

# Education and Skills Annual Report 2017/18



## Our Education and Skills Annual Report 2017/18

On behalf of all of the council, I would like to thank all the teachers and support staff in our schools and academies for the huge support and encouragement they give to the children and young people of Northumberland as they progress through our education system.

We want to work even more closely with them to further develop the professional development programme on offer and to build on the excellence that already exists and is evident in every school I visit. This is because we want Northumberland to provide a high quality education system where children make a great start in life, have outcomes that are better than they have been before and where young people are given unrivalled opportunities to pursue further education, university qualifications, apprenticeships and employment.

We are committed to working with all our partners to drive up performance and to make Northumberland a great place to live and learn in. There are however challenges. We have more to do to make the impressive gains in primary and early years translate into success in later years in secondary schools. We need to improve and enhance our offer for children and young people with special needs and we really welcome those mainstream schools that have embraced our call to be more inclusive. We will focus like a laser beam on those schools which "off roll" (removing a pupil from the school roll for the school's best interest rather than the child's) or exclude pupils without just reason.

There are also opportunities. We want to grasp the massive opportunity given by the devolution deal and the creation of the North of Tyne Combined Authority to shape our future through the Education Challenge proposals. This has given us the chance to set our own educational priorities and to seek 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.

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 2018-19 academic year.

**Wayne Daley**

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

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## Foreword

This has been my first year as Executive Director of Children's Services and taking on the responsibility for education has led to a journey of learning which I have really enjoyed.

I have had the absolute pleasure of meeting a number of our pupils from various schools across the region in a range of settings and events. I have been impressed by the highly motivated and engaging young people who are involved in Youth Parliament and Youth Cabinet as well as the National Citizenship Scheme.

Whilst it is clear that there is much to celebrate and that we have made some positive steps towards improving the overall education outcomes for children in Northumberland, there is still some variability when children are not achieving what they should and consequently this has led to children being disadvantaged.

Opportunity North East was announced by the Secretary of State in October 2018 and Northumberland has been identified as one area that will receive some targeted support and intervention. Any support to improve our children's education and outcomes should be welcomed and hopefully will lead to a sustainable programme for the future which all our schools will benefit from.

I am looking forward to the opportunities that 2019 will bring.

**Cath McEvoy-Carr**  
**Executive Director of Children's Services**



## Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2017-2018 Annual Report of the Northumberland Education and Skills Service as it is a chance to celebrate the many successes that our schools, academies and education services had in the last academic year. Our schools and academies have risen to the challenge of high pressure inspections, high stakes examination results and increasing financial pressures to produce some of the best results that the county has seen for many years.

Improving the quality of education in Northumberland is a key priority for the local authority's elected members and both the Corporate Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy place education at the heart of the council and its partners' work. Elected members recognise how vital it is for the future prosperity of Northumberland that our children and young people achieve at the highest levels possible in schools, academies and colleges and that all of our educational establishments are judged to be good or better by Ofsted.

There have been significant improvements in educational attainment in the five years since OFSTED judged that *'... efforts are urgently required to tackle underperformance in a relatively large number of schools in the county and to ensure that pupils' achievement rises to a good standard'*.

My thanks for bringing about the improvement that was needed go to my predecessor Dr Andrew Johnson and to the headteachers and staff of all our schools.

In 2017-18, pupil attainment in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 was in the top 20% nationally, attainment in Key Stage 2 was in line with the national average and attainment at GCSE was higher than the national average. Overall attendance at our schools is higher than that seen nationally, although it is better in first and primary schools than in secondary schools.

Ofsted inspection outcomes for first, primary and middle schools have been strong this year with the vast majority of our schools improving to, or remaining, good or outstanding.

We do continue, however, to have an unacceptable number of secondary schools judged as inadequate over the last three years that have not made sufficient progress over that period to move out of the lowest Ofsted category. Most have now joined multi-academy trusts and we will be working in partnership with the Chief Executives of those Trusts to support them in bringing about the rapid improvement needed to fulfil our ambition of every child in the county attending a good or outstanding school.

Our track record in maintaining or improving a school's effectiveness is frequently noted in Ofsted reports and comments such as *'the school has been supported well by the local authority in difficult circumstances'* and *'representatives from the local authority have provided strong support for new leaders and governors at the school, helping them to improve teaching and learning quickly in a short time'* illustrate that, whilst it is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body or trust to bring about improvement in their school, the local authority still has a key role to play in supporting schools to be more effective.

There have been a number of other notable successes in 2017-18. The Northumberland post-16 Learning and Skills Service, formerly known as Adult Learning, was inspected by Ofsted in June 2018. It was judged to be good overall, with outstanding leadership and management that has taken the service to *'a very high standard'*.

The capital investment in our school building programme is one of the highest in the country and, alongside the investment in new special schools in Ashington and Hexham and the completion of the new Darras Hall Primary School, work is about to start on the Ponteland High School and leisure centre complex.

We do, however, face a number of challenges. Northumberland has a higher than average number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In addition, a significantly higher than average number of those EHCPs state that the pupil requires specialist, rather than mainstream school provision.

