



# Northumberland County Council

Education, SEND & Skills  
Annual Report for Northumberland  
**Academic Year 2022-23**



# Education, SEND and Skills Priorities

Northumberland Education has spent the academic year 2022-23 working productively towards the key priorities highlighted below.

1

**Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the council and the community.**

2

**Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including disadvantaged and SEND learners, achieve the best educational outcomes:**

We will support across the Early Years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child.

We will support all first, primary and middle schools to ensure their pupils have the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum.

We will support improved transition, progress and performance for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 to promote access for all learners to their first choice destination.

3

**Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with SEND:**

We will work in partnership with all stakeholders, including championing the voice of children, young people and their families, jointly working with Health and Social Care, to fully implement the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy.

We will lead on the development of a fully inclusive education system.

4

**Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults:**

We will develop a curriculum and facilities which both supports the ambition of learners and links to the workforce requirements for Northumberland.

We will build on key relationships between education and industry.

We will produce clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations.

5

**Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible:**

We will strive to deliver the right number of places to meet all learner needs in the right place, at the right time.

6

**Ensure the Education, SEND and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework (including the School Admissions Code, Exclusions, Attendance, Virtual School, School Organisational Regulations, Early Years Sufficiency and those relating to SEND):**

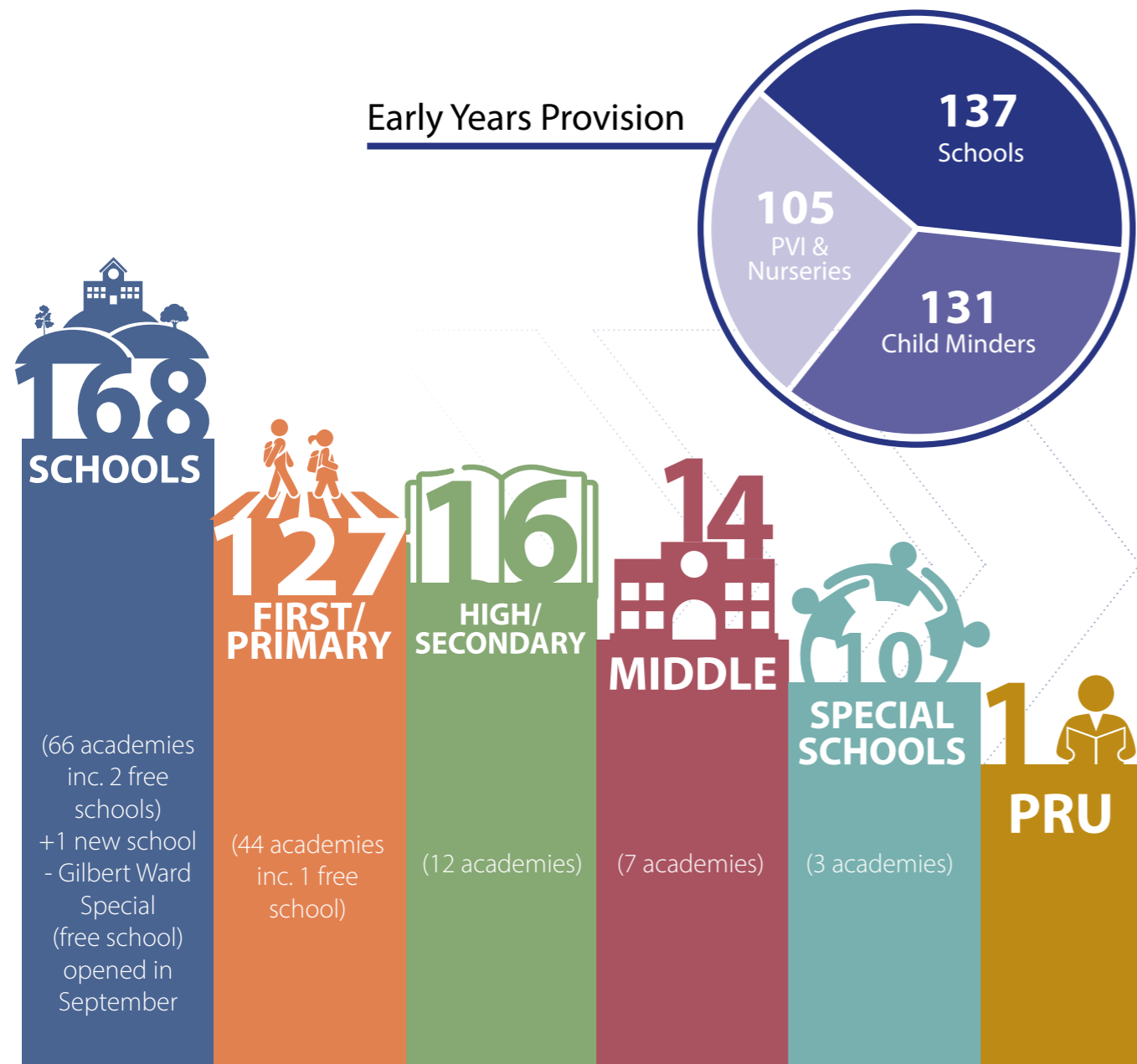
We will meet our own statutory duties.

We will further develop relationships with the Regional Director and Academy Trusts to ensure they adhere to their statutory duties whilst ensuring equality of access to education.

The Local Authority will work closely with children, young people, their families, schools, settings and all other partners to deliver on these priorities. They will be monitored and evaluated by the sector-led Education Strategy Partnership Board and the SEND Board.

**➤ This report focuses on each priority, the actions taken, the impact to date and identifies appropriate next steps for further development.**

# Overview of Northumberland School Landscape



“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success”

Henry Ford

## Welcome

### Key Priority 1

**Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the Council and the community.**

Our Early Years settings, schools, alternative educators and post 16 providers have been focussed on the task of continual improvement to the benefit of all learners.

Collectively the academic outcomes continue to bounce back to our 2019 levels (the last year comparative exams took place) and **the number of schools judged good or better by Ofsted is now at an all-time high of 94% (August 23).**

Attendance outcomes are also strengthening, but they are yet to regain the levels from before the pandemic. School admissions remain strong with the vast majority of applicants gaining their first choice.

Challenges remain with meeting the needs of all learners with Special Educational Needs. Growth in this area includes both higher levels of need and greater numbers being presented across the sector. Schools and providers have responded magnificently, with needs being well met, parental satisfaction remaining high and Ofsted reports exclusively stating that SEND provision is at least good.

**The ability to deliver specialist provision continues to grow in line with our Strategic SEND Capacity Plan.**

Special School capacity has been extended across the county and supplemented by the development of Specialist Support Bases at a range of primary schools. Our Skills Service has doubled the size of their post 16 SEND courses. Further development in this area will continue to meet the needs of young people with SEND as close to their homes as possible.

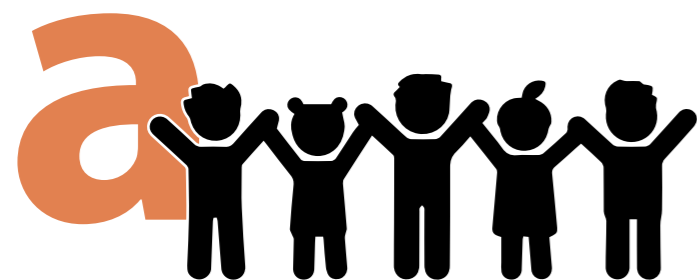
Disadvantaged learner outcomes remain an area for development. Although many disadvantaged pupils do reach their full potential there remains a gap in outcomes between them and their peers which, collectively, we must diminish.

The partnership between early years settings, maintained schools and academies continues to extend from an already strong base. The sector led Education Strategy Board continues to review all the key priorities and direct further developments.

**All of these actions and those listed over the following pages demonstrate that Northumberland know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and clearly report their performance to the Council and the community.**

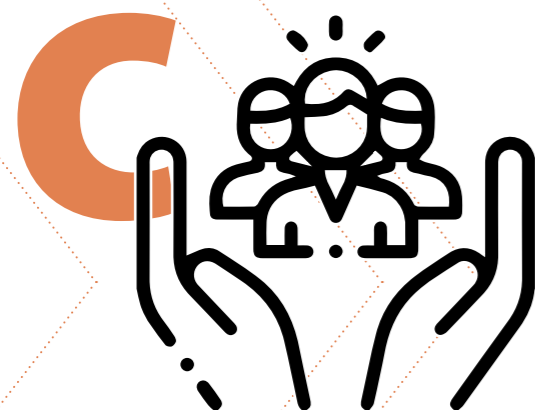
## Key Priority > 2 <

Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including disadvantaged and SEND learners, achieve the best educational outcomes:



We will support across the early years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child

We will support all first, primary and middle schools to ensure their pupils have the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum



We will support improved transition, progress and performance for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 to promote access for all learners to their first-choice destination

## Early Years Provision >

The quality of early years provision in Northumberland is excellent. **97% of early years providers were rated Good or Outstanding at Summer 2023.**

The take up of 2-year-old provision continues to be good. **82% of all eligible 2 year olds took up their statutory entitlement to early education** in the summer term 2023. There was a drop in take up compared with the autumn and spring terms (96% & 91% retrospectively) but still consistently better than the National Average of 74%.

The take up of funded entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds is exceptional with **104% of 3 and 4 year old's taking up their early education entitlements** compared with 94% nationally in the year 2022-2023. The over 100% take up reflects some families choosing to take up their early education entitlements in Northumberland who live in other local authorities.

Early Years settings value the support of the Early Years Team to maintain high quality early years provision with 81% of the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings subscribing to Local Authority services to access training and consultancy support.



The percentage of children with SEND in Northumberland achieving a Good Level of Development in Summer 2023 was **22.6%** compared to 19.9% nationally.



There were a number of closures of PVI provisions across Northumberland in 2022-23, which reflects the well reported challenges around sustainability, recruitment and retention following the COVID pandemic. However, **we were successfully able to find alternative provision for children affected by closures and support the opening of new provision. As such, we continue to have no gaps in sufficiency.**



# Academic Outcomes

## Early Years Foundation Stage:

Outcomes for children at the end of their EYFS are positive, with **68.8% achieving a Good Level of Development**, compared with 67.3% nationally in Summer 2023.

## Key Stage 2:

**57% of Northumberland pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, an increase on 2022** but 2% below the national average. Reading was 0.1% above the national average at 72.7%, writing was 0.3% above the national average at 71.3% (9.2% decrease nationally) and Maths was 2.2% below the national average at 70.7%.

## Key Stage 4:

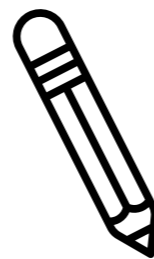
External examinations returned for the second time since 2019. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall back to 2019 levels, so a fall in the percentages in comparison to 2022 was expected. Data is provisional at this stage.

