are currently working towards a range of qualifications and accreditations from Entry Level 1 to GCSE level, including English, Mathematics, Science, Performing Arts, Construction, Health and Social Care, Pre-Vocational Studies, ASDAN Lifeskills Challenge, Catering, Information Technology and Horticulture. Students have made a positive start to their courses, engaging well with learning and demonstrating strong commitment to achieving their individual targets.

Accessible pupil voice remains a priority. The pupil surveys in both the Extended Pathway and on the main site highlighted that young people would like more choice in lunchtime activities. As a result, the lunchtime offer has been expanded to include a range of additional opportunities in line with pupil preference and need, including a Dungeons & Dragons Club, Sing and Sign, Music Therapy drop-in sessions and a daily lunchroom provision.

Through our work with the local authority, the Extended Pathway focus group reviewed and selected their preferred final version of the co-production charter that they helped develop with Northumberland County Council during the summer term. The next phase of this work will involve further collaboration with the Youth Participation Team and our Can-Do Crew students on the main site.

Ongoing priorities include strengthening pupil voice representation through the Environments Group and ensuring that pupils continue to play an active role in shaping wellbeing provision.



3. Careers, Community Engagement and Future Pathways

This term, the school has continued to implement its Strategic Careers Plan, strengthening links between the curriculum, Preparation for Adulthood and future destinations, while extending pupils' understanding of local labour market opportunities and increasing engagement with employers, community partners and civic organisations.

The plan continues to be reviewed alongside wider Preparation for Adulthood priorities. A significant development this term has been the opening of the school café. The café has been established as both a curriculum and enrichment provision and provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop communication, independence, teamwork, problem-solving and customer service skills within an authentic setting. The café also supports work-related learning and work experience opportunities, enabling pupils to apply learning in real-life situations and strengthen readiness for future pathways.

A particular highlight this term is the continued delivery of the 'Therapuetic Horticulture' qualification. A member of Appleby Centre staff contributed to the development of this qualification in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society and it is now delivered nationally. This is a valuable pathway for students with interests and aspirations linked to horticulture and land-based industries.

Supporting students to make informed decisions about their future pathways remains a significant focus. Throughout the Autumn Term, students have visited a range of further education providers and adult social care settings as part of the school's transition and careers programme. These opportunities have enabled students to explore different destinations and develop a clear understanding of the options available to them after leaving school. Many students are already demonstrating confidence in discussing their future aspirations and identifying potential next steps. Families continue to receive support throughout this process from the school's CEIAG Assistant and Careers Lead, ensuring that both students and parents are fully informed when making decisions regarding post-16 and post-18 destinations.

The school has maintained contact with students who left Cleaswell Hill School last year. It is particularly pleasing to report that all former students are successfully enrolled in and attending their chosen college placements, demonstrating the effectiveness of the school's Preparation for Adulthood and transition programmes.

Rachael Ford Hutchinson



Educational Visits

Educational visits and enrichment are central to our curriculum, supporting pupils' personal development, wellbeing and preparation for adulthood. Learning beyond the classroom enables pupils to apply knowledge and skills in real-life settings, making learning more meaningful, memorable and engaging. These experiences build confidence, independence and self-esteem while strengthening communication, teamwork and positive social interaction.

Regular access to community-based learning experiences helps pupils become familiar with a wide range of environments, enabling them to develop resilience, adaptability, and the practical skills needed for greater independence in later life. Visits also provide valuable opportunities to practice emotional regulation, decision-making and risk awareness in real-world situations, supporting pupils to generalise skills taught within school.

Many classes participate in weekly educational visits, ensuring that enrichment is embedded within the curriculum rather than viewed as an occasional addition. Whether accessing local businesses and community facilities, engaging in outdoor learning, visiting cultural venues or taking part in recreational activities, each experience is carefully planned to support individual learning outcomes and wider developmental goals. These opportunities not only enhance pupils' educational experiences but also contribute significantly to their wellbeing, sense of belonging and quality of life, helping them to become more confident, connected and active members of their communities.

Julie Brown

Integrated Therapy

The integrated therapy service has a continued focus on developing communication, independence, physical skills and access to learning.

Speech and Language (SaLT) Interventions

There are nine Lego Therapy groups running this term, supporting pupils from both the Core and Extended Pathways. Through these interventions there has been a notable improvement in both confidence, social skills and speaking volume. Alongside group interventions, ten pupils are currently accessing personalised one-to-one Speech and Language Therapy programmes tailored to their individual needs. Pupil Strategy Meetings have also been used effectively to identify pupils requiring further assessment and targeted therapeutic support from SaLT, occupational therapy and wellbeing.

Additional communication opportunities continue to be embedded throughout the school day. Lunchtime communication clubs run three times a week, providing valuable opportunities for pupils to practise their communication and social interaction skills in a less structured environment.

The Autumn Term's Makaton signing video, performed to the song 'This Is Me', was produced to highlight the value 'Resilience' - Kelly Coe's skilful performance has been very well received!

A whole-school reminder around the importance of oracy was delivered in September to reinforce the development of communication across all areas of the curriculum.

A 'Functional Environmental Print Recognition Pack' has been designed to support pupils' independence when accessing toilet facilities. This project involved collaboration with educational colleagues, including visits to Cramlington to gather photographs and video resources to ensure the materials reflected real-life environments.

The SaLT team continues to provide ongoing support for newly admitted pupils and those with more complex needs, including targeted support for pupils with English as an additional language.

Therapy to Support Sensory, Physical and Emotional Development (Supported by OT)

Written Output (and fine motor skills)

Typing programmes, selected according to developmental level, are established across all Extended Pathway classes and are being successfully implemented within the Core Pathway classes. In addition, all Extended Pathway classes have received occupational therapy involvement to review pupils' handwriting and postural needs. As a result, appropriate support equipment, including pen grips, posture cushions and sloping boards, has been provided or updated according to changing needs. Equipment reviews are currently being carried out within the Core Pathway and will be completed in the Autumn Term. At the Appleby Centre, typing and handwriting speed assessments have been completed by the Class Leads (with advice from OT) to identify to most appropriate method of recording for accreditation; this removes a barrier that may otherwise hinder optimal achievement.

Rebound Therapy

Rebound Therapy continues to have a highly positive impact on pupils' physical development and wellbeing. Every pupil accessing Rebound Therapy this term has made measurable progress, achieving at least one of their aspirational targets. A class group Rebound session has been introduced as a new initiative and has been particularly successful; pupils have demonstrated improved tolerance of others, developed turn-taking skills, engaged in activities around the trampoline and shown increased ability to wait calmly.

This term a very complex pupil from the engagement pathway was able to access the trampoline for the first time in several years, representing a major personal milestone for him. Another young man, who is recovering from brain surgery is midway through a 12-week block of rebound therapy and video recordings are capturing progress in the areas of core strength, posture and confidence. Video footage will be analysed to inform next steps for future therapeutic practice.



Hydrotherapy

The hydrotherapy pool continues to be well utilised across the whole school, supporting a wide range of therapeutic and educational activities. Sessions remain well attended and staff continue to demonstrate commitment and determination in ensuring that the provision is effective and accessible for pupils. We are also pleased to welcome Bothal Academy to the pool on a weekly basis, with these partnership sessions proving successful and beneficial to all involved. Evening hire bookings are gradually increasing following the decision to limit use to healthcare professionals, helping to ensure that the facility is used appropriately and safely. Income generated during September and October 2026 totals £1,390, providing a positive contribution towards the ongoing running and maintenance costs of the pool.

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture continues to provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their wellbeing, independence and confidence through meaningful engagement with nature. Danielle Forsyth (Therapy Assistant) successfully achieved the Award in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, a Level 5 qualification accredited by the Open College Network London. The course focused on understanding how therapeutic horticulture can benefit specific client groups, designing tailored horticultural programmes, selecting appropriate assessment methods and developing evidence-based rationales to support practice. At present Danielle Forsyth and Charlotte Calcutt (Phase Lead, Appleby Centre) are working collaboratively with other key staff to deliver Entry Level 3 and Level 1 Qualifications in Horticulture, through the Royal Horticultural Society.



The polytunnel and outdoor horticulture spaces are therapeutic environments supporting pupils with a range of physical, sensory and emotional needs. Staff observations and pupil feedback indicate that time spent outdoors can have a positive impact on mood, wellbeing and recovery. The continued development of therapeutic horticulture within school strengthens our provision and provides an inclusive environment where pupils can experience achievement, connection and improved quality of life. Pupils experience 'seed-to-plate' learning over time, following the life cycle of food and learning about nutrition and food preparation. With the exciting opening of 'Our Cafe', pupils will access high-quality work experience and a sense of belonging to something extremely special for the school and community.