Meeting the needs of all young people with special educational needs is the absolute priority for the county but with government funding for special educational needs remaining static in Northumberland for the last three years, this has presented real difficulties. To resolve this, we need to support our mainstream schools and academies to develop more effective inclusive strategies that will enable them to better identify, assess and meet the needs of all their pupils who have special needs to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Most importantly, we need to work with our

schools to remove the barriers that get in the way of children and young people with additional needs being fully included in all areas of mainstream school life.

If improving the way that we meet the needs of children and young people with SEND will make Northumberland a more inclusive county, then significantly reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions that take place in Northumberland's schools will further enhance that inclusive status. It is not acceptable for 115 pupils to be excluded permanently and for 4426 fixed term exclusions to be given out in one academic year as happened in 2017-2018. Many of the children who were excluded were extremely vulnerable young people, a high proportion have special educational needs, some will never return to mainstream school and, for all of them, it is a life changing and damaging experience. Home education is not the answer for these young people and, as for any child who should be in school but isn't, there are safeguarding concerns. I accept that the local authority has a role to play in bringing this situation under control and I look forward to working closely with all of our schools in 2018-2019 to develop innovative and appropriate solutions for this issue.

It is clear that we have some of the best schools and headteachers nationally in Northumberland and that we have the potential to be one of the highest performing local authorities in the country - but we are not there yet. To achieve this, we all need to work more closely together to take on the collective and moral responsibility for the academic and personal achievement of every child and young person in the county. When one school begins to struggle, for whatever reason, then it is up to every other school and academy in Northumberland to come to their support, regardless of distance, governance or sector, and offer their resource and expertise. This is a wonderful county for children and young people to grow up in and each of them deserves and is entitled to a high quality education that will provide them with the best possible start to their lives.

I hope that you enjoy reading this report. There is a lot to celebrate within it.

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



## Executive Summary

1. Ofsted have judged 96% of early years providers in Northumberland to be good or outstanding. The number of children assessed as having a good level of development at the end of the Reception year is 4% above the national average at 75%.
2. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 were above the national average in 2017-18. Outcomes in Key Stage 2 English were also above the national average, although outcomes in mathematics are 1% below the national average.
3. In Key Stage 4, the number of young people achieving a strong GCSE pass in English and mathematics increased by 4% on the previous year. Attainment 8, a measure of eight GCSE subjects, was above the national average and Progress 8, the rate of progress in those subjects, was virtually in-line with the national average.
4. The Northumberland post-16 Learning and Skills Service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2018. It was judged to be good overall, with outstanding leadership and management and apprenticeship provision.
5. Meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to be a key priority for the county council. Particular growth has been noted in the specialist provision and support required by young people with special educational needs aged 16-25.
6. The Northumberland Safeguarding Children's Board continues to meet on a regular basis and, in 2017-18, explored in depth areas such as neglect, domestic violence, children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care.
7. Nearly 200 children were being home educated by July 2018, with less than half of those families agreeing to an optional visit by a local authority officer to check the child's welfare and educational progress. This remains an area of concern for the local authority.
8. School attendance in Northumberland continues to improve and is now higher than the national average. Attendance is better in first and primary schools than in middle and secondary schools.
9. The 115 permanent exclusions and 4,426 fixed term exclusions in 2017-18 is a cause of great concern. Working alongside schools, the County



Council will propose a number of strategies in 2018-19 to address this issue.

10. Nine schools became academies in 2017-18, with a further 17 schools expected to convert in 2018-19. Three schools in the county closed.
11. The Council invested more than £23m in improving and adapting schools through a combination of new builds, extensions, alterations and refurbishments. Major projects saw Darras Hall Primary School rebuilt at a cost of £7m and the extension to Duchess's High School being completed in time for September 2018.

## 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 480 Ofsted registered early-years providers in Northumberland, 333 of which take funded education children.
2. Of these early years providers, 96% are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding, which is above the national average of 94%. These hugely impressive inspection outcomes indicate 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 4% higher than the national average. This is the fifth consecutive year of improvement in Northumberland and the third consecutive year of being above the national average.
4. 40% of looked after children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Stage compared with 43% in 2017.
5. Girls continue to outperform boys at the end of the Foundation Stage.
6. Around a quarter of children with SEND achieve a good level of development.
7. The disadvantage gap, defined as the difference in outcomes between those children entitled to free school meals and the rest, has closed over time but remains too large at 22%.
8. The local authority has worked with early years settings to develop 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.
9. Currently, 91% of those who are eligible take up this entitlement, which gives them the best possible start to their early education. Participation rates in early years education have been increasing for the last four years and are now significantly above the national average.
10. 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, in particular, must be diminished rapidly 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, 86% of primary schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. This is an improving picture and is 1% behind the national average. The challenges of the current Ofsted framework, however, continue to stretch some schools in Northumberland. This is particularly the case for small rural schools where any lack of capacity in teaching or leadership can have a most dramatic effect on Ofsted judgements.
2. There are clear strengths in primary education in Northumberland but a number of key areas for improvement have emerged. Maintaining above national average attainment in all three subjects is vital, as is improving outcomes for boys and, in particular, for 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.
3. Phonics teaching is strong across the county. As a result, 85% of Year 1 children meet the expected standard in the statutory screening 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) and disadvantaged learners are improving over time. For other children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), outcomes continue to slightly decrease each year, a trend that needs to be reversed. 75% of looked after children achieved the Year 1 phonics standard, compared with 80% the previous year albeit with small cohