

Music development plan summary:

Cleaswell Hill School

Academic year 2026-27 | All-range special school, Northumberland

This summary sets out how Cleaswell Hill delivers and develops high-quality, inclusive music education through curriculum music, co-curricular provision and musical experiences. It is designed around the needs of pupils with a wide range of complex SEND and reflects the Department for Education's National Plan for Music Education, the Model Music Curriculum and the school's wider curriculum, therapy and Preparation for Adulthood priorities.

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026-2027
Date this summary was published	September 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	July 2027 (and updated before the start of the next academic year)
Name of the school music lead	Beth Blaxall
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Patrick Ford-Hutchinson – Deputy Headteacher
Name of local music hub	Northumberland Music (formerly Music Partnership North), within the regional Music Hub partnership
Other music education organisation(s) / partners	Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy; Music North East; The Glasshouse International Centre for Music; Coast Radio; Platform One; visiting/touring performance partners. Developing links include Open Orchestras, Sing Up! and regional SEND music networks.

Cleaswell Hill is an all-range special school. Music provision is therefore deliberately age-respectful, developmentally responsive and adapted so that pupils can access meaningful musical learning from their individual starting points. Adaptation changes the route into learning, not the ambition that pupils should know more, do more, communicate more and participate with increasing independence.

Part A: Curriculum music

This section explains what pupils learn in lesson time, how the curriculum is adapted and sequenced, how progress is evidenced, and the routes available for pupils who wish to continue music or performing arts into Key Stages 4 and 5.

Curriculum intent and structure

Cleaswell Hill's Music curriculum is informed by the Model Music Curriculum (2021), the National Curriculum and the school's own curriculum rationale. It is organised around the connected disciplines of singing, listening, composing and performing. Pupils revisit these disciplines through increasingly demanding contexts so that musical knowledge, vocabulary, control and independence build cumulatively rather than as isolated activities.

Chronological age determines the broad, age-respectful musical experiences pupils encounter. Individual starting points determine the cognitive demand, communication method, level of prompting, sensory or physical adaptation and degree of independence through which pupils access those experiences. This supports breadth without lowering expectations for pupils with SEND.

Pathway-sensitive access

- Extended Pathway: subject-specific Music is taught through a progressive sequence of singing, listening, composing and performing, with learning linked to prerequisite, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 expectations as appropriate to the pupil.
- Core Pathway: pupils access practical, adapted and functional musical learning at a level matched to cognition, communication and independence. Repetition, visual support, modelling, structured routines and accessible instruments are used to secure understanding and participation.
- Engagement Pathway: musical experiences are adapted to pupils' developmental profiles and can provide powerful contexts for anticipation, attention, communication, interaction, regulation, choice-making and self-expression. These experiences complement the personalised Engagement curriculum and EHCP priorities rather than being treated as a simplified version of age-related subject content.
- Across all pathways, teachers use pupils' most effective communication systems and make reasonable adjustments to remove physical, sensory, communication and regulation barriers.

Curriculum time and entitlement

- Extended Key Stages 1 to 3: the school allocates approximately one hour of curriculum music each week across the school year for the relevant phases, in line with the National Plan for Music Education expectation.
- Key Stages 4 and 5: music and performing arts progression is personalised according to attainment, interests, independence and intended destination. The current published qualification offer includes BTEC Performing Arts Level 1, subject to cohort need and uptake.

What pupils learn

Curriculum component	Progressive learning
Singing and voice	Vocal exploration, breathing, posture, call and response, melody, expressive singing, dynamics, rounds and increasingly controlled individual or group singing.
Listening and appraising	Attention to pulse, beat, rhythm, pitch, timbre, dynamics, structure and expressive effect; listening to complete works; developing musical memory; responding to music from different periods, genres, traditions and cultures.
Composing and improvising	Creating, selecting and combining sounds; musical conversations; composing to a stimulus or purpose; developing motifs and patterns; recording ideas using symbols, graphic, dot or staff notation where appropriate; using music technology to capture, change and combine sound.
Performing	Solo and ensemble participation; rehearsal; stagecraft; collaboration; responding to others; performing with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression; giving and responding to feedback.
Musical knowledge and vocabulary	Progressive use of terms including pulse, rhythm, pitch, tempo, dynamics, melody, harmony, notation, form, scales, chords and instruments, taught through practical application rather than vocabulary in isolation.
Cultural and historical understanding	Encountering music from a broad range of traditions, cultures, styles and historical periods, including jazz, Indian and Chinese music, so that pupils develop cultural understanding, curiosity and respect alongside subject knowledge.

Teaching, adaptation and resources

Teaching is practical, multi-sensory and explicit. Staff use modelling, repetition, rehearsal, scaffolded choices and flexible pacing while maintaining clear musical intent. Adaptations may include colour-coded instruments, visual timetables, Widgit or colourful semantic supports, enlarged or simplified notation, adapted grips or mallets, switches and music technology, reduced sensory demand, supported positioning and use of AAC or signing. Pupils are given repeated opportunities to apply the same musical knowledge in different contexts so that learning becomes increasingly secure and transferable.

The school continues to audit and develop its instrument stock, storage and access to specialist resources. Loan schemes and partnership support are used where possible to broaden the range of instruments available without creating unnecessary barriers for pupils or families.

Assessment and evidence of progress

Assessment is proportionate and rooted in what pupils can demonstrate musically. Evidence may include practical observation, audio/video, photographs, musical products, rehearsal and performance, pupil communication, work samples and teacher assessment against relevant curriculum statements. Earwig is used as an online learning journal and evidence-collection system where appropriate; it supports, rather than replaces, professional assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do.

Leaders look for sustained change from individual starting points: increased accuracy and control, deeper listening, stronger recall, reduced prompting, more purposeful choice, greater independence, improved collaboration and the ability to apply musical learning in a new context. Where music directly contributes to an EHCP or PLIM outcome, curriculum and therapeutic evidence can be triangulated while keeping the distinction between subject learning and therapy clear.

Accreditation and progression

From Key Stage 4 onwards, pupils continue to develop musical knowledge, technical control, creativity, performance skills and independence at a level matched to their starting point, interests and intended destination. External accreditation is selected because it supports the pupil's next stage rather than defining the curriculum. The current published qualification offer includes BTEC Performing Arts Level 1. Pupils may also access personalised instrumental or vocal tuition, awards or wider creative/vocational units where these are appropriate and available.

Careers education links musical learning to the creative industries and to roles such as community performer, music assistant, event assistant, stage crew, lighting or sound assistant and front-of-house work. Experiences with Koast Radio, The Glasshouse and performance partners help pupils see how musical, technical, communication and teamwork skills can transfer into adult life, further education and employment.

Part B: Co-curricular music

Co-curricular provision extends music beyond timetabled lessons and gives pupils additional opportunities to sing, play, rehearse, perform and develop interests at their own pace. Access is adapted so that physical, sensory, communication or regulation needs do not become barriers to participation.

Current opportunities

- Musically focused lunchtime and enrichment opportunities, which have included Makaton Sign and Sing, dance, Little Movers, Tiddly Winks and karaoke, subject to the annual club offer and pupil demand.
- Individual or small-group instrumental tuition and vocal coaching can be supported for pupils who wish to pursue music beyond the core curriculum, with rehearsal opportunities during the school day where appropriate.
- Suitable spaces are identified for individual or small-group rehearsal and practice, with environmental and sensory adaptations made according to pupil need.
- School signposts families to local weekend, after-school and holiday opportunities through Northumberland Music and other inclusive providers. Charging and remission arrangements are applied in line with school and provider policies so that disadvantage does not become an unnecessary barrier.

Music therapy within the wider offer

Nordoff Robbins music therapy is an important part of Cleaswell Hill's integrated therapeutic provision. It is targeted according to pupil need and is distinct from curriculum Music: therapy focuses on personalised

therapeutic and EHCP-related outcomes, while curriculum Music focuses on progressive subject knowledge and musicianship. The two can complement one another where this is purposeful for the pupil.

Area of therapeutic contribution	What the evidence shows
Communication	Pupils may express preferences through instrument choice and communicate through movement, gesture, vocalisation and musical response. Reports also identify increasing reciprocity and clearer communication about continuing or ending an activity.
Social interaction	Turn-taking, shared attention, listening to others, participating alongside peers, responding to others' musical contributions and collaborative music-making support wider relationship-building.
Attention and listening	Pupils develop capacity to attend, maintain focus, listen and respond, wait for a turn and sustain involvement within structured shared activity.
Confidence and independence	Evidence includes increased willingness to engage, requesting preferred instruments, taking greater initiative and expressing choices with increasing independence.
Emotional wellbeing and self-expression	Music provides a safe and motivating medium for enjoyment, movement, self-expression, success and positive engagement with peers and adults.

Current sampled reports provide strongest qualitative evidence of impact on engagement, participation and communication, with consistent emerging evidence around social interaction, confidence and self-expression. Leaders will continue to strengthen how this impact is evaluated over time through therapy reports, EHCP/PLIM links where relevant, pupil response, professional observation and case sampling.

Ensembles and progression beyond lessons

The school's next step is to make ensemble participation more systematic. During 2026-27 Cleaswell Hill will establish or formalise an accessible vocal ensemble/choir and at least one instrumental or percussion group, drawing on Northumberland Music and specialist partners where appropriate. The design will be flexible enough for pupils who communicate non-verbally or require adapted instruments, switch access, close adult support or reduced sensory demand.

Part C: Musical experiences

Musical experiences are planned to bring curriculum learning to life, broaden cultural capital and allow pupils to participate as performers, creators, technicians and audiences. The school aims for pupils to experience music in authentic settings and to understand that successful participation can take many forms.

Current and recurring experiences

- Pathway assemblies include opportunities for singing, listening and solo or ensemble performance, giving pupils a regular audience and a low-risk context in which to share learning.
- The annual autumn pantomime, delivered in school by a touring company, gives pupils the opportunity to take part or experience live performance as an audience member in a familiar, supported environment.
- The school-led drama/performance group at Platform One includes opportunities to participate as an actor, musician, dancer or through light and sound technology, culminating in larger and smaller public performances.
- Educational visits include shows, concerts and other professional musical performances. The school's Enrichment Passport supports leaders to monitor breadth of cultural and arts experiences across the pupil journey.
- Links with Coast Radio provide workshops and, for some pupils, work-related learning or placement opportunities connected to broadcasting and sound.
- The Glasshouse International Centre for Music supports careers encounters, workshops and backstage experiences that raise aspiration and broaden understanding of music-related roles.

Performance entitlement

During 2026-27 the school will formalise a minimum expectation of at least one accessible performance or musical showcase each term across the year. This may be pathway-based, whole-school or linked to wider performing arts activity. Pupils can contribute in different roles, including performer, composer, musician, technician, stage support or audience member. The aim is meaningful participation and progression, not a single model of performance.

The school will continue to secure at least one live professional performance experience each year, in school or off site, with reasonable adjustments and subsidy used where necessary to maximise access.

In the future

The priorities below form Cleaswell Hill's Music Development Action Plan for 2026-27. They deliberately combine the Department for Education's key features of high-quality school music provision with the priorities identified through the school's subject review, curriculum development work and therapeutic evidence. Progress will be reviewed termly by the Music Lead and senior leaders, with an annual evaluation informing the next published summary.

Priority	Actions for 2026-27	Success criteria / evidence of impact	Lead / timescale
1. Secure curriculum progression and consistency	Implement the updated Music curriculum overview. Ensure planning consistently develops singing, listening, composing and performing; add practical lesson ideas and explicit prerequisite knowledge. Strengthen pre-teaching and consistent use of subject vocabulary and visual supports.	Planning, learning walks, pupil work/recordings and Earwig samples show a clear sequence from starting points. Pupils increasingly recall and apply musical vocabulary and skills across contexts. Staff can explain what pupils are learning and how it builds over time.	Music Lead / Phase Leads Autumn 2026, then termly review
2. Strengthen staff subject knowledge and confidence	Deliver targeted CPD on pulse, rhythm, pitch, singing, instrumental work, composition, accessible notation, adaptive strategies and use of music technology. Use expertise from Nordoff Robbins, Northumberland Music and other specialists. Provide model activities for non-specialists.	Staff confidence increases from baseline. Lesson visits show more secure musical subject knowledge, clearer modelling and purposeful adaptation. CPD is evaluated through staff voice and evidence of changed classroom practice.	Music Lead / Specialist partners Autumn-Spring 2026-27
3. Improve instruments, technology and accessible resources	Complete a resource audit; prioritise tuned/untuned percussion, accessible/adapted instruments, colour-coded resources, visual/communication materials, storage and suitable music technology. Use Hub loans, grants and fundraising where appropriate.	All pathways have reliable access to an appropriate range of voice, instruments and technology. Resource gaps identified in the subject review reduce. Staff can select resources that remove barriers rather than narrow musical learning.	Music Lead / Business team Audit Autumn 2026; purchases/loans by Spring 2027
4. Establish sustainable co-curricular ensembles	Formalise an accessible vocal ensemble/choir and at least one instrumental/percussion group. Build predictable rehearsal routines and suitable rehearsal space. Ensure participation is open and adapted for pupils across communication and physical profiles.	A vocal ensemble and instrumental/group offer operate regularly. Participation is monitored by pathway and disadvantage so that access is equitable. Pupils demonstrate increasing confidence, turn-taking, listening, ensemble awareness and performance readiness.	Music Lead / Northumberland Music Launch by Spring 2027
5. Strengthen the evidence of music therapy impact	Agree a concise evaluation framework with the therapy team linking therapeutic aims to communication, interaction, attention, confidence, wellbeing and relevant EHCP/PLIM outcomes. Use case sampling and longitudinal evidence, while keeping therapy and curriculum assessment distinct.	Leaders can show sustained therapeutic impact for sampled pupils and explain how this supports wider access to learning, relationships and Preparation for Adulthood. Reports identify baseline, change over time and next steps more consistently.	Therapy Lead / Music Therapist / SLT Framework Autumn 2026; review termly
6. Guarantee performance and live-music experiences	Plan at least one accessible school performance/showcase opportunity each term and at least one live professional performance experience annually. Use assemblies, pathway events, drama/performance activity and visiting artists. Record participation through Enrichment Passports.	Every pupil has meaningful opportunities to experience live music and to contribute to performance in an appropriate role. Participation evidence shows breadth across pathways and vulnerable groups, with pupil voice demonstrating enjoyment, confidence and cultural learning.	Music Lead / PD Lead Termly; annual entitlement by July 2027
7. Clarify KS4-5 progression,	Map progression from curriculum Music into BTEC Performing Arts Level 1 and other personalised creative routes. Identify pupils who would benefit	Pupils and families can see clear next steps from interest to qualification, further education, work-related learning or	Music Lead / Careers Lead / Senior team

Priority	Actions for 2026-27	Success criteria / evidence of impact	Lead / timescale
accreditation and creative careers	from instrumental/vocal tuition, awards or graded progression. Strengthen careers links to sound, performance, events, broadcasting and backstage roles.	community participation. Choices are driven by attainment, interest and intended destination rather than by qualification availability alone.	Spring-Summer 2027
8. Deepen partnerships and outward-facing SEND music practice	Strengthen work with Northumberland Music, Nordoff Robbins, The Glasshouse, Coast Radio, local special schools and regional SEND music networks. Explore Open Orchestras, Sing Up! and the new National Centre for Arts and Music Education CPD/resources where these add value.	Partnership activity results in tangible pupil opportunities, staff development, resource access or progression routes. Cleaswell contributes to regional SEND music dialogue and shares effective adaptive practice where evidence is strong.	Music Lead / SLT Throughout 2026-27
9. Strengthen quality assurance, pupil voice and equity	Use termly subject review, pupil voice, parent/carer feedback, participation information and case sampling to evaluate curriculum, co-curricular and enrichment provision. Check access for pupils who are disadvantaged, have complex communication needs or require higher levels of physical/sensory adaptation.	Leaders know which pupils participate, the quality of their experience and what difference provision makes. Identified gaps lead to specific action. Annual review provides clear evidence of provision, impact and next steps rather than activity alone.	Music Lead / SLT / Governors Termly; full review July 2027

Longer-term direction

- 2027-28: embed the ensemble offer; increase opportunities for sustained instrumental/vocal progression; evaluate whether specialist delivery should be expanded; use participation and pupil outcome evidence to refine the offer.
- 2028-29: strengthen post-14 accreditation and creative/vocational pathways where cohort need supports this; deepen regional SEND music partnership work; share effective adaptive practice and sustained impact with other settings.

Further information

The following sources and partnerships support this plan. The school will update its published Music Development Plan summary annually and will continue to work with families, pupils and external partners to strengthen access and progression.

- [Cleaswell Hill School - Curriculum and Therapies](#)
- [Cleaswell Hill School - Qualification Offer](#)
- [Department for Education - The Power of Music to Change Lives: National Plan for Music Education](#)
- [Department for Education - Model Music Curriculum / Teaching music in schools](#)
- [Department for Education - School music development plan summary template](#)
- [Northumberland Music](#)
- [Nordoff and Robbins](#)
- [The Glasshouse International Centre for Music](#)

Review and governance

The Music Lead will review this plan termly with senior leaders. Governors can use the action plan to test whether provision is ambitious, inclusive and sustainable; whether pupils across all pathways are participating; whether music therapy and curriculum music are each having the intended impact; and whether identified development actions are improving outcomes over time. The published summary will be refreshed before the start of the 2027-28 academic year.