## Progress 8:

The average Progress 8 score was -0.2, poorer than the national average of -0.03 but better than the North East average of -0.27.

## Attainment 8:

Northumberland achieved 44.4, slightly below the national average of 46.2 but matching the North East average.



## English and Maths:

**4+ is deemed to be a standard pass and 5+ a strong pass**

	Northumberland	North East	National
English & Maths 4+	63.1%	62.2%	65%
English & Maths 5+	42.8%	41.7%	45%

## Key Stage 5:

External examinations returned for the second time since 2019. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall back to 2019 levels, so a fall in the percentages in comparison to 2022 was expected. No national comparisons are available at present.

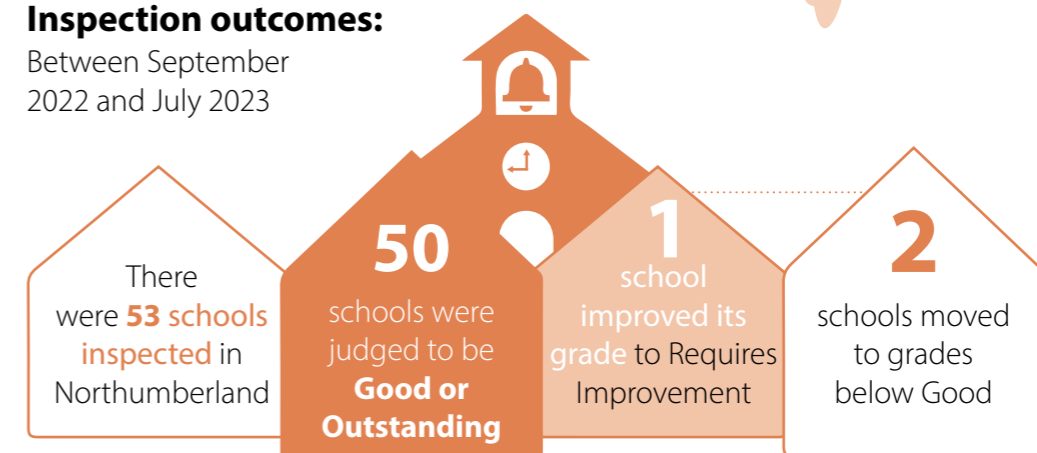
**1152 pupils sat A levels, achieving an average grade of B**, matching the performance of 2022.

494 pupils sat Applied General Qualifications, **achieving an average grade of a Distinction minus, slightly below 2022.**



## Inspection outcomes:

Between September 2022 and July 2023




The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes were at the highest they had ever been in August 2023.

## Key Figures >



**93.9%**

of Northumberland schools are **Good or Outstanding**, 4.9% above the national average.

**96.7%** 

of primary schools in Northumberland were **judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good** by July, better than the national average of 90%.

**86.7%**

of secondary schools in Northumberland were judged by Ofsted to be **Outstanding or Good in summer 2023**, an improvement of 10% compared to summer 2022 and above the national average of 80%.



**95%** 

of primary pupils were in **Good or Outstanding schools in summer 2023**, 7% more than the previous year

**84%** 

of secondary pupils were in **Good or Outstanding schools in summer 2023**, 4% better than the previous year

**82%** 

of our cared-for children and young people attend schools judged by Ofsted to be **Good or Outstanding**, significantly more than the 64% in the previous year, and more than the national average of 78%.





# Key Priority **3**

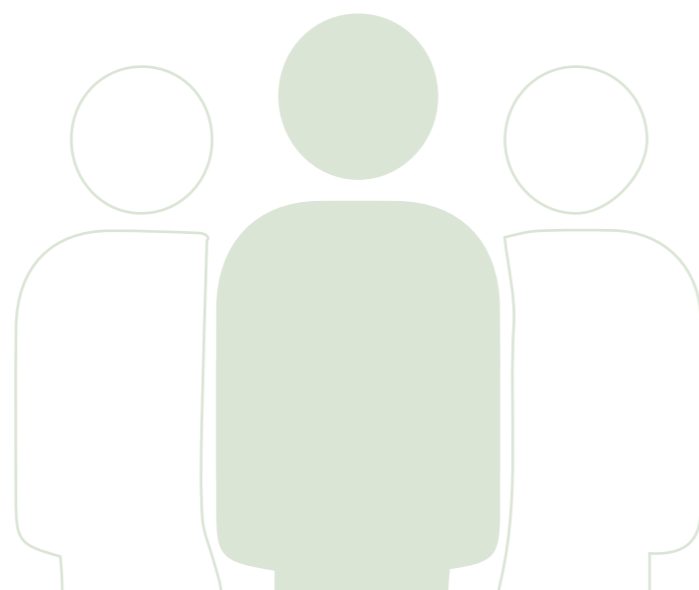
Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

**A) We will work in partnership with all stakeholders, including championing the voice of children, young people and their families, jointly working with Health and Social Care, to fully implement the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy**

The Local Area SEND Partnership consists of Northumberland County Council senior leads for education and health and social care alongside NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Work on the delivery of strategic actions described within the Northumberland Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-2024 has been ongoing and the education work is described in this report.

**Key delivery highlights from the partnership include:**

- The co-production and launch of the Children's Occupational Therapy Sensory Processing Service for children and young people living in Northumberland.
- A new team has been developed to support education providers to initiate Early Help Assessments and facilitate Team Around the Family meetings. This is a significant investment of 6 Education EHA workers. The aim was to reach 200 children with EHAs initiated by school in the 2022-23 academic year. At the end of the summer term there have been 420 children with education initiated EHAs demonstrating the impact this has had on children and young people accessing early support.



**B) We will lead on the development of a fully inclusive education system**

There has been, and continues to be, an increase in the number of learners presenting with SEND in Northumberland. Correspondingly, the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being applied for and agreed has increased. **Over the last 4 years, the number of EHCPs in Northumberland has increased by 75.6% including 23% in 2022-23.**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of EHCPs: January 1st	1849	2180	2638	3247

Many schools and settings believe the reasons for this growth include-

- Improved identification of SEND
- Increasingly complex young people with SEND (in part, linked to COVID measures)
- A lack of confidence for some parents that mainstream schools can meet their child's needs
- The actions in a minority of schools which are less inclusive

Special schools continue to operate at capacity, with learners with the most complex needs being supported into such provision whilst mainstream settings are required to make effective provision for a greater number of pupils with EHCPs.

There are many very inclusive schools and settings in Northumberland. The staff and governors of those schools hold similar principles and a desire to ensure all learners are successful alongside their peers and as close to home as possible.

It is a key responsibility of the local authority to support schools with developing and sustaining their inclusive ethos and provision.



# Actions and Impact >

Following a successful pilot of new SEND self-evaluation projects, working with Whole Education and David Bartram (OBE), Northumberland has 150 schools and other educational settings engaged in standardised SEND self-evaluation. This will be supported in 2023/24 with the development of new SEND Reviews for schools, which ensures that the LA have quality assured and moderated oversight of SEND.

Over 150 delegates attended each of our triad of inclusive conferences including the Relationships Matters Conference (March 23), the SENCo Conference (July 23) and the Inclusion Conference (Sept 23).



Joint working with parents, carers and colleagues in all settings has supported the development and launch of the Northumberland Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance document in September 2022. The document promotes Northumberland's vision that learners with SEND have the best start in life and are supported, through highly effective and inclusive educational provision, to attend settings as close to home as possible.

Across the High Incidence Needs Team (HINT), there has been a 14.3% increase in requests for support for individual children and young people (CYP), a 208% increase in whole school activity and a 30% increase in the number of training courses delivered from 2021-22 to 2022-23.



HINT have developed new ways of working to meet increased demand within existing budgets. All teams remained open to referral throughout the year and have developed further improvements to ensure the same in 2023-24.

HINT's 2022-23 training offer comprised of 123 school-based courses being delivered to 2,304 delegates from 103 school settings plus a further 47 Learning Together Courses, 12 Cygnet Courses and 15 Safety Intervention Training courses. 95.4% of respondents stated that their subject knowledge had increased as a result of training attended.



There has been a 19% increase in the number of referrals received by the Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) team between 2021-22 and 2022-23. There were 15,945 individual support activities carried out 2022-23, including home visits, individual assessments and whole school development visits.



The LINT service has delivered 148 training sessions during 2022-23, ensuring continually improving access to effective education for learners with English as Additional Language and with Vision, Hearing or Multi-Sensory Impairment.



The LINT service has supported an increased number of children and young people, witnessing a rise of 19% in referrals received in 2022-23 compared with 2021-22.

The Educational Psychology service continues to face challenges aligned to national pictures. There are, currently, 3 vacant posts and one psychologist on 12-month sabbatical.

699 educational advices were requested from Educational Psychologists during 2022-23 for Education and Health Care assessment (following request for EHCP).



In 2022, timeliness of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks was 15.9% higher in Northumberland than England as a whole. Northumberland issued 8.8% more of its EHCPs in timescale than the North East as a whole. The proportion of EHCPs issued in timescale has continued to decrease as a result of increased demand and reduced capacity.

The statutory EHCP assessment and Review Team currently have the 2nd highest caseload in the North East. Development work to improve practice and capacity is planned for 2023-24 within existing budgets.

Our teams have remained well connected with colleagues on a regional and national basis over the past year, further developing links with Whole School SEND, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and Whole Education.





# Key Priority > 4 <

Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults:

- A) We will develop a curriculum and facilities which both supports the ambition of learners and links to the workforce requirements for Northumberland
- B) We will build on key relationships between education & industry
- C) We will produce clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations

## Northumberland Skills

- > There were **1,659 enrolments** onto programmes across eight campuses in 2022-23 for adult learners and **212 enrolments** for young people aged 16-18 with the largest majority (87.3%) of enrolments being adult learning.
- > Overall achievement rates across the whole Service (all ages) for **2022-23 were 88.7%** (excluding Apprenticeships).
- > Achievement rate for 16-18 (excluding Apprenticeships) is **81.1%**, demonstrating significant distance travelled and with a larger cohort compared to 2021-22 where the achievement rate was 69%.

> Apprenticeship recruitment continues to remain a challenge in 2022-23, **headline achievement was 67.1%, 7.1% points above the current national rate and increased by 9.0% from 2021-22**, with availability in many advertised apprenticeships not being filled from the local & regional labour markets.

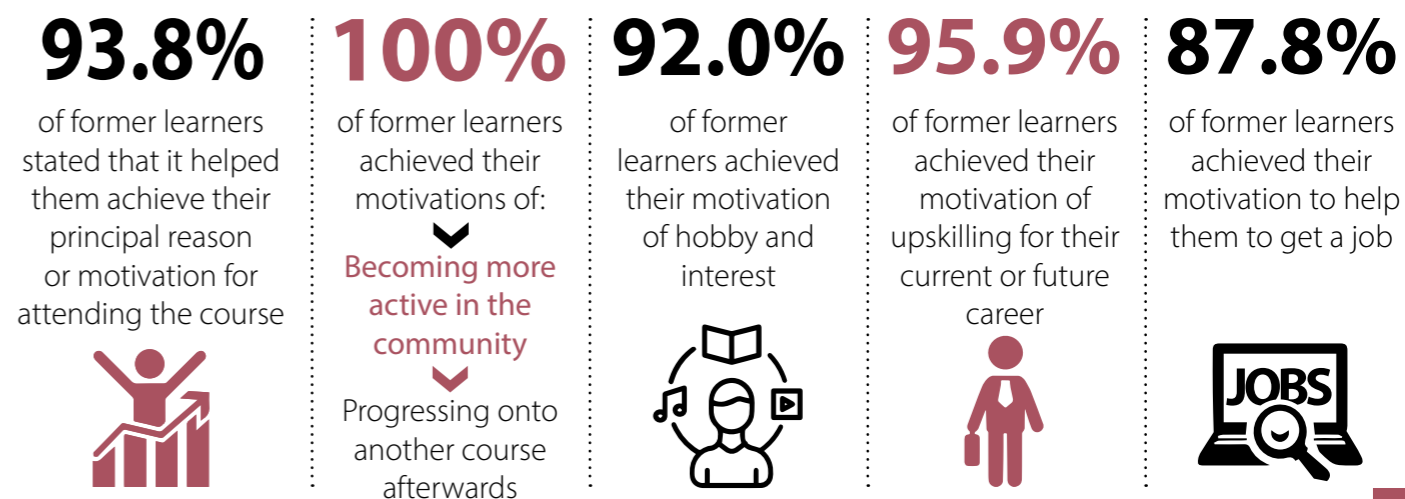
Northumberland Skills continues to provide training models through apprenticeships in various vocational sectors and have availability in various roles across the county to work directly with internal and external employers.



- > Northumberland Skills' self-assessment grades the service as **GOOD**, in terms of OfSTED gradings for 2022-23.
- > **The achievement rate for GCSE English and mathematics is 84.4%** which is an increase of 5.2% from 2021-22 and is above the National Rate of 82.8%.
- > Pass rates for learners with an EHCP is **outstanding at 100%**.
- > Adult Learning for those aged over 19 years forms the largest majority of the service and remains as a **GOOD performance with an achievement rate overall of 93.6%**.
- > Pass Rate at Entry/**Level 1 (all ages) is 90.5%** and remains the largest cross section of the participation at 1,080 enrolments, Pass Rate at Level 2 (all ages) is 92.7% with 319 enrolments, both demonstrating an increase by 3.0% and 4.7%, respectfully, against 2021-22.
- > Given the legacy Covid-19 challenges to ensure **learners remain on programme, engaged and making good progress**, the achievement rates are reassuring.
- > Attendance in 2022-23 for 16-18 learners was 87.4%, Adults (19+) was 88.9%.
- > Apprenticeship End Point Assessment achievement remains positive with a high number of apprenticeships achieving **Distinction grades** at the end of their programme of training.
- > **Learner Voice surveys** (Student feedback) demonstrate positive examples of good practice and **positive outcome data with an overall Course Satisfaction score of 4.66 out of 5**.
- > **Learner's attitudes to their education are positive and have been shown to have improved over time.** Behaviour and attitudes of learners is good, with learners demonstrating effective behaviours for learning supporting what we know to be the expectations of employers, an **overall score of 4.65 out of 5 reflected 'How enjoyable is your learning?'**
- > In 2023 The Employability Service successfully completed 2 programmes - The DWP JETS programme (Job entry targeted support) and The Refugee Employability Support Programme.
- > The Employability Service continues to be well positioned to respond particularly to North of Tyne Inclusive Growth projects where the prime aims are to support residents into gaps, reduce inequality and disadvantage gaps and to support progression into employment as well as in work progression through training.



An independent destination survey carried out by J2 research in August 2023 focused on all learners from the 2022-23 cohort and returned the following:



# Collaborative Projects

## Strengthening Pathways to Employment

### Northumberland Skills Welding & Fabrication training facility, Port of Blyth

The capital investment of £1.4m to deliver Northumberland Skills Welding & Fabrication training facility within the clean energy cluster at Port of Blyth reached completion and was handed over to the Skills team April 2023. The facility welcomed its first small pilot cohort of 9 young people for the remainder of the 2022-23 academic year, 2 of which have moved into apprenticeship and employment, while the remainder have returned for training to the next level on their journey to entering the engineering sector.



The facility also welcomed a cohort of 19 adult trainees on a six-week intensive programme designed to prepare them to enter welding roles within local employer Universal Wolf. Four of the candidates were successful in taking the roles while all 15 others have returned for further training to continue on their journey into the sector. Looking ahead to the 2023-24 academic year interest is strong with circa 20 apprentices, circa 30 young people and a growing cohort of adult and commercial trainees planning to study at the centre. Much more will emerge in-year.

### Energy Central Campus

Work officially began during the spring of 2023 on the £13.6m Energy Central Learning Hub situated in the clean energy cluster at Port of Blyth, an official ground-breaking ceremony took place during July. The campus will create a high-quality talent pool, supporting the clean energy sector in meeting its ambitious growth aspirations, whilst inspiring, training and providing pathways to employment for the local community and wider region.

The strategic partnership formed between Northumberland County Council, Port of Blyth and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult to lead the development has focussed upon the construction phase of the project. However, during summer 2023, with construction underway, the focus has shifted and now officers from Education SEND & Skills are front and centre of developments to refine the vision and business model as well as engaging education delivery and industrial partners.



### Fuse Campus Developments

During the summer of 2023 plans have been drawn up and costings developed to explore the expansion of learning space within the FUSE campus for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It is concluded that in the region of 60 additional places can be created providing an additional vocational education option for more young people with SEND and providing greater reach of provision into the south and the Tyne Valley. Next steps will be to secure funding to allow works to be taken forward based upon the plans.



## Key Priority 5

Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible:

### A) We will strive to deliver the right number of places to meet all learner needs in the right place at the right time

Planning permission was granted by the Secretary of State following approval at the Strategic Planning Committee on 6th December 2022 for the rebuild of Astley and Whytrig Schools. RIBA Stage 4 designs are now complete and signed off by the school. **A main contractor has been brought on board to deliver the scheme with the new facilities scheduled to be ready for September 2025.**

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for James Calvert Spence College was approved by Cabinet and a large amount of work was undertaken to develop the designs in readiness of a Planning application with detailed design and construction to follow soon after. In conjunction, designs were completed for the repurposing of the vacated former JCSC middle school building to become a new SEND facility (operated by Barndale SEND School) and a new primary school for Amble First School. In addition, a contractor has been appointed to deliver the additional capacity to enable four feeder first schools to become primaries in September 2024.

During the summer holidays (July 2023 - September 2023), the capital team undertook a range of projects to replace existing dilapidated mobile classrooms which were identified during condition surveys. A further 2 projects were identified to create much needed additional accommodation for James Calvert Spence College and Cramlington Learning Village. These projects include:

- **James Calvert Spence College** - Relocation of 3 existing double mobile classrooms and the installation of 1 newly refurbished double mobile classroom to accommodate the reorganisation from a 3-tier to 2-tier education system.
- **Cramlington Learning Village** - Installation of 1 new double mobile classroom to create additional school places for 60 pupils.
- **Felton Primary School** - Replacement of 1 existing double mobile classroom unit with a new bespoke double mobile classroom, featuring a kitchenette and toilet facilities.
- **Seaton Sluice Middle School** - Replacement of 1 existing single mobile classroom unit with a new mobile classroom, including toilet facilities.

**The replacement of two dilapidated modular buildings with one state of the art Early Years facility is now complete at Bedlington Station Primary School.** The £1.75m project has provided a range of spaces including a Reception classroom, Nursery and a community classroom incorporating dedicated entrances and associated ancillary facilities including kitchens, age-appropriate toilets and enhanced, dedicated outdoor play areas.

The School Capital Improvement Programme has continued through the year and between September 2022 and September 2023 has seen 11 projects completed on site, with a combined value of approximately £1.3 million. Geographically, these projects have ranged from Belford in the North to Seghill in the South and have undertaken a range of works including replacing and upgrading roofs, replacing windows, upgrading heating and sewage treatment systems and improving facilities for pupils with SEND needs.

In addition to the projects completed over this period, many other projects are moving through the design stage or have started work on site. As well as maintaining the school estate, these projects seek to reduce operating costs for the schools and help the Council in achieving its climate change objectives. **The latter has been helped by additional funding being made available from the DfE specifically to help schools improve their energy efficiency.**

**Works have been undertaken throughout the county to create a number of Primary Support Bases (PSBs) and Specialist Support Bases (SSBs) that will provide additional support for pupils at a host school.** The first 5 PSB's began operations in September 2022 at a range of school sites. The first 6 SSB's will come on stream in September 23.

**Redevelopment of a building formerly known as the Sycamore Centre, for use as specialist teaching for students with additional needs has created an additional 30 places for pupils attending Cleaswell Hill Special School.** The works were completed in the summer of 2023, with the new facilities opening in September. Works included: the repurposing of existing space into 4 separate teaching rooms (catering, STEM, performing arts, social skills), a hygiene room, and improvements to the outdoor space.





## Key Priority 5



A project to create an additional 40 places for pupils with ASD and SEMH has also been completed on the site of the former PRU and this is now known as The Woodlands, an offsite provision for Collingwood based at Hepscoth Park. This project was also completed for the start of the new academic year and offers a bespoke facilities to support the teaching of vocational subjects, and therapies spaces.

The relocation and refurbishment of Northumberland PRU to the former Atkinson House Special School site in Seghill was undertaken. The relocation and capital investment has also enabled the expansion and change in age range which now means that the needs of KS4 pupils can also be met.

Gilbert Ward School in Blyth opened to students in September and will provide up to 80 places for students with SEMH and ASD over time.

Following more than 2 years of consultation, approval for the reorganisation of Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure together with £41m funding for buildings was secured in July 2023. Implementation has begun, with approval of a draft Staffing Protocol and technical advisors to support the delivery of the capital investment plans.

Approval of Berwick Reorganisation also included approval and funding for the establishment of SEND Units at St Mary's CE Primary School (as it will be) from September 2025 and at Berwick Academy from September 2026. This will create an additional 70 places across the primary and secondary phases in Berwick for students with SEMH/ASD/MLD/SLCN. Together with approval of the satellite site in Amble of Barndale Special School (to be named Barndale by the Sea), this means that 120 specialist provision places will be created in the North of the county over 3 years from September 2024.

4 Schools have academised successfully in 2023, with £25k costs to the Council successfully recovered.

# Key Priority > 6 <

Ensure the Education, SEND and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework (including the School Admissions Code, Exclusions, Attendance, Virtual School, School Organisational Regulations, Early Years Sufficiency and those relating to SEND):

- A) We will meet our own statutory duties
- B) We will further develop relationships with the Regional Director and Academy Trusts to ensure they adhere to their statutory duties whilst ensuring equality of access to education

## > Admissions > SEND Commissioning

**Primary**  
98.2% of children were allocated their first choice Primary school, **6% above** the national average

**Secondary**  
95.5% of children were allocated their first choice Secondary school, **13% above** the national average

**2,138 'in year' applications were processed within 2022-23**

Between Sept 2022 and Aug 2023 the team have **processed 171 applications for Ukrainian children**, all of which were allocated within 15 school days

The School Organisation and Resources Team (SORT) have taken responsibility for the commissioning and allocation of SEND placements.

Revised Terms of Reference for the SEND Placement Review and Transition Panel were put in place and a new commissioning process was developed, implemented and rolled out to colleagues in the SEND team and specialist provisions.

From November 333 students have been considered at panel, with 207 students placed, 55 students considered not to require specialist provision, 16 students where a placement is still to be found, and 55 students in consultation with provisions.

Relationships with Special Schools improved through new processes and communication.

A brochure for Northumberland Special Schools was developed to assist parents in making appropriate school preferences.

## Inclusion

In 2022-23 the Inclusion team supported **234 learners in alternative provision** (AP). Out of those, 9 learners reintegrated into Special School and 14 back into mainstream successfully.

In 2022-23 the Inclusion Team supported **63 managed moves, 33 were successful** and 25 were unsuccessful, with 5 pending; the success rate is 52%. Historically, the success rate was 20%.

The Inclusion Panel launched in Sept 2022-this panel considers all referrals into the PRU, Alternative Provision (AP) and Primary Support Bases. In 2022-23 we received 131 referrals, with only 3 going on to be permanently excluded (PEX).

**72% of the 2022-23 Year 11 PEX cohort achieved a qualification in English**, 61% of the 2022/23 Year 11 PEX cohort achieved a qualification in Maths. These results are lower than the 2021-22 cohort, but it mirrors the national trend due to the re-introduction of formal assessments.

The number of PEX learners in AP in September 2023 was 144. This is double the number in AP in 2021 and reflects the increase in the number of children and young people being PEX from Northumberland schools.

**74% PEX learners were in full time suitable provision by day 6** in 2022-23. This is a reduction of 7% on the previous year, however there are several contributing factors which include the availability of AP placements as well as the delay in the LA receiving notifications of PEX from schools.

There have been no permanent exclusions of cared-for children since 2008.

The first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy was finalised and approved by Cabinet in November 2022. A copy can be found [here](#). Work will continue in 2023-24 on refining and redrafting the strategy with our schools and partners.

Nationally, the highest rate suspension and permanent exclusions rates are in the North East and of the 12 authorities across the North East Northumberland is ranked 4th highest for permanent exclusions and 6th for suspensions.

In 2022-23 Northumberland reported **105 permanent exclusions** and 5,870 suspensions, an increase of 11% and 37%, respectively compared to the previous year. The data also indicates that pupils with SEND and Cared-for children are more likely to be excluded / suspended.

## Free School Meals

We are continuing to support families across the county through the HUGGG voucher scheme for meals during the school holidays and uniform provision. From December 2020 to May 2022, 97,143 vouchers were issued valuing £4.3m+ and with a redemption rate of 95%.





# School Finance



## School Funding and the National Funding Formula

Northumberland moved successfully towards the implementation of the National Funding Formula for 2023-24 schools. The Council classified as a local authority which “mirrors the NFF”. An overall balanced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position was reported to Schools Forum in July 2023, but this also highlighted significant pressures arising within the High Needs Block. This is caused principally by the increase in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the year to January 2023, together with higher inflationary pressures over the last 24 months.

## School Balances

A report to Schools Forum in July 2023, illustrated that, after 2 years of increasing school balances, the financial year to March 2023, saw an overall marginal fall in the balances held by Northumberland’s maintained schools.

This fall in balances was most notable across First and Primary Schools, who together with Special Schools would have felt the impact of the general NJC pay award, which was not supported by additional funding in the way the teachers’ pay award was.



## The Education Welfare Service

School attendance in Northumberland is gradually improving with overall absence better than regional and national averages in the Secondary and Special phases, and persistent absence better than regional and national averages in the Primary and Secondary phases. The legacy of the pandemic on school attendance is still present, but new initiatives are clearly starting to have a positive impact.

Legal intervention is back to pre-pandemic levels. Whilst it is a last resort, the increase shows that schools are aware that it is an option when all other interventions have been exhausted.

Safeguarding arrangements for identifying children at risk of missing education (CME) are a strength and hundreds of pupils were tracked through the process and re-engaged in education. Validated DfE data available from 2021-22 shows that Northumberland is one of the local authorities with the lowest number of children missing education. Monthly multi-agency CME Tracking Panels continued and were developed to introduce focussed panels on Transition and for cared for children. From Sept 22 to July 23, 286 students were discussed at panel, of which 173 are no longer CME.

