



Northumberland  
County Council

# Education and Skills Annual Report 2018/19



## Our Education and Skills Annual Report 2018/19

On behalf of Northumberland County Council I would like to thank all the teachers, support staff and partners in our schools, academies, colleges and pre-school settings for the superb support that they give to the children and young people of Northumberland as they make their way through our education system. We want to continue to build on the excellence that already exists in our education system, and is evident in every setting that I visit, by working even more closely with all of our teachers. We want Northumberland to provide one of the highest quality education systems in the country where all children make a great start in life, have outcomes that are better than they have been before and where young people have outstanding opportunities to pursue further education, university qualifications, apprenticeships or employment.

We have shown our commitment to work with all our partners to further improve pupil performance and to make Northumberland the best place to live and learn in. We recognise, however, that there continue to be challenges. Our impressive performance in the primary and early years does not yet translate into success later on in our secondary schools. OFSTED made it clear that we need to improve and enhance our offer for children and young people with special needs, a challenge that we have tackled head-on this year. In addition, more and more of our schools have embraced our call to be more inclusive and, as a consequence, good progress has been made in reducing exclusions across the county. I am extremely grateful to all of our schools, academies and settings for responding so positively to the challenges we set last year.

We have continued to make good progress in developing the North of Tyne Education Challenge and welcome the support that our schools have shown for this initiative. It will give us the chance to set our own educational priorities and to seek extensive additional funding from Westminster to develop them. In addition, the Borderlands initiative is committed to creating networks that improve access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and digital skills learning for learners. As a council, we have invested over £150m in school capital building projects.

It is an exciting time to be a child, young person and/or learner in Northumberland. I wish all of you, and your teachers, support staff and parents, a very successful 2019-20 academic year.

**Wayne Daley**  
**Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services**

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## Foreword

The vital importance of education, and more importantly a good education has been well researched and well documented.

Education improves life chances and contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

Improving the outcomes for all of our children and young people in Northumberland remains a priority across the County and for all of the agencies who provide services within the County and not just those found in education.

Our Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy and our Children and Young People Plan all highlight the desire for our children to achieve their best and to the best of their ability academically.

There has been much to celebrate this year, including:

- the growing number of schools that have been judged to be good or outstanding by OFSTED;
- the successful opening of new school buildings at Morpeth First School and Ponteland Primary School;
- the good start made in reducing the number of school exclusions following coordinated multi-agency work across the county.

We have risen up the regional and national ranks over the last three years but there is still a long way to go before we can be confident that we are providing a consistently good education and skills offer across all of the County.

Education issues occupy significant amounts of my working week but I have really enjoyed the interactions and challenges that this brings and look forward to the new opportunities that next year will bring.

**Cath McEvoy-Carr**  
**Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services**

## Introduction

I am delighted to present the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Northumberland Education and Skills Service. It provides an opportunity to reflect upon the successes and challenges that the 2018-19 academic year brought, and to look forward to the tasks ahead of us if we are to have one of the highest performing and most inclusive and equitable education systems in the country. Ultimately, our ambition is to improve the life chances of every child and young person in Northumberland.

In September 2018, the provision for children and young people with special educational needs in the Northumberland Local Area, which includes the local authority and the health service, was inspected by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission. The inspectors noted that, in the previous twelve months, there had been '...a determined drive to improve arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.' In addition, it was noted that '...leaders have an accurate understanding of the local area's effectiveness in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of this group of children and young people'.

It was also reported, however, that '... since 2014 (when the SEN reforms were introduced), the local area has made too little progress in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms.'

As a consequence, the Local Area was required to produce a SEND Written Statement of Action which details the ways in which we will collectively address the areas of weakness that the inspection highlighted. At the subsequent monitoring visits that took place through the year to gauge our progress, it was noted that our improvement strategy was having a positive impact and that we are making sound progress in all the areas that were highlighted as being of concern.

In addition, our bid to the Department for Education to open a new secondary SEND Free School to meet the needs of young people with autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs was successful. Six highly experienced school SEN Coordinators have been seconded to work with us on a part-time basis in order to support all our teachers in the county. We are reviewing the support that we offer our schools for children and young people with SEND to ensure that it is universal,



affordable and even more effective. Finally, in January 2019, we opened the new Ashdale Special School in Ashington to further meet the demand for specialist provision that we have in the south-east of the county.

We also want to reduce the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions taking place in Northumberland schools. The council's Families and Children Services Scrutiny Committee set up an Exclusions Task and Finish Group which met six times during the year and took evidence from Northumberland schools and local authorities in other areas in order to develop strategies to reduce exclusions. In addition, the local authority's Inclusion Team successfully supported many pupils that were at risk of exclusion. Consequently, permanent exclusions in the county in 2018-19 reduced by 28% and fixed-term exclusions by 26%. Northumberland still has one of the highest rates of exclusion in the country, but genuine progress has been made this year towards our target of fewer than twenty permanent exclusions by 2022 and single figures by 2023.

We continue to make good progress towards our ambition of ensuring that every school and academy in Northumberland is judged to be good or outstanding. The percentage of good and outstanding first and primary schools is now above the national average.

This has been driven by high quality school leadership and increasingly strong pupil outcomes at the end of the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. These outcomes are now amongst the highest in the country. However, outcomes at the end of secondary education generally and, in particular, for those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, are too variable and are not consistently strong across the county.

Encouragingly, good improvements in pupil GCSE outcomes were seen at both Ashington Academy and Blyth Academy, two of our schools currently judged as being either 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' by OFSTED. In addition four of our secondary schools will be supported by the Opportunity North-East initiative.

We have the potential to be one of the highest performing local authorities in the country and I believe that this report indicates that we have continued to make good progress in 2018-19 towards this target.

Finally, I would like to thank our schools, academies and partners and the elected members and officers of the council who go to such great lengths every day to support and encourage all the children and young people in Northumberland to have the very best start in life.

**Dean Jackson**  
**Director of Education and Skills**



## Executive Summary

1. Over 98% of early-years providers in Northumberland have been judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, 75% of children have reached a good level of development, which is significantly above the national average.
2. The percentage of first and primary schools judged to be good or outstanding in Northumberland (88%) is above the national average. In addition, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in all of reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is broadly similar to that seen nationally.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, both attainment and progress, as measured by Progress 8 and Attainment 8, remains just below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving a strong GCSE pass in both English and mathematics (43%) was in line with the national average but both the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils remains a concern, being much lower than that seen nationally.
4. Education outcomes for looked after children and care leavers over the last three years have shown improvement in most measures, but particularly in the Early Years Stage and at Key Stage 2.
5. The 'September Guarantee', a national arrangement to ensure that all 16- and 17-year-olds are offered a suitable place in education or training by their local authority by the end of September, remains strong with 97.9% (national: 94.5%) of the cohort in Northumberland receiving an offer. By the end of the year, the percentage of 16-17-year-olds in the county who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or their status is not known reduced again this year to 4.4% of the cohort (national: 5.5%).
6. The Local Area SEND inspection identified three key areas of development:
  - Improving the arrangements for jointly planning and commissioning services for children and young people with SEND;
  - Ensuring mainstream schools are more consistent in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND;
  - Improving outcomes for pupils with SEND and successfully preparing them for adult life
7. A refreshed model for improving multi-agency partnership working between the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) and schools was introduced in 2018-19.
8. School attendance in Northumberland in 2017-18, the last published data, was better than the national average. Primary absence was 4.1% (national: 4.2%) and secondary absence was 5.4% (national: 5.5%).
9. In 2018-19, permanent exclusions were reduced by 28% and fixed-term exclusions by 26% from 2017-18.
10. In January 2019, according to the School Census, there were 55 community languages spoken in Northumberland schools in addition to English. The languages spoken by the most significant groups of bilingual pupils in the county's schools are Polish, Chinese and Arabic.
11. The number of schools in the county converting to academies continues to grow and, in the 2018/19 academic year, two new academy trusts, the Pele Trust in Ponteland and the Tyne Community Learning Trust in Prudhoe, were established.
12. The local authority was successful in its application to set up the first Northumberland SEND Free School for secondary pupils with ASD and SEMH, which will be on the Princess Louise site in Blyth.
13. In 2018-19, over £232m of dedicated schools grant was allocated to the county's 155 maintained schools and academies. In addition, over £30m was paid to a range of Special Educational Needs (SEN) providers. Just under 8000 children each day are provided with travel assistance to and from school.
14. The local authority invested £41m to maintain the schools' estate, grow school places and deliver projects to support school reorganisation. This included a combination of new builds, extensions, alterations, refurbishment and maintenance projects.
15. The relocation of Morpeth First School from its existing site at Goose Hill to the Loansdean site was completed in August 2019. A new £2m special educational needs provision, Ashdale, opened at the former Ashington High School Annexe to support 50 primary-age children with social, emotional and mental health needs. £3.1m was allocated to support projects in Blyth, including an extension to New Delaval Primary School and a modular new-build at Horton Grange Primary School. A £200k investment at Collingwood Special School was provided to provide 6th form provision and to facilitate growth within the main school.

## Early Years Foundation Stage

1. Northumberland has a diverse mix of early-years providers educating children aged from 0-5 years including private, voluntary and independent nurseries, childminders and provisions attached to school. There are 486 Ofsted registered early-years providers in Northumberland, 339 of which take funded education children.
2. Of these early-years providers, 98% are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding, which is above the national average. This indicates the strength of early years provision in Northumberland.
3. All providers educate their children within the principles and content of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Profile, an informal but reported assessment at the end of the Reception year, found that 75% of children in Northumberland gained a good level of development, which is 3% higher than the national average. This is the fourth consecutive year of being above the national average.
4. Girls continue to outperform boys at the end of the Foundation Stage. Around a third of children with SEND achieve a good level of development. The disadvantaged gap, defined as the difference in outcomes between those children entitled to free school meals and the rest, has closed significantly by 7% but remains too large at 16%.



5. 62.5% of looked after children achieved a good level of development which is significantly better than last year (40%) and is higher than that of looked after children regionally (52%) and nationally (49%).
6. The local authority and early years settings have developed sufficient high-quality places for two-year olds across the county, many of whom are in new school units. The most disadvantaged children in Northumberland access 15 hours of educational childcare as soon as they are two years old. Currently, 90% of eligible two-year-olds take up this entitlement which is the third highest participation rate in the country. Take up rates in early years education have increased in each of the last five years and are now significantly above the national average. The three and four-year old take up in Northumberland is now the highest in the country.
7. Challenges remain for the early-years sector. The attainment of boys, disadvantaged children and those children with SEND is improving but the gaps with others are still too large at the end of the Foundation Stage. The under-achievement of disadvantaged children must be addressed urgently across the early years as those attainment gaps, identified as early as five years old, rarely close throughout the rest of the child's education.

# Primary Education (Key Stages 1 & 2)

1. In Northumberland, 88% of primary schools are now judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding (August 19) which is above the national average.
2. Phonics teaching is strong across the county, with 84% of Year 1 children meeting the expected standard in the statutory check, which is above the national average and reflects a five-year improving trend. Phonics outcomes for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or SEND are improving over time. For disadvantaged pupils, outcomes continue to slightly decrease each year, a trend that needs to be reversed. In 2019, 50% of looked after children achieved the phonics standard, which is lower than last year (75%), albeit with small cohorts of less than ten children in both years.
3. The teaching of core subjects is good and at the end of Key Stage 1, reading, writing and mathematics attainment is above the national average. The percentage of children attaining at the higher standard is also above the national average. This has been the pattern for the last four years. Girls continue to outperform boys in each subject. The disadvantaged gap, however, remains and is slowly increasing.
4. Outcomes across Key Stage 2 are in line with the national average. There is, however, too much variation both between schools and within schools. The proportion of children who reached or exceeded the expected standard in all three of mathematics, reading and writing improved for the third year running and is now above the national average. This was driven by good improvements in mathematics. As in previous years, the disadvantaged gap remains too large, although it has closed over the last three years in mathematics. Boys continue to be behind girls in reading and writing, although they do catch up somewhat in mathematics. Mathematics attainment now matches the national average, which reflects the emphasis put on this subject by schools in 2018/19 to improve outcomes for pupils.

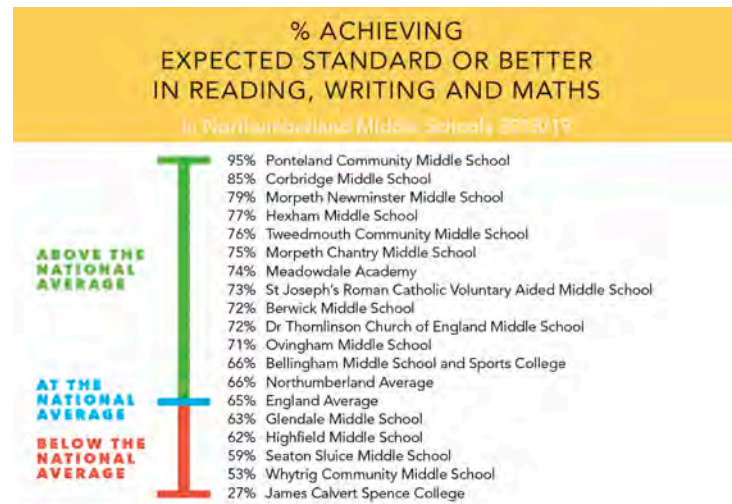
## HOW ARE OUR FIRST AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS GRADED BY OFSTED?



5. Pupils' progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is in line with the national average in each of reading, writing and mathematics. Key Stage 2 achievement for looked-after children has greatly improved, with 50% meeting the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths (from 30% in 2018). This is better than looked-after children both regionally (49%) and nationally (36%).
6. There are clear strengths in primary education in Northumberland but key areas for improvement have emerged. Maintaining above national average attainment in all three subjects is vital, as is continuing the improvement in outcomes for SEND learners, boys and disadvantaged children in both key stages. Early years providers and schools in Northumberland need to target their additional Pupil Premium funding far more effectively at the disadvantaged children it is provided for to diminish the advantage some children have over others because of socio-economic factors that they cannot control.



### 2018-19 Key Stage 2 Outcomes



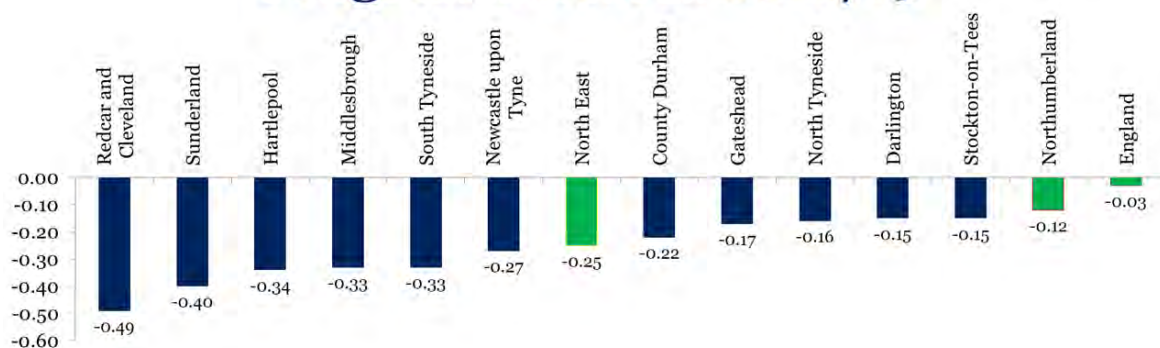


## Secondary Education (Key Stages 3 and 4)

1. Reforms to the GCSE examination system are virtually complete, which means that the vast majority of subjects utilise the grading scale of 1 (lowest) to 9 (highest), with assessment by examination only.
2. The progress made and the overall attainment in eight subjects (Progress 8 and Attainment 8) and the proportion of pupils achieving a “strong pass” (Grade 5+) in English and mathematics are the main accountability measures for schools and the local authority. The proportions of pupils entering and achieving the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and the average points score in EBacc subjects are also published accountability measures.
3. In 2019, Northumberland secondary schools achieved a Progress 8 score of -0.12 which, whilst a small decline from 2018, was the highest of the twelve north-east authorities.

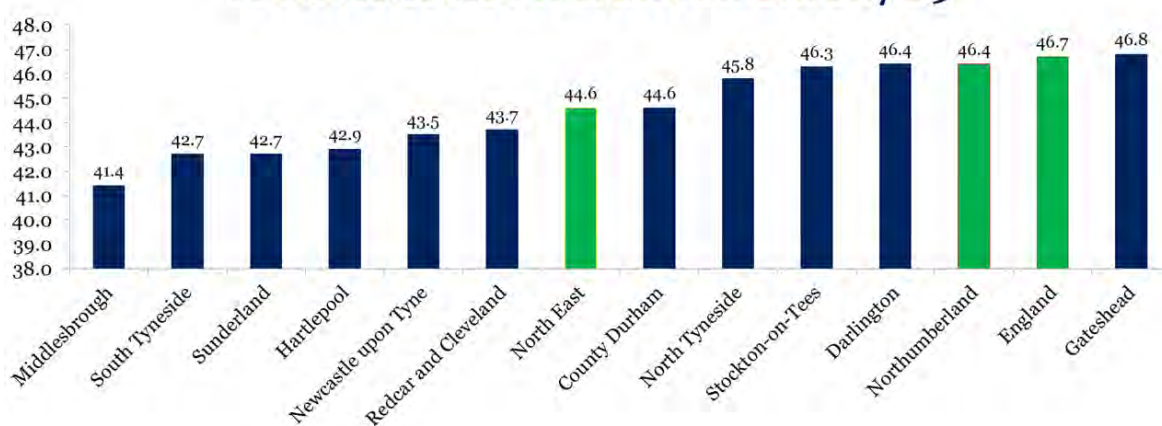


### Progress 8 Scores 2018/19



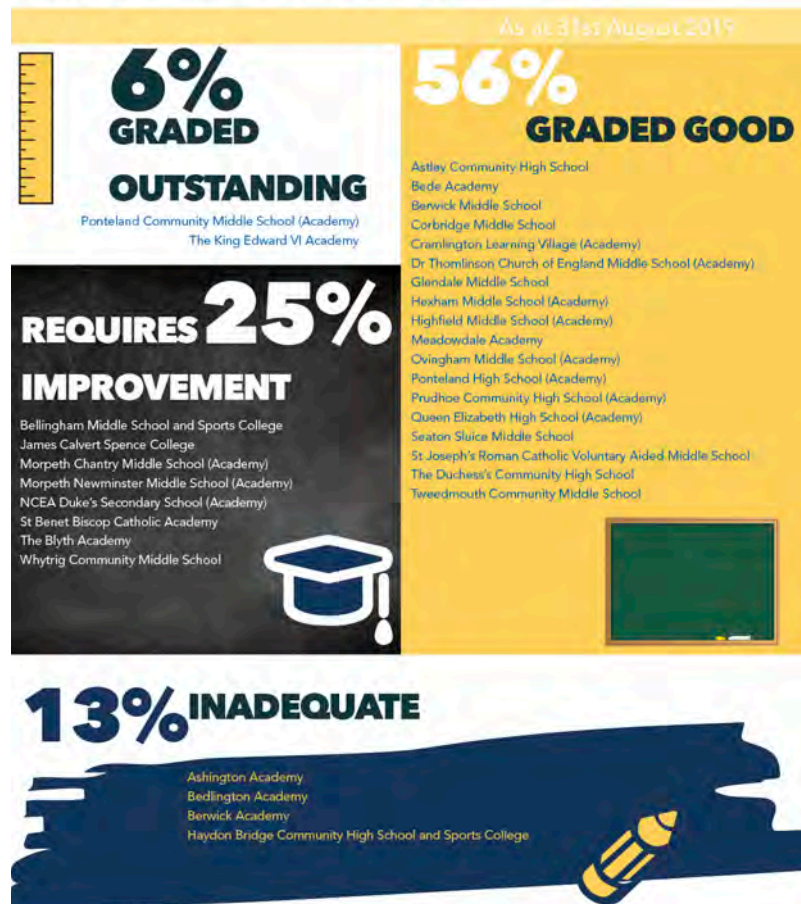
4. The Attainment 8 score of 46.4 was 0.3 points above that achieved in 2018 and 1.7 points above that achieved in 2017. It was still, however, marginally lower than the national average but placed Northumberland second amongst the north east local authorities.

### Attainment 8 Scores 2018/19



5. 43.1% of Northumberland pupils achieved a strong pass in GCSE English and maths, a slight decrease of 0.4% on 2018 but 0.1% above the national average. This result is welcome but needs to be sustained over time, with the variation across schools reduced. 12% of looked after children in Year 11 achieved at least Grade 4+ in English and mathematics at GCSE which was in-line with expectations but was lower than in 2018.
6. Whilst this improvement reflects well on the way that our schools have adapted to the reformed GCSE system, there is still much work to do to ensure that Northumberland is recognised nationally as a high achieving local authority, which is the council's ambition.
7. The average points score in EBacc subjects nationally was 4.08. Northumberland pupils achieved an average point score of 3.97. Further analysis has indicated that attainment and achievement in the sciences, modern foreign languages and the humanities subjects all need to improve in order to lift Northumberland above the national average.
8. Ofsted has judged 20 out of 32 Northumberland middle/secondary/high schools to be Good or Outstanding. This is 13% (about four schools) below the national average. The cycle of inspection indicates that many of middle, secondary and high schools deemed to be Inadequate or Require Improvement will be inspected in the next eighteen months and, as improvements in those schools are visible, it is expected that the proportion of Good schools will rise consistently over time.
9. As in the primary sector, the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils continues to be a concern. Whilst there are signs of the gap closing, it is not closing quickly enough. It is expected, however, that the positive pupil outcomes seen in Early Years and primary education in the county will continue into the secondary sector in the next few years.

## HOW ARE OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADED BY OFSTED



## Post 16 Learning and Skills

1. Post-16 participation in education, employment and training in Northumberland at 89% remains above the national average of 88%. Participation in education alone (60%), however, is slightly below the national average (61%). A significantly greater proportion of Northumberland's young people (11% of the cohort) undertook apprenticeships as compared to the national average of 7%.
2. The Council's own apprenticeship programme continues to grow, with apprenticeships now available from intermediate level through to degree and masters level, with an average of well over 300 apprentices on their respective programme at any one time.
3. The geography of the county remains challenging for post-16 providers in terms of achieving viable learner group sizes, and the loss of some post-16 provision this year in the south east of Northumberland has impacted upon the opportunities available for some of the county's hardest to help young people.
4. The Post-16 Learning and Skills Service continues to develop strong collaborative partnerships in order to address the gaps in provision left by other providers and to simultaneously reduce the number and proportion of young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET). The national NEET scorecard demonstrates the current positive position in Northumberland. The percentage of 16-17-year-olds in the county who were NEET or their status was not known reduced again this year to 4.4% of the cohort (national: 5.5%).
5. The county's performance in the 'September Guarantee', a national arrangement to ensure that all 16- and 17-year-olds are offered a suitable place in education or training by their local authority by the end of September, is strong with 97.9% (national: 94.5%) of the cohort in Northumberland receiving an offer.
6. New and bespoke programmes targeted at specific cohorts are providing solutions and options for many young people for whom post-16 education or training had previously been difficult to access. A pilot partnership programme in Berwick for a group of learners with education health and care plans (EHCPs) has developed their employability, personal, social and communication skills. In addition, all the learners gained the bronze Arts Award and qualifications in employability, English and maths. Most importantly, they all progressed to a positive destination after completing the programme including supported internships, further education and employment.



## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

1. Northumberland County Council works closely with Health partners to ensure that together, we effectively identify and meet the needs of learners with special educational needs and disabilities. This close partnership helps to improve outcomes for our children and young people, and to ensure that they are prepared for adulthood.
2. The Northumberland local area SEND arrangements were inspected in October 2018. As a result of the inspection, the outcome letter detailed the strengths of the local area's provision and identified the following areas for development which needed to be addressed through a Written Statement of Action:
  - Improving the arrangements for jointly planning, commissioning and providing the services children and young people who have SEN and / or disabilities and their families need
  - ensuring greater consistency in the graduated response in mainstream schools to the identification, assessment and meeting of needs of children and young people who have SEN and / or disabilities in mainstream primary and secondary schools
  - improving outcomes for children and young people with SEN and / or disabilities and in successfully preparing them for adult life
3. The improvement plan was approved by Ofsted in March 2019 and is being monitored on a quarterly basis by representatives from the Department for Education and NHS England. Since the action plan was approved, two successful monitoring visits have taken place where the council and Northumberland CCG were able to provide assurance that positive progress was being made across all three areas.
4. Northumberland County Council has delivered a significant number of SEND training events to SENCOs, Class Teachers and Governors, culminating in the summer SENCO conference that focussed on supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, the annual review process and the role of Early Help in supporting children, young people and their families.
5. In order to support the use of the graduated response within our mainstream schools, Lead SENCOs have been appointed to share best practice. A programme is in place which focusses on the graduated approach for different needs and effective use of classroom support.



6. The most prevalent areas of need identified continue to be social, emotional and mental health, speech, language and communication needs and moderate learning needs. Improved analysis of SEND data has enabled the local area to better support the targeting and delivery of support for SEND.
7. Overall, the number of children and young people at the SEN Support level has fallen again this year. Geographical differences exist, however, with the west of the county having significantly fewer children and young people at SEN Support compared to those in the south east, central and the north.
8. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to be issued within the statutory timescale. More rigorous quality assurance processes have helped to improve the content of the plans by supporting professionals across education, health and social care to provide high quality advice and to more accurately reflect the needs of children and young people.
9. The number of EHCPs issued continues to rise, which matches the national trend. The national average for EHCPs for children and young people is 3.1%; currently, 3.3% of Northumberland pupils have an EHCP.
10. Northumberland has one of the highest percentage of pupils with EHCPs in specialist provision (i.e. special schools), rather than mainstream schools, in the country. This is due to a combination of factors, including both inconsistent inclusive educational practice across Northumberland's mainstream schools and an increasingly strong parental preference for specialist educational placements. To manage this, the council will be providing additional specialist provision within the south east in 2020.



## HOW ARE OUR SPECIAL SCHOOLS GRADED BY OFSTED?

As at 31st August 2019

**36% GRADED OUTSTANDING**

Cleaswell Hill School  
Hexham Priory School (Academy)  
The Dales School  
The Grove Special School



**GRADED GOOD 45%**



Atkinson House School  
Barndale House School  
Collingwood School & Media Arts College  
Cramlington Hillcrest School  
Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit

**REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT 2 SCHOOLS**

Howard House  
Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia



NCEA Castle School (Academy)

**1 NEW PROVISION TO BE GRADED IN FUTURE**

11. The Council have been working with colleagues in Public Health, Social Care and the CCG to develop the offer of support for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs. Ongoing work has focused on developing the role of Mental Health Support Leads in schools.
12. Updated guidelines were provided to all schools to support compliance with DfE guidance 'Supporting pupils with medical conditions in schools' to ensure that children and young people with SEND are not disadvantaged due to their health needs.
13. A number of careers events were held for pupils with SEND to share the range of opportunities available to young people post-16. In addition, work was undertaken with adult social care to enable young people with complex needs to experience a smooth transition between education and social care as they move into adulthood.

## Safeguarding

1. To support improved school engagement, a refreshed model for improving multi-agency partnership working between the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) and schools was introduced this year. In addition, the Schools' Engagement sub-group established its priorities to support the half termly briefings for all Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). Priorities this year included how to make a good referral to social care and improving the use and understanding of the Early Help offer.
2. Well attended DSL training, delivered by the Schools' Safeguarding team, provided re-assurance to the NSCB that children in education in Northumberland are appropriately safeguarded. During inspections in both 2018 and 2019, Ofsted have scrutinised this training and commented favourably on its quality.
3. The Schools' Safeguarding team investigated 29 complaints made to Ofsted and 15 additional complaints by members of the public and elected members in 2018-19, none of which required further action.
4. The post of Education Safeguarding Liaison Officer is managed through the Schools' Safeguarding team. Responsibilities include the co-ordinating Operation Endeavour, a local alert system for sharing information between professionals about children who go missing and contributing key information for school referrals into Early Help and Social Care services. This post promotes effective communication and integrated working between education and children's support services.
5. The incidence of children missing education (CME) continues to be low in Northumberland when compared to national data. CME procedures also identify children at risk of missing education and support the safeguarding of children at risk of being sexually exploited and /or trafficked. In 2018-19, 633 pupils were recorded and tracked at some point during the year and were supported back into suitable full-time education. The tracking procedures support schools to effectively identify children at risk of or subject to both sexual and/or criminal exploitation and to be provided with the support they need.
6. The number of children removed from school rolls to be educated at home continues to rise. By July 2019, 216 children were known to be electively home educated in Northumberland, of which 163 were new cases since September 2018. 81 children returned to school places during the year.
7. The EOTAS (Education Other Than at School) Health Needs team delivers the council's statutory service for pupils with health and medical needs, including those with mental health needs, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents. The service achieved an impressive improvement in pupil attendance, from an average of 22% whilst still at school to 76% when working with the EOTAS service and there was also an improvement in outcomes at GCSE.



## Children Not in School

1. School attendance in Northumberland in 2017-18, the last published data, was better than the national average. Primary absence was 4.1% (national: 4.2%) and secondary absence was 5.4% (national: 5.5%). Overall persistent absence (those pupils having attendance of less than 90%) was 10.82% which is better than the national average of 11.2%. Overall absence at special schools increased from last year to 9.2% but is still lower than the national average of 10.2%.
2. The Education Welfare team supported schools to issue 976 Fixed Penalty Notices to parents for unauthorised absences which is a significant increase from 619 in 2018. The rise is due to more schools prosecuting parents who take their children on holiday during term time. In addition, the Education Welfare team received 1224 referrals relating to school attendance from which 443 formal warning notices were issued to parents who had failed to ensure their child attended school regularly. Successful prosecutions for non-attendance have also increased this year to 151, a rise from 89 in 2018.
3. Almost 400 entertainment licences were issued so that children and young people could participate in major productions such as Doctors (BBC1), The Dumping Ground (CBBC), Miss Saigon, Beauty and the Beast, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Les Miserables.
4. The local authority commissions a school improvement partner to make an annual visit to each of the alternative education providers on the council's procurement framework. No provider was judged to be inadequate but there was increase in the number of providers judged to require improvement.



## Northumberland Virtual School

1. A new model of support for schools working with looked after children was implemented this year with a greater emphasis on diversity, therapies and skills acquisition. The support offered is identified, monitored and evaluated through the recently developed Northumberland ePEP (personal education plan) for students.
2. Education outcomes for looked after children and care leavers over the last three years have shown improvement in most measures, but particularly in the Early Years Stage and at Key Stage 2. In 2019, 62.5% of children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Stage (2018: 40%) which is better than the national achievement of 49%. At Key Stage 2, achievement has greatly improved with 50% (2018: 30%) of looked after children meeting the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths. Again, this is higher the national average (36%).
3. Attainment dipped in Key Stage 4. To prevent this in future years, schools are being supported to set high expectations for individual children based on their prior attainment, and to intervene early to challenge any emerging under-achievement.
4. A focus on reducing exclusions and strengthening transition arrangements has had an impact on stabilising school placements for looked after children. 10% had a mid-year school move in 2017-18, the same as in 2018, which is significantly better than the national figure. 3% had at least one school move in 2017-18 compared to 4% nationally. No looked after child has been permanently excluded from school since 2008. 2019 saw a significant dip in the number of fixed term exclusions which reverses the rising trend from 2018.
5. During 2019, the Virtual School participated in a local authority peer review of provision for Care Leavers, had a lead role in the delivery of the Care Leavers' Covenant, and contributed to the development and implementation of the Northumberland protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers. All care leavers in Year 13 completed their A-level courses and progressed into higher education. Five care leavers enjoyed success in their chosen degree courses and are now planning routes into further study or employment.

