

Section 2 – Overall Effectiveness
Safeguarding (see section for details)
Safeguarding is transformational because pupils with the greatest vulnerability are increasingly able to be heard, understood and protected through trusted relationships, accessible communication and responsive multi-agency support.
Inclusion (see section for details)
Inclusion is transformational because removing barriers changes what pupils with the greatest complexity are able to access, participate in and achieve, enabling greater communication, regulation, independence, belonging and readiness for adulthood.
Curriculum and Teaching (see section for details)
Curriculum and teaching are transformational because exceptional SEND pedagogy and highly personalised pathways change what pupils are able to learn, demonstrate and do independently from their individual starting points.
Achievement (see section for details)
Achievement is transformational where progress changes a pupil's future trajectory by increasing what they know, can do and can access, leading to greater independence, accreditation and successful preparation for the next stage.
Attendance and Behaviour (see section for details)
Attendance and behaviour are transformational because personalised relational and therapeutic support enables pupils to move from dysregulation, distress or reduced access towards safer, more sustained participation in school and learning.
Personal Development and Wellbeing (see section for details)
Personal development and wellbeing are transformational because pupils develop the confidence, communication, regulation, relationships and independence needed to belong, contribute and participate more fully in life beyond school.
Early Years
(no pupils are receiving EYFS provision at the time of self-evaluation)
Post 16 (see section for details)
Post-16 provision is transformational because personalised academic, vocational and Preparation for Adulthood pathways increase students' independence, qualifications, employability and access to meaningful future destinations.
Leadership and Governance (see section for details)
Leadership and governance are transformational because leaders continually reshape provision in response to changing need, secure improved outcomes for pupils and use Cleaswell's expertise to influence SEND practice beyond the school.

Developments since last inspection – June 2022
Cleaswell Hill was judged to remain Outstanding at its June 2022 inspection, with no areas for improvement identified. Inspectors found that pupils thrived within a culture of strong relationships and high expectations; behaviour was exceptional; pupils felt safe; the curriculum was highly ambitious and carefully sequenced; teaching was expertly adapted to individual SEND; therapy

and pastoral provision were integral to the school; and pupils were prepared effectively for their next steps. Since then, leaders and governors have deliberately sustained, deepened and extended these established strengths through the Five-Year Development Plan launched in June 2022, responding proactively to significant growth and increasing complexity within the pupil population.

Cleaswell Hill continues to experience a significant increase in the severity and complexity of pupil need. Leaders have adapted provision intelligently so that pupils with highly complex profiles can remain successfully educated within their local communities. This civic commitment supports family stability, strengthens local SEND sufficiency and reduces reliance on more distant or restrictive specialist placements, while enabling pupils to remain connected to their families and communities.

The school has grown from 194 pupils in 2022 to 255 pupils in September 2026, an increase of approximately 31%, while continuing to provide for a wholly EHCP cohort with increasingly diverse and complex SEND. During 2025/26, the roll remained at or around the school's published capacity of 261 places, with 261 pupils recorded at the autumn SIP reference point, 263 in spring and 261 at the summer reference point. Provision has evolved accordingly. Cleaswell Hill is now a two-site school, with the Appleby Centre providing a distinct transition environment for older learners through qualifications, vocational learning, work-related experiences, community access and Preparation for Adulthood. The curriculum has been extensively refined into coherent Engagement, Core and Extended pathways; integrated SaLT and OT are now deeply embedded across curriculum, teaching, inclusion, behaviour and assessment; and assessment has developed through curriculum and PLIM tracking, moderation, comparative judgement and use of an online evidence system to capture academic, functional, small-step and non-linear achievement with increasing precision.

Leadership capacity and professional expertise have developed substantially alongside this growth. Distributed phase, pathway, curriculum, therapy and safeguarding leadership, strengthened succession planning and an increasingly coherent professional-learning model have supported organisational resilience. Professional curiosity has become an embedded feature of the school: 95 practitioner-enquiry projects have been completed, supported by collaboration with Northumbria University, with findings informing teaching, communication, regulation, metacognition and independence. Cleaswell Hill has also moved significantly towards the civic and system-leadership ambition established in the original Five-Year Plan. Fusion Learning Hub, Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN), university and ITT partnerships, local-authority collaboration and reciprocal work with other schools now extend the school's specialist SEND expertise well beyond Cleaswell Hill; between March 2025 and May 2026 alone, more than 2,200 practitioners and professionals accessed Fusion support, of which 1,524 completed CPD-accredited NEN training, and advisory work reached 13 external settings. External learning is deliberately brought back into school so that this outward-facing work continues to strengthen provision for Cleaswell Hill pupils.

This sustained strategic development has enabled Cleaswell Hill to respond successfully to substantial organisational growth and increasingly complex need without losing the strengths identified in 2022. The school enters the final phase of its Five-Year Strategy with increasingly coherent curriculum pathways, embedded integrated therapy, stronger assessment and professional learning, expanded Post-16 and Preparation for Adulthood provision, and an established regional role in SEND improvement. The final phase is focused on the areas leaders already know require further work: strengthening longitudinal assessment and use of an online evidencing system, refining Core provision, deepening careers and stakeholder evidence, managing capacity and premises pressures and sustaining leadership through succession.

Distinctive Strengths

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is deeply embedded in the culture of Cleaswell Hill and enables pupils with the greatest vulnerabilities to be understood, heard and protected. Staff recognise that pupils with complex SEND may communicate distress, harm or fear through changes in behaviour, regulation or presentation rather than through spoken disclosure, and trusted relationships, Total Communication and adapted pupil voice provide accessible routes for them to seek help. A distributed and well-supervised DSL model, rigorous case review, multi-agency working and strong governor and external scrutiny ensure concerns are identified early, acted on promptly and followed through. Safeguarding is reinforced through the curriculum, online safety, Prevent, safer recruitment and CPOMS analysis, while contextual information and Early Help enable leaders to respond as risks and family circumstances change. The result is that safeguarding does more than respond to incidents: it reduces vulnerability and enables pupils to remain safe, included and able to engage in education and wider school life.

Inclusion

Inclusion at Cleaswell Hill changes what pupils with the greatest complexity are able to access, participate in and achieve. Stage-not-age pathways, Total Communication, integrated therapy, highly adapted teaching and precise assess-plan-do-review systems remove barriers without lowering ambition, enabling pupils to communicate more effectively, regulate more successfully, learn with increasing independence and experience a strong sense of belonging. Assessment, therapy evidence, pupil and family voice and multi-agency case sampling identify barriers before they become entrenched and show how provision is changing individual trajectories, including for disadvantaged pupils and those known or previously known to social care. Families are genuine partners in provision and transition. This expertise also reaches beyond Cleaswell through Fusion, NEN, universities, local-authority and partner-school work, with practice developed within the school increasingly informing inclusion elsewhere while external learning continues to strengthen provision for Cleaswell pupils.

Curriculum and Teaching

Curriculum and teaching at Cleaswell Hill change 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 deliberately sequenced foundations in communication, language, reading, writing and mathematics enable pupils to access increasingly complex learning. Specialist SEND and subject expertise, explicit instruction, modelling, retrieval, metacognition, adaptive communication, integrated SaLT/OT and carefully faded support enable pupils to retain, apply and generalise knowledge rather than simply complete activities. When an established approach does not work, leaders change the route rather than lower the destination: adapted phonics, targeted intervention and teacher/therapist collaboration demonstrate how assessment leads directly to changed teaching and improved pupil outcomes. A deeply embedded culture of coaching, practitioner enquiry, university collaboration, NEN and Fusion continually strengthens practice, while external quality assurance confirms that highly effective, responsive teaching is typical across the school.

Achievement

Achievement at Cleaswell Hill is defined by what pupils can increasingly know, communicate, apply and do independently, and by how this changes the opportunities available to them at

their next stage. From highly individual developmental starting points through to GCSE and vocational accreditation, pupils build academic, functional, communication and independence knowledge and skills that are increasingly retained and generalised beyond the context in which they were first taught. Whole-school curriculum achievement increased from 70.8% in Autumn 2024 to 77% by Spring 2026 and whole-school PLIM achievement reaching 80.7% across the year; disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as strongly as their peers. In 2026, every GCSE entry across English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Statistics and PE resulted in an achieved qualification, alongside successful Entry Level and vocational routes. These outcomes connect directly to Preparation for Adulthood, independence and future destinations, with school tracking recording 100% of 2024/25 and 2025/2026 leavers entering positive onward destinations. The significance is not simply that targets or qualifications are achieved, but that pupils leave Cleaswell able to access learning, community life and future opportunities that were previously beyond their reach.