The proportion of children in Northumberland that are electively home educated is lower than the national average. The number of children being electively home educated in Northumberland is 385, which is a reduction since earlier in the academic year. 209 children became EHE from September 2022 to July 2023, and 69 returned to school places.

Pupils with health and medical needs who attend Northumberland’s EOTAS provision enjoyed a better teaching and learning experience this year.

- Family Hubs were used as teaching venues.
- A hybrid model of teaching was successfully embedded containing both virtual and face to face delivery.

## Safeguarding

School engagement with the Northumberland Children’s and Adult’s Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) is **good**:



In all but one school inspected by Ofsted this year, safeguarding was judged to be at least **Good**.



Recommendations from learning reviews were implemented by education settings with direction from the Schools’ Engagement sub-group.



Over 95% of Ofsted whistleblowing complaints about safeguarding in schools had a response within the required timeframe and no complaints required further action from the local authority or NCASP.



The Schools’ Engagement sub-group successfully developed into the broader, more strategic **Safer in Education Group**.





## Virtual School >

Our whole council approach is strengthening corporate parenting to support improvement of educational outcomes for our **cared-for children and young people.**



More pupils are working in their age-related curriculum since last year and a high number of care leavers have been engaged in Education, Training and Employment through the multi-agency ETE Clinics.



More care leavers achieved **Level 3 qualifications** this year compared to last year.

A high proportion of school leavers are choosing to stay in education at 16, and successful liaison with Northumberland College means that our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children have access to and an English language speaking course.



For further details about the education of looked after children see the forthcoming **Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2023.**

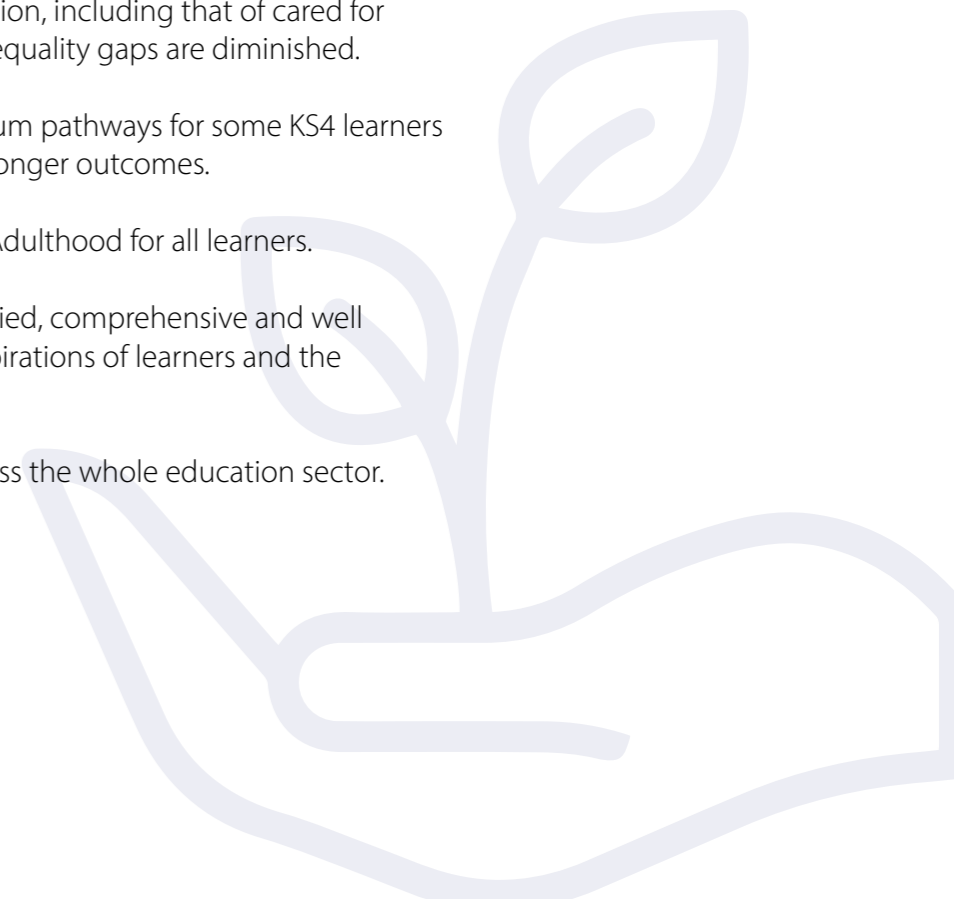
## Next Steps >

Alongside the many successes highlighted within this report a number of development areas have been rightfully identified.

Moving through 2023-24 and beyond the Local Authority will work closely with children, young people, their families, schools, settings and all other partners to refine and extend the current priorities to meet those development areas.

### Key foci for 2024-25 will include:

- > Sufficiency of Early Years provision as entitlements are extended.
- > Ensuring the growth in SEND is well managed and needs are met.
- > Revisiting disadvantaged provision, including that of cared for children, in a drive to ensure inequality gaps are diminished.
- > Developing alternative curriculum pathways for some KS4 learners which enables them to gain stronger outcomes.
- > Strengthening Preparation for Adulthood for all learners.
- > Ensuring the post 16 offer is varied, comprehensive and well communicated to meet the aspirations of learners and the needs of employers.
- > Recruitment and retention across the whole education sector.



## DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this publication is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of production. Data sources are available upon request.

## OTHER FORMATS

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Northumberland County Council,  
County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF.  
Telephone: 0345 600 6400.

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