## Equalities and schools

1. In January 2019, according to the School Census, there were 55 community languages spoken in Northumberland schools in addition to English. The languages spoken by the most significant groups of bilingual pupils in the county's schools are Polish, Chinese and Arabic.
2. In 2018-19, 94% of pupils in Northumberland schools were described in the school census as having white British heritage, with around 5% black, Asian or minority ethnic pupils.
3. Northumberland participated in the Stonewall Education Equality Index, a benchmarking exercise for local authorities, that showcases how well they are celebrating difference and tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in schools as well as supporting LGBT young people in their local communities.
4. Thirty primary schools took part in the Newcastle United Foundation Primary Stars programme, which incorporates work on discrimination, sexism, bullying, intolerance and racism over a block of six weekly visits. The Foundation uses the context of sport to engage children in critical thinking about a range of topics promoting equality and diversity. Show Racism the Red Card delivered race equality and football fitness educational workshops in 22 schools and academies.
5. Northumberland Education hosted an informative training afternoon from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust in October 2018. The Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) is a highly specialised clinic for young people presenting with difficulties in their gender identity. Increasing numbers of young people in Northumberland are being seen at the Tavistock, and the session developed awareness and understanding about referring children and young people.
6. Three Northumberland primary schools were among the first nationally to benefit from a Government Equalities Office training programme that promoted the celebration of differences and the elimination of discrimination against LGBT young people, with the programme continuing for more schools in 2019-20.





# School Organisation and Resources

## School Place Planning

1. The council published its School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 in July 2018 and was updated in July 2019. It describes how the council will fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children and young people in Northumberland in the three-year period. The plan also assists schools, parents and partners to understand how the availability of school places across the county are monitored, how needs are identified and how additional places are delivered and funded.
2. The provision of sufficient school places in Northumberland is a challenge, with high levels of surplus places in rural areas of the county and a growing demand for places in parts of the urban south east. A key challenge is to ensure that there are viable schools within reasonable travelling distance for most children living in rural communities. While some areas of the South East and central areas of the county have growing populations, overall pupil numbers in Northumberland continue to decline.
3. Following consultation, approval was given to extend the age range at Bedlington West End and Whitley Memorial First Schools to become primary schools from September 2020. Approval for expansion was also given to Whytrig Middle School, New Delaval Primary School and Horton Grange Primary School.
4. The number of schools in the county converting to academies continues to grow and, in the 2018/19 academic year, two new academy trusts were established. In Ponteland, six schools formed the Pele Trust and, in Prudhoe, the eight schools in the Prudhoe Partnership and Whittonstall First School formed The Tyne Community Learning Trust. Hexham Priory Special converted to become an academy in September 2018 and joined the Eden Trust. The local authority continues to be monitored by the DfE due to its high number of surplus places.
5. The Authority was successful in its application to set up the first Northumberland SEND Free School and is working with the DfE to agree which existing academy trust will run the new provision for pupils with ASD and SEMH. The successful trust will be announced in early 2020, with work then commencing on the procurement process to build the new school on the Princess Louise site in Blyth.
6. In some schools, additional places have had to be created to accommodate pupils from new housing developments. Between September 2018 and August 2019, £7 million was requested as contributions to education infrastructure developments from developers via Section 106 Agreements. To date, over £20m in education infrastructure contributions via S106 agreements for schools and academies in Northumberland has been secured from central government.



- Just under 8000 children each day are provided with travel assistance to and from school. Of the 8000 children travelling, nearly 1200 are children who have special educational needs or disabilities and 649 are provided with travel support on grounds of their religious belief.



## School Finance and Business Support

- In 2018-19, over £232m of Dedicated Schools Grant was allocated to the county's 155 maintained schools and academies. In addition, over £30m was paid to a range of Special Educational Needs (SEN) providers. The Schools Forum is the key consultative body in relation to education funding for Northumberland. Forum members are drawn from a representative cross section of Northumberland Schools and other stakeholders such as Early Years, Post 16 and trade union representatives.
- The development of the on-line Services to Schools Service Level Agreement portal has been a major achievement. 178 schools, including academies, special schools and non-maintained schools have signed up to the portal, which provides access to 51 services. To date, over £6m of services have been ordered via the portal.
- The School Organisation Service also managed 146 Freedom of Information requests in relation to education and skills, often involving complex queries covering areas such as school funding, special educational needs, transport and school re-organisation.

## School Admissions

- Northumberland is very successful in meeting parental preference for school places. In September 2018, 98% of first preferences were allocated for entry into Reception and 98% of first preferences were allocated for entry into secondary schools.