Attendance and Behaviour

Attendance and behaviour at Cleaswell Hill are built around understanding what prevents an individual pupil from feeling safe, regulated and able to participate successfully in education. Leaders combine high expectations with relational, therapeutic and family-centred support, recognising behaviour and absence as information about underlying communication, sensory, emotional, health or contextual barriers rather than simply problems to be managed. Pupils are known well and supported through the Cleaswell Code – Ready, Respectful, Safe – alongside restorative, trauma-informed and neuroinclusive practice, integrated therapy and personalised regulation strategies. This increasingly preventative approach is changing pupils' experience of school: recorded incidents reduced from 844 to 488 and restrictive physical interventions from 106 to 49 across 2025–26, while attendance remained above the published state-funded special-school comparator and persistent absence reduced across the year. For individual pupils this means more time safely engaged in education, less reliance on restrictive intervention and greater capacity to regulate, learn and participate independently.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

Personal development and wellbeing at Cleaswell Hill enable pupils to move from participation towards increasing agency, independence and contribution within school and the wider community. PSHE/RSHE, Preparation for Adulthood, integrated therapy, pastoral support, enrichment, pupil voice, careers and community experiences operate as one coherent entitlement, developing confidence, resilience, self-advocacy, relationships, regulation and independence from pupils' individual starting points. Enrichment Passports, accessible pupil voice and personalised adjustments ensure that disadvantage, SEND or social-care involvement do not narrow pupils' experiences. The impact is particularly powerful for pupils facing the greatest barriers: longitudinal evidence includes pupils who previously struggled to tolerate adult direction progressing to use local buses and access community destinations, substantially changing their independence, confidence and quality of life. Pupils increasingly shape provision, volunteer, participate in enterprise and civic activity and contribute to the school's inclusive culture rather than simply receiving support.

Post 16

Post-16 at Cleaswell Hill is designed around the adult life each student is working towards. Across Engagement, Core and Extended and between the main site and Appleby Centre, personalised study programmes combine appropriate accreditation from Entry Level to GCSE with English and mathematics, work-related learning, RSHE, integrated therapy, community participation and

Preparation for Adulthood. Teaching removes communication, sensory, physical and regulation barriers so students can demonstrate what they know with increasing independence and apply learning beyond the classroom. In 2026, every GCSE entry across the six subjects entered resulted in an achieved qualification alongside successful Entry Level and vocational routes, while Summer 2026 PfA outcomes showed 91% of Core, 88% of Extended and 91% of Appleby targets met. These outcomes translate into greater autonomy and future choice: students increasingly travel independently, participate in authentic vocational and community experiences and progress into destinations matched to their strengths and aspirations, with school tracking recording 100% of 2024/25 and 2025/2026 leavers entering positive onward destinations.

Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance at Cleaswell Hill are defined by a sustained capacity to understand changing need, act early and reshape provision when evidence shows that pupils require something different. Forensic self-evaluation is translated into the Five-Year Strategy, annual Horizons and focused implementation planning, linking decisions about curriculum, therapy, staffing, assessment, premises and professional learning directly to pupils' access, achievement, independence and quality of life. Leadership is deliberately distributed, with staff at all levels developing expertise through coaching, professional dialogue, practitioner enquiry and university collaboration, while governors combine first-hand monitoring, strategic data, SIP scrutiny and external assurance to test whether improvement is making a meaningful difference. Cleaswell's influence also extends beyond its own pupils through Fusion, NEN, ITT, university research, local-authority and partner-schoolwork, including contributions to published SEND guidance. The result is a school that not only responds successfully to increasing complexity but continually develops, tests and shares specialist practice that improves opportunities for pupils within Cleaswell and contributes to better SEND provision beyond it.

Next Steps - targeted areas for further consideration include:

Safeguarding

Continued evaluation of safeguarding, online-safety and Prevent arrangements will sustain the school's securely embedded safeguarding culture as contextual risks and statutory expectations evolve. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, leaders will use CPOMS analysis, pupil voice, case sampling, DSL supervision, multi-agency working and governor and external assurance to test impact, while securing the transition to the new Lead DSL and ensuring KCSIE 2026 is understood and consistently applied by staff and governors. Any learning from the 2025–26 action plans will inform a sharply focused 2026–27 plan so that safeguarding remains vigilant, preventative and responsive.