Juliet Ruddick



Admissions

Admissions arrangements continue to present significant challenges as the complexity of need within the local SEND landscape increases. The school currently has 11 tribunal appeals logged and four mediations. The Admissions Team meets fortnightly to review papers relating to approximately 10–15 pupils, with an increasing proportion of referrals involving pupils whose needs are likely to require provision within the Engagement or lower Core pathways. At present, the school does not have the environments or resources necessary to meet the needs of many of these pupils safely and effectively. The team works diligently to communicate these concerns to the Local Authority, both through formal correspondence and regular meetings, ensuring that the complexity of need and the limitations of current provision are clearly understood.

The school welcomed 20 new starters in September 2026, with six pupils currently confirmed for September 2027 and a further five awaiting Local Authority confirmation. The changing SEND landscape is also influencing the profile of future admissions, with fewer pupils presenting for the Extended Pathway as more are encouraged to remain within mainstream settings. While this may be appropriate for some pupils, others will continue to require specialist provision, and families may pursue tribunal appeals where they believe a specialist placement is necessary. The reported 97% success rate for parents challenging Section I of an EHCP highlights the potential for further changes to the school's admissions profile. This reinforces the importance of ongoing dialogue with the Local Authority regarding the suitability, capacity and sustainability of our provision, particularly in light of increasingly complex needs and the need to ensure that any placement can be supported effectively.

Emma Dunn

The Appleby Centre

Student Transition and Settling In

The academic year has begun positively, with all students settling extremely well into life at The Appleby Centre. While several students were returning from the previous academic year, others transitioned from the main school site and one student joined Cleaswell Hill School as a new starter.

Despite these varied starting points, all students have made a successful transition and are now well-established within their classes and daily routines. This has been supported by a comprehensive transition programme carried out during the Summer Term, enabling students to become familiar with the setting, staff and expectations before the start of the new academic year.

Parent engagement has also played an important role in ensuring successful transitions. Families of new starters were invited to a dedicated information evening prior to the beginning of term, providing an opportunity to meet staff, gain further understanding of the curriculum offer and ask questions. Feedback from families has been positive and has supported parental confidence during this important stage.



Enrichment and Community Engagement

Developing relationships with families and the wider community remains a key priority. In December, The Appleby Centre will host a Christmas Event for students and their families. This will provide an opportunity to celebrate student achievements, strengthen home-school relationships and encourage families to become actively involved in school life.

Students are also participating in several exciting Performing Arts opportunities. The annual Christmas production will provide opportunities for students to showcase their talents to families and members of the community. In addition, students have been invited to perform at the Spectrum Holidays Charity Ball, providing a valuable opportunity to perform in a wider community setting and further develop confidence and communication skills.

Summary

The Autumn Term has been a successful and productive start to the academic year at The Appleby Centre. Students have settled well, are engaging positively with their learning, and are benefiting from a wide range of curriculum, enrichment and Preparation for Adulthood opportunities. Staff remain committed to ensuring that all students develop the skills, confidence and independence required for successful transitions into further education, employment and adult life.

Priorities for the remainder of the academic year include continuing to develop community-based learning opportunities, supporting students through accreditation programmes, strengthening family engagement and ensuring effective transition planning for all learners.

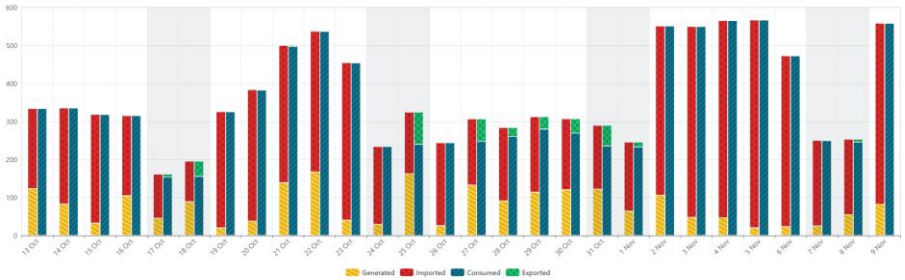
Charlotte Calcutt

Site, Premises and Resources

Solar panels

After months of discussion and negotiation with our Council colleagues and Solar for Schools, I'm pleased to confirm that the 79kW solar panel system was finally installed in the summer holidays by Solar for Schools.