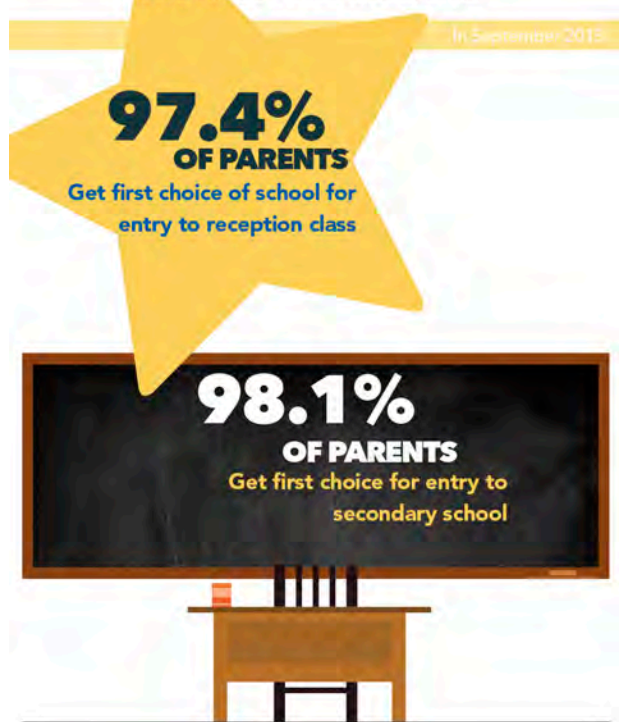
## Exclusions

- In 2018-19, following successful proactive work by the Inclusion Team, permanent exclusions were reduced by 28% and fixed-term exclusions by 26% from 2017-18:

	Permanent Exclusions			Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
2017/18	115	6	53	4514	291	1347
2018/19	83	4	23	3337	180	769

- An Exclusions Task and Finish Group was convened to explore the high number of exclusions in Northumberland and to put forward recommendations to significantly reduce the number of both permanent and fixed term exclusions. It will report in December 2019.
- Two further Inclusion Support Workers were recruited to offer schools support, advice and guidance to prevent exclusion, including the brokering of managed moves to other schools and places in alternative provision that better support the young person's needs.

## GETTING YOUR SCHOOL CHOICE IN NORTHUMBERLAND



## Schools Capital Investment

1. The Council has continued with an investment programme of £41m funded from local authority resources in order to maintain the schools' estate, grow school places and deliver projects to support school reorganisation. It includes improving and adapting the existing school estate through a combination of new builds, extensions, alterations, refurbishment and maintenance projects.
2. £3.1m of Basic Need funding has been allocated to support projects in Blyth. This includes an extension to New Delaval Primary School to provide an additional 105 pupil places. A modular build approach was undertaken at Horton Grange Primary School to provide an additional 210 pupil places.
3. The relocation of Morpeth First School from its existing site at Goose Hill to the Loansdean site was completed in August 2019. Capital investment of £6.9m has seen the school rebuilt to a high standard and ready to welcome new pupils at the start of the academic year in September.
4. A new special educational needs provision was developed at the former Ashington High School Annexe through the investment of £2m. Ashdale will further support children with social, emotional and mental health needs through the creation of 50 additional primary aged places.
5. A £200k investment at Collingwood Special School has funded the refurbishment of an existing SureStart building to deliver 6th form provision and to facilitate growth within the main school.
6. Projects underway that will be completed in 2019-20 include an investment of £46m in the schools and leisure scheme and new fire station in Ponteland and a £2.5m investment to support the remodelling of the former Haltwhistle Middle School to become Haltwhistle Primary School. £5.6m has been allocated to support school reorganisation in the Haydon Bridge partnership. This involves refurbishment and remodelling at Haydon Bridge High School, Bellingham Primary School, Otterburn First School and Greenhaugh First School.
7. £40.8m has been identified for the Hexham Academies Scheme which incorporates the co-location of a middle and high school onto one site. Planning and commencement on site are due in spring 2020. In addition, £23m will be provided for a new-build middle and high school to the value of £23m in the Seaton Valley.
8. Work has begun to invest £1.6m to support school reorganisation in the Bedlington partnership. Capital works will be undertaken at Bedlington West End First School and Whitley Memorial First School to convert them into primary schools.
9. £2.85 million was invested in 2018-19 through the School Capital Investment Programme (SCIP) on a variety of maintenance projects. These included replacing timber windows with new double-glazed units, replacing or improving existing pitched and flat roofs, installing new boilers and/or distribution systems and replacing kitchen ventilation systems. Over the last eight years, the council has invested almost £30 million to improve the school estate through SCIP. In previous years, the programme has also supported schools by improving accessibility and facilities for pupils with special educational needs.
10. Northumberland County Council also received £243,000 of central government funding for capital schemes that encouraged physical activity and promoted healthy lifestyles and healthy eating. This was allocated to 31 schools via a bidding process.

## School Meals

1. The school meals service supports 55 schools within Northumberland. The service continued to work with an external company who provide the hardware and software to promote the benefits of electronic pre-ordering of school meals. Eighteen schools now have the system in place, and all are seeing increased school meal take-up along with payment benefits to the school.
2. The school meals service continued to maintain their accreditation with the Soil Association Food for Life bronze award. This was the tenth consecutive year of gaining the accreditation. The service meets the Soil Association certification requirements as over 75% of school meals menus are home-made, sourced by the service, use local products where possible and reflect the season.





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