Inclusion

As a result of leaders continuing to refine already exceptional inclusive practice, assessment, pupil and family voice, therapy evidence and case sampling will provide increasingly precise evidence of sustained and transformational impact across all pathways. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, co-production and the developing Family Partner role will further strengthen family involvement, transitions and personalised ambition, while continued evaluation of Fusion, NEN, university and partner-school work will demonstrate the impact of Cleaswell Hill's civic and system leadership and ensure that reciprocal learning continues to strengthen practice within the school.

Curriculum and Teaching

As a result of leaders further refining the exceptional coherence and ambition of the three curriculum pathways, pupils will sustain and deepen cumulative subject knowledge and increasingly apply learning across subjects and authentic contexts, with Oracy, written output and metacognition remaining particular areas of strategic development. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, evidence-informed SEND pedagogy will continue to be strengthened through coaching, practitioner enquiry and the Northumbria University partnership, while the impact of Fusion, NEN and wider system leadership will be evaluated increasingly precisely within Cleaswell Hill and beyond.

Achievement

Building on consistently strong achievement, the precision and proportionality of pathway-specific assessment will be further refined through an online evidencing system, moderation, comparative judgement and longitudinal case sampling so that linear, small-step and non-linear progress is increasingly visible without creating unnecessary workload. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, the golden thread between EHCP outcomes, curriculum achievement, therapy and Preparation for Adulthood will be further strengthened, increasing pupil and family ownership of goals and making vocational, enterprise and wider holistic achievement more visible. This will provide an increasingly rich longitudinal evidence base demonstrating the sustained impact of already strong achievement across pathways and pupil groups.

Attendance and Behaviour

Building on consistently strong attendance and behaviour, increasingly precise pupil-level analysis will enable leaders to demonstrate which attendance, relational and therapeutic approaches have the greatest sustained impact for pupils facing the most significant barriers. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, the Family Partner and multi-agency contribution will further strengthen work with vulnerable pupils and families, particularly where persistent, severe or emotionally based absence is present, while stronger pre/post evidence will demonstrate the impact of relational and therapeutic practice on regulation, engagement, attendance and the already significant reduction in restrictive intervention. Leaders and governors will continue to use triangulated evidence to sustain positive trajectories and respond rapidly where individual circumstances change.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

As a result of further embedding our online evidencing system personal-development tracking, Enrichment Passports, Preparation for Adulthood evidence, accessible pupil voice and longitudinal case sampling, leaders will make the sustained and transformational impact of an already exceptional personal-development offer increasingly visible over time. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, pupils and families will have an increasingly influential role in shaping personal goals, enrichment and wider provision, while civic, community, cultural and sustainability opportunities will continue to develop pupils' independence, belonging and contribution. The Strategic Careers Plan will further strengthen learner and stakeholder voice, labour-market understanding and curriculum-careers connections so that the wider exceptional offer remains ambitious, equitable and closely connected to future life.

Post 16

Building on consistently strong Post-16 provision, the breadth, progression and evaluated impact of work experience, employer encounters and community-based learning will continue to develop so that every student's programme remains closely matched to their strengths,

aspirations and intended adult destination. In line with the Year 5 Horizon, pathway-specific Preparation for Adulthood will be further embedded, particularly for Engagement learners, while increasingly coherent PfA, WRLE, careers and destination tracking will demonstrate sustained progress from individual starting points. Stronger cross-pathway transition planning and the development of authentic vocational environments, including the community café, will further strengthen employability, independence and successful transition into adult life.

Leadership and Governance

As a result of completing and evaluating the final Year 5 Horizon, leaders and governors will identify and carry forward the features that have secured exceptional standards into the school's next strategic cycle. Succession and distributed leadership will continue to strengthen organisational resilience, while the Theory of Change will make the relationship between professional learning, leadership action and pupil outcomes increasingly explicit. Cleaswell Hill will sustain and extend its civic and system leadership through Fusion, NEN, university, local-authority and partner-school work, with increasingly precise evaluation of external impact and reciprocal benefit. Governors will continue to use stakeholder voice, workforce evidence, external challenge and strategic data to ensure exceptional practice remains sustainable as pupil complexity and the wider SEND landscape evolve.