

Section 5 – Curriculum and Teaching

Curriculum and teaching at Cleaswell Hill are transformational because exceptional SEND pedagogy changes what pupils are able to learn, demonstrate and do independently from their individual starting points. Engagement, Core and Extended provide different but equally ambitious routes, while integrated therapy, precise assessment, accessible communication and highly responsive teaching remove barriers without reducing curriculum ambition. Where an established approach is not enabling a pupil to learn successfully, leaders change the route rather than lowering the destination. This is evident across very different starting points: the adapted multisensory SSP route enabled 23 of 24 pupils to make measurable progress in Summer 2026, while scrutiny of written output for Entry Level Post-16 students led teachers and OT to change teaching and recording approaches, with measurable improvement evident within two weeks. External quality assurance confirms that this responsive practice is typical rather than isolated: over 70% of teaching observed during one 2025/26 review was judged exceptional and teaching was highly effective in all ten lessons observed during the Summer 2026 review. The impact is that pupils who previously struggled to access, sustain or demonstrate learning increasingly acquire, retain, generalise and apply knowledge with less dependency on adults and are better able to progress to their next curriculum, qualification or adult-life stage.

What is going well: Evidence to support this judgement

Strategic Leadership of Curriculum and Teaching

Leaders know where curriculum and teaching are strongest and where they vary across Engagement, Core and Extended because they routinely compare what they see in curriculum conversations, observations, learning walks and work scrutiny with moderation, Earwig, governor monitoring and SIP challenge. This evaluation results in demonstrable change rather than simply identifying variation. Where assessment showed that some pupils could not access the standard phonics route successfully, leaders developed an adapted multisensory SSP approach; by Summer 2026, 23 of 24 pupils on this route were making measurable progress. Similarly, during Spring 2026, 22 of 24 pupils receiving targeted academic intervention made progress; the two pupils who did not were subject to deeper review and their intervention was changed rather than ineffective provision continuing. Feedback, coaching, curriculum adaptation and implementation planning are therefore followed by re-evaluation of pupil response, enabling leaders to demonstrate a clear cycle of evidence → action → improved access or achievement → further refinement.

Leaders are exceptionally effective in designing and continually refining three ambitious, coherent pathway curricula while protecting every pupil's entitlement to appropriate breadth, depth and statutory curriculum content. Baseline assessment, EHCP and PLIM priorities, pupil outcomes, therapy evidence and Preparation for Adulthood goals shape age-respectful curricula that remain highly responsive to changing complexity without placing a ceiling on ambition. Pathways are deliberately fluid: pupils can move between, or blend elements of, Engagement, Core and Extended provision as assessment identifies changing strengths, barriers and readiness, ensuring curriculum, staffing, therapy and accreditation remain precisely matched to need and future destination. The impact of this increasingly precise pathway model is visible particularly within Engagement, where curriculum target achievement increased from 56% in Autumn 2024 to 77% by Spring 2026. This matters because pupils with some of the most complex starting points are increasingly able to sustain purposeful engagement, demonstrate meaningful curriculum learning and progress towards greater communication, participation and independence rather than complexity of need restricting curriculum ambition.

Curriculum design deliberately prepares pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those facing the greatest barriers, for later opportunities, responsibilities and experiences. Knowledge, communication, independence, personal development, accreditation and Preparation for Adulthood are progressively connected from pupils' starting points to meaningful next steps, including qualification pathways, the Appleby Centre, further education, employment, training and adult services. This progression is realised in outcomes rather than remaining an intended curriculum endpoint: in 2026 every GCSE entry across English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Statistics and PE resulted in an achieved qualification, while school destination tracking records 100% of 2024/25 and 2025/2026 leavers entering positive onward destinations. Curriculum ambition is therefore translating into pupils acquiring the knowledge, qualifications, independence and readiness required to move successfully beyond Cleaswell.

Leaders identify barriers early and deploy expertise according to assessed pupil and curriculum need. EHCPs, PLIMs, assessment, therapy, attendance, behaviour, family insight and classroom evidence inform flexible grouping and the deployment of teachers, subject and pathway specialists, therapists and teaching assistants, enabling pupils to receive appropriate expertise and timely intervention rather than provision being determined by diagnosis or age alone. The impact is evident when specialist expertise changes what a pupil can demonstrate: for example, Post-16 scrutiny identified written output as a barrier, leading teachers and OT to jointly reassess individual need and personalise key skills; measurable improvement was evident within the first two weeks. This exemplifies how specialist deployment is judged by whether it increases access, independence and achievement rather than by the amount of specialist input provided.

An exceptionally coherent Professional Learning and Development Programme sustains specialist expertise across a large all-age workforce, from new entrants and ECTs to experienced teachers, teaching assistants and therapists. Theory of Change, coaching, modelling, Steplab, mentoring, appraisal, gap analysis and targeted Bitesize learning are used responsively to develop subject knowledge and SEND pedagogy while protecting workload and professional agency. Leaders do not evaluate professional learning through attendance or staff confidence alone; they test whether changed adult practice alters pupils' experience and achievement. External quality assurance provides strong evidence that this development translates into consistently highly effective classroom practice: during one 2025/26 SIP visit, over 70% of teaching observed was judged exceptional, with particular strengths in therapeutic integration, staff knowledge of pupils and precisely tailored support; teaching was highly effective in all ten lessons observed during the Summer 2026 review. This is triangulated with pupil-level evidence such as the rapid improvement in Post-16 written output following teacher/OT refinement and the improved access secured through adapted phonics, demonstrating that professional learning leads to changes in teaching that pupils can experience and benefit from.

Professional curiosity is an exceptional and sustained feature of the school's improvement culture. Since 2021 every teacher has engaged in class-based practitioner enquiry, with 95 completed projects informing refinements to teaching, communication, regulation, metacognition and independence; the Northumbria University research partnership provides external scrutiny and strengthens the school's contribution to research-informed SEND practice.

Cleaswell Hill uses its expertise beyond the school through Fusion, NEN, university, ITT and partner-school work, while deliberately bringing external learning back into internal practice. Between March 2025 and May 2026, more than 2,200 practitioners and professionals accessed Fusion support; 1,524 completed NEN training and advisory work reached 13 external settings. This reciprocal system leadership disseminates specialist neuroinclusive pedagogy and contributes to improvement across SEND settings. External ITT evaluation provides further evidence of impact: Three Rivers reports that Cleaswell Hill's contribution has increased trainee teachers' capacity and

confidence beyond programme expectations and is influencing practice in other schools. Northumberland SEN Transport reports a reduction in complaints following its decision to mandate NEN training for drivers and passenger assistants. Leaders use feedback and external learning from these partnerships to refine provision within Cleaswell Hill as well as supporting improvement beyond the school.

Leaders recognise remaining variation rather than allowing an exceptional judgement to obscure it. Summer 2026 quality assurance identified specific opportunities to refine visual communication, challenge, formative assessment, independence, prior-learning awareness and staff deployment; these are already incorporated within professional learning and implementation planning, demonstrating leaders' continual drive to sustain and extend exceptional practice.

Securing Strong Foundations for All Pupils

Leaders prioritise keeping up wherever possible and act rapidly when foundational knowledge is insecure. Frequent assessment and small-step measures identify precisely what pupils have secured and what requires further teaching, enabling additional practice, intervention or specialist input before gaps become entrenched; for pupils making non-linear progress, gains in fluency, independence, maintenance and generalisation are identified and built upon. This process demonstrably changes provision when pupils do not respond as expected. During Spring 2026, 22 of 24 pupils receiving targeted academic intervention made progress; leaders undertook deeper review for the two pupils who did not and changed the intervention rather than allowing the same approach to continue. This demonstrates that assessment is being used to alter pupils' learning trajectories, not simply to record them.

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Language, vocabulary and communication are defining strengths and are developed deliberately across every pathway and subject. Pre-teaching, modelling, repetition, Core and Fringe Boards, Total Communication, speech, signing, symbols and AAC enable pupils to acquire high-frequency and subject-specific vocabulary, articulate ideas in their most effective mode of communication, listen and engage with others and access increasingly complex learning.

Reading is a sustained strength: since 2022, systematic synthetic phonics has been rigorously implemented and intelligently adapted to developmental, language and communication need without compromising its sequence. Termly assessment, precisely matched reading material and rapid intervention develop decoding, fluency, confidence and comprehension, while Launching into Literacy and functional reading pathways ensure pupils requiring different developmental routes continue to progress towards reading independence and wider curriculum access. Summer 2026 assessment provides strong evidence that this differentiated model is securing progress across different starting points: 23 of 24 pupils (96%) following the adapted multisensory SSP route made measurable progress in at least one assessed area, while 28 of 32 pupils (88%) following structured ELS made measurable progress. This progress is translating into movement through the literacy curriculum rather than pupils remaining indefinitely within intervention: within the identified 2025/26 transition group, all five pupils moving from Phase 5 phonics into Year 2 spelling reached 100% in phoneme recognition, blending and high-frequency-word recognition by the end of Summer 2026. Where progress is less secure, assessment leads directly to regrouping, adaptation or targeted intervention rather than gaps being allowed to become entrenched. This

expertise extends beyond Cleaswell Hill: phonics leaders support mainstream and specialist settings to maintain fidelity while intelligently adapting systematic synthetic phonics for pupils with complex SEND.

For pupils in the earliest stages of learning and KS1, curriculum and teaching deliberately secure communication, interaction, early literacy and mathematical knowledge as prerequisites for later learning. Pathway-specific developmental assessment and baseline information connect coherently into Launching Into, ensuring teaching starts from precisely identified prerequisite knowledge and skills. High-quality adult interaction, modelling, scaffolding, continuous provision, stories, songs, rhymes, shared books and repeated practice enable pupils to acquire, consolidate and generalise small but significant steps in learning.

Spelling, handwriting, written output and mathematical fluency are taught systematically but with exceptional responsiveness to individual need. ELS spelling, explicit pre-writing and handwriting teaching, therapy-informed visual-motor support, assistive technology and alternative recording methods sit alongside carefully sequenced number, counting, calculation, time, size and shape teaching, using manipulatives, precise mathematical vocabulary, modelling, repetition and functional application. The impact is increasingly measurable: in Summer 2026, 32 of 33 pupils (97%) accessing the ELS Year 2 Spelling Programme made progress and all 50 pupils following the Year 3 and Year 4 Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge programme progressed. At the later end of the learning sequence, all 12 AQA Entry Level Mathematics entries and all five GCSE Mathematics entries resulted in an achieved qualification in 2026, demonstrating that foundational learning can develop into increasingly ambitious accredited outcomes.

For older pupils who have not yet secured the communication, reading, writing or mathematical foundations required for their next stage, assessment precisely identifies prerequisite knowledge without lowering expectations. Age-respectful targeted teaching, flexible grouping, functional literacy and numeracy, repetition and specialist intervention enable pupils to address gaps and progress towards increasingly ambitious curriculum and accreditation routes; leaders regularly evaluate whether this additional support is having its intended impact.

Where pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, leaders distinguish language acquisition from SEND and maintain high expectations by recognising pupils' existing linguistic competence. English proficiency assessment informs structured opportunities for interaction, explicit vocabulary teaching, modelling, repetition and access to systematic synthetic phonics.

School and Subject Curriculum

The three pathway curricula are coherently planned so that pupils build knowledge and skills sequentially and cumulatively from their individual starting points. Engagement provides a developmentally sequenced specialist curriculum; Core combines subject knowledge with transferable and functional learning through a spiral model; Extended provides increasingly knowledge-rich, subject-specific and accreditation-aware learning, creating clear progression towards future education and adulthood.

Curriculum structures deliberately provide time for pupils to revisit, practise and generalise important learning rather than progressing superficially through content. Spiral sequencing, overlearning, retrieval and repeated application enable pupils to encounter important concepts at increasing levels of complexity, while assessment identifies where additional time or re-teaching is needed.

Subject-specific rigour is maintained alongside adaptation. Long-term plans, progression frameworks, subject vocabulary and increasingly specialist teaching ensure pupils acquire the distinctive knowledge and ways of thinking associated with different subjects; subject leaders use curriculum conversations, diagnostic review and monitoring to evaluate whether intended subject learning is actually being secured. The resulting ambition is evident in the breadth of later accredited achievement: in 2026 every GCSE entry across six distinct subjects—English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Statistics and PE—resulted in an achieved qualification. This demonstrates that SEND adaptation is enabling pupils to access and succeed within increasingly demanding subject-specific learning rather than reducing the curriculum to generic skills.

Curriculum decisions are refined over time in response to evidence rather than being preserved because they are established practice. Leaders have adapted pathway structures, foundation curriculum design, assessment approaches and teaching organisation where pupil outcomes, engagement, cognitive-science evidence, staff insight or governor/SIP challenge indicate that previous approaches are no longer sufficiently effective. The adapted SSP route, revised Post-16 written-output teaching and changes to intervention following non-response exemplify this approach: leaders identify the barrier, alter curriculum or pedagogy and then check whether the pupil can access or demonstrate more learning. Curriculum responsiveness is therefore evidenced through changed pupil outcomes rather than through curriculum redesign alone.

From 14+, curriculum sequencing becomes increasingly explicit in relation to qualifications, vocational learning, independence and destination. Alignment between the main site and Appleby Centre through linked teaching, shared planning and accreditation pathways from Entry Level to GCSE provides continuity and enables pupils to understand and progress towards meaningful future routes. The impact is increasingly visible at the point pupils leave: 2026 outcomes show successful achievement across a broad range of GCSE, Entry Level and vocational routes, while school tracking records 100% of 2024/25 leavers entering positive onward destinations. This demonstrates that curriculum sequencing is resulting in pupils leaving with qualifications, functional knowledge and increasingly appropriate routes into further education, training, employment or supported adult provision.

Curriculum innovation extends beyond adapting existing provision: where leaders identify gaps in available accreditation or progression routes, they work with external partners to create solutions. Evidence of strong pupil interest alongside the absence of an appropriate SEND horticulture qualification led Cleaswell Hill to work with the Royal Horticultural Society to develop an Entry 3/Level 1 course, strengthening progression towards relevant college, vocational and employment pathways.

Teaching

Teaching is underpinned by an exceptional culture of evidence-informed practice and a sophisticated understanding of how pupils with complex SEND learn. Explicit instruction, modelling, scaffolding, retrieval, repetition, metacognition and carefully faded support are intelligently selected rather than mechanically applied; sustained practitioner enquiry continually tests these approaches in the context of the pupils actually being taught. External quality assurance provides strong validation of typicality: over 70% of teaching observed during SIP evaluation was judged exceptional, with particular strengths in therapeutic integration, staff knowledge of pupils and precisely tailored support. Crucially, this quality is visible in what changes for pupils: assessment-led adaptation has enabled pupils who were not progressing through standard phonics to make measurable gains, students previously constrained by written-output barriers to demonstrate improved learning within two weeks, and pupils facing complex barriers

to participate with increasing independence. Teaching quality is therefore evaluated through changed pupil capability, not simply through the quality of adult practice.

Teachers and higher-level teaching assistants have strong specialist and subject knowledge and share a secure understanding of pathway intent, curriculum sequence and assessment. Subject and pathway leaders strengthen expertise through collaborative planning, modelling, coaching and targeted professional learning, while specialists support increasingly demanding subject and qualification teaching; linked plans, progression frameworks and assessment criteria create a coherent line from curriculum intent to classroom implementation.

Teachers and higher-level teaching assistants present learning explicitly and accessibly and check understanding systematically. Carefully structured language, modelling, questioning, Blank Levels, appropriate communication systems, practical demonstration and formative assessment enable staff to identify misconceptions and adapt explanations, pace, challenge, prompting or task demands in real time; observation evidence confirms strong knowledge of learners and effective questioning as established strengths.

Resources are selected and adapted to enable pupils to achieve the intended curriculum goals rather than merely complete activities. Visual supports, communication resources, manipulatives, knowledge organisers, practical resources and appropriate technology make important concepts accessible and allow pupils to demonstrate understanding while reducing unnecessary cognitive, communication or recording demands.

Teaching is deliberately structured so that important knowledge is remembered, connected and increasingly applied independently. Teachers identify prerequisite and essential knowledge, use retrieval, feedback, repetition and overlearning, and sequence new learning from what pupils already know towards clear subject, pathway and accreditation end points; practical and real-world application supports generalisation beyond the original learning context.

Assessment is inseparable from teaching and is used with exceptional precision to determine starting points, check understanding and identify gaps. Earwig, formative assessment, EHCP and PLIM evidence, questioning, moderation and progress review show what pupils know, remember and can do, including non-linear gains; teachers respond with timely re-teaching, additional practice, increased challenge, intervention or adaptation and evaluate whether this secures improvement. For example, scrutiny of written output for Entry Level Post-16 students led teachers and OT to refine teaching and recording approaches, with measurable improvement evident within two weeks. At whole-school level the same principle is visible within targeted intervention: 22 of 24 pupils made progress during Spring 2026 and provision was changed for both pupils who did not. Assessment therefore has a direct consequence for pupils: ineffective approaches are not allowed to persist, while successful approaches are consolidated and extended.

Inclusive Curriculum and Teaching

Staff identify and remove barriers to achievement with exceptional precision, producing transformational changes for pupils facing the greatest barriers, including disadvantaged pupils and those known or previously known to social care. Formative assessment, EHCPs, PLIMs, therapy evidence, pupil response, attendance, behaviour and family insight shape real-time adaptations, enabling pupils to develop stronger knowledge, communication, regulation, participation and independence. Leaders test sustained impact through progress, cohort analysis and longitudinal case sampling: Pupil Premium PLIM achievement moved from 74% compared with 79% for non-Pupil Premium pupils in Autumn 2024 to 81% compared with 79% by Spring 2026, while Spring 2026 curriculum achievement was also higher for Pupil Premium pupils at 79% compared with 75% for non-Pupil Premium pupils. Summer 2026 case sampling then traced a looked-after pupil from

baseline through attainment, progress, attendance and assessed need and found clear evidence of significant progress from the pupil's starting point. Together, this evidence shows that disadvantage and wider vulnerability are not simply being accommodated: barriers are being removed sufficiently well for these pupils to participate and achieve at least as strongly as their peers and, in individual cases, to change their longer-term learning trajectory.

Inclusive curriculum and teaching draw explicitly on high-quality research, specialist clinical expertise and evidence about the individual pupil rather than generic SEND approaches. NEN-informed neuroinclusive practice, therapy assessment, metacognitive evidence and analysis of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils are translated into classroom decisions and continually evaluated, ensuring that professional judgement remains responsive to what works for each learner.

Additional adults are deployed purposefully to increase access to high-quality teacher-led learning while reducing dependency over time. Teaching assistants use skilled communication, regulation, therapeutic and scaffolding strategies and deliberately fade prompting as pupils become more secure; approaches such as Quiet Classroom demonstrate how changing adult interaction can increase active engagement and independence.

Reasonable adjustments are embedded as pupils' normal way of accessing ambitious learning rather than being added retrospectively. SaLT and OT assessment informs communication systems, oracy development, sensory regulation, positioning, assistive technology, written output, access arrangements, environments and teaching approaches, enabling pupils to participate and demonstrate knowledge with increasing independence; therapy assessment, EHCP/PLIM progress and case studies evaluate the sustained impact of these adaptations.

Where substantial curriculum adaptation is required, it is coherently planned around ambitious progression rather than becoming a reduced curriculum offer. Flexible, age-respectful pathways support progression from highly individualised or adult-supported learning towards greater peer interaction, shared learning, community participation and independence, while protecting appropriate curriculum breadth, subject entitlement, Preparation for Adulthood and meaningful participation beyond the classroom. The transformational effect is most visible for pupils whose starting points include profound barriers to adult direction, shared space or community participation. External SIP case sampling identified Engagement pupils who had previously found adult direction extremely difficult but who progressed to travelling on local buses to community destinations. This represents more than successful participation in an activity: highly personalised curriculum and teaching have enabled pupils to transfer communication, regulation and independence into authentic contexts that previously appeared inaccessible.

Supporting Documentation	Quality Assurance Activities
- Three Pathway Rationales – Engagement, Core and Extended - Subject rationales, long-term plans and progression frameworks - Curriculum & Teaching Implementation Plan / Five-Year Strategy - Professional Learning & Development Programme and Theory of Change - Class-based practitioner research portfolio and Northumbria University research - Earwig, EHCP/PLIM and pathway assessment evidence	- Planned lesson observations and follow-up coaching/action planning - Learning walks across pathways, subjects and phases - Curriculum conversations with subject/pathway leaders and teachers - Subject diagnostic reviews and curriculum audits - Planning, work and Earwig scrutiny - Internal/external moderation and comparative judgement

• Moderation and assessment records • SaLT/OT assessments and integrated therapy evidence • Phonics/ELS, Launching Into Literacy and foundational-learning documentation • Accreditation pathways, qualification tracking and destination evidence • ECT/induction, appraisal and workforce-development records • Fusion Learning Hub / NEN partnership and impact evidence • Governor monitoring and SIP reports • Published professional contribution to the revised SENCO Handbook (autumn 2026), demonstrating dissemination of Cleaswell Hill's specialist practice in adaptation, therapy integration, healthcare planning, risk assessment and pupil independence.	• Termly pupil-progress and Pupil Strategy Meetings • Cohort analysis, including disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils • EHCP/PLIM and intervention-impact review • Therapy assessment and multidisciplinary case review • Pupil and family voice / longitudinal case sampling • ECT mentoring and external quality assurance • Governor monitoring and sustained SIP challenge • Evaluation of PL&D, practitioner enquiry, Fusion and NEN impact
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Next Steps (Including targets taken from 5-year plan)

Sustain and further refine the exceptional coherence and ambition of the three curriculum pathways as pupil need continues to evolve. Continue to sharpen cumulative subject knowledge, accreditation and challenge within Extended; functional and interdisciplinary application within Core; and highly personalised communication, regulation, life and living skills within Engagement, while maintaining strong alignment with therapy, EHCP outcomes and preparation for adulthood.

Deepen the impact of the school's distinctive foundational approaches to communication, cognition and independence. Build on the established Oracy project, written-output developments and interdisciplinary learning so that increasingly strong outcomes in communication, metacognition, confidence, independence and the transfer of learning into real-world contexts are captured systematically across all three pathways.

Sustain and extend the school's exceptional evidence-informed SEND pedagogy and professional learning culture. Further develop deliberate practice, instructional coaching, ECT development and class-based practitioner enquiry, using the Northumbria University partnership and research into metacognition to refine practice and demonstrate sustained impact on teaching quality and pupil outcomes.

Consolidate Cleaswell Hill's exceptional outward-facing system and civic leadership. Extend the impact of Fusion, NEN and university partnerships, including the developing Masters-level offer and dissemination of practitioner research, while systematically evaluating how this work improves practice across partner settings and continues to enrich provision within Cleaswell Hill.