The system allows us to use as much of the energy we produce as possible, with any excess going back to the grid. At this time of year, we are using a lot of energy and not producing an awful lot, but as we get into the spring we can expect to see the benefits of solar.

New Timber Cabin

We received formal approval for a new timber cabin comprising a teaching space and a hygiene room on Friday the 17th of July, with work beginning on Monday the 20th. This followed a very short period of time to get plans produced, building control approval and contractors lined up. A big thank you to ID Construction & Joinery, Steven Kirk Architectural Services and Keith Wilkinson Electrical Contractors for pulling out all the stops to get this project over the line in time for pupils returning to school in September.



Formation of new office and medication room

The project to reduce the size of Room 16 (the old Science Room) to form a new office and medication room was completed during the summer holidays. The new medication room allows us to provide a fit-for-purpose space for administering medication to pupils in private, as well as much needed space for the safe storage of the increasing number of medicines we administer in school. Thank you to ID Construction & Joinery and Keith Wilkinson Electrical for getting both rooms ready for September.

Jordan Tolley

Fusion Learning Hub

Despite Abi McCarthy's current sabbatical, Fusion Learning Hub continues to operate successfully, maintaining its commitment to strengthening inclusive practice and developing staff confidence in supporting neurodiverse learners. Molly Cleverly is currently working within mainstream settings for two days each week, providing practical support to staff and pupils and helping to develop provision that is responsive to individual needs. The Hub also maintains an active presence across social media platforms, sharing regular updates on available support and training, alongside useful hints, tips and practical strategies to promote inclusive practice. This ongoing work ensures that expertise continues to be shared across settings, supporting the development of staff capacity and more inclusive learning environments.

WISE Academies

A new Service Level Agreement has been established with the WISE Academies Trust. This collaborative programme includes:

- Direct school-based support from Molly.
- Delivery of NEN CPD-accredited webinar training modules by Rachael Howitt.
- Ongoing work by Rachael Howitt and Emma Dunn with the WISE SENCO Network through attendance at monthly network meetings. This work focuses on developing robust approaches to the assessment and identification of children with complex needs across the trust.

Northern Lights Teaching Hub

In November, a new training partnership commenced with the Northern Lights Teaching Hub. This expands the reach of neurodiversity-informed practice and provides further opportunities for workforce development across the region.

Kelly Coe continues to work closely with the SEN Transport service, delivering monthly, and where required fortnightly, training sessions. These sessions aim to increase understanding of neurodiversity amongst transport staff across the county, supporting more positive experiences for children and young people accessing transport services.

The summer Headteacher's Report included an inaccurate statement regarding participation in NEN training. The figure of approximately 1,524 participants did not relate to a single year of delivery. This figure is now 2,145 and represents the cumulative number of participants trained in CPD-accredited NEN training sessions over the five years during which the NEN licence has been held. We wish to correct the record and ensure that future reports accurately distinguish between annual and cumulative participation data.

Current figures

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
250 participants	471 participants	544 participants	560 participants	298* participants

*Figure based on one half term for this academic year

SEND Advisory Role

Emma Dunn is currently seconded to Northumberland County Council for two days each week as the SEND Advisor for the region. The secondment will conclude in January 2027, as Emma will be leaving Cleaswell Hill School at Christmas to take up a new role.

During the past term, Emma has contributed to panel discussions on EHC needs assessments and pupil placements, helping to identify provision that best meets pupils' individual needs. This work has also provided valuable insight into the local authority's evolving inclusion strategy, including the development of inclusion bases to support pupils with lower levels of complexity and preserve specialist school places for those with the greatest needs.

A key aspect of Emma's role has been supporting mainstream schools to develop effective strategies and strengthen their capacity to meet pupils' needs. This has also created opportunities for Cleaswell to share its expertise with local schools, reflecting its wider civic responsibility.

The next step is to undertake a PESTLE analysis as part of a business plan, considering the sustainability of this outward-facing support and the capacity required to continue and develop it in the future.

The Fusion Learning Hub continues to maintain and expand its programme of support despite staffing changes. New partnerships with the WISE Academies Trust and the Northern Lights Teaching Hub, alongside the ongoing work of the Fusion Hub and SEN Transport training programme, are strengthening neurodiversity-informed practice across schools and services within the county. The correction of previously reported participation figures also provides a more accurate reflection of the cumulative impact of the NEN training programme over the past five years.

Emma Dunn, Rachael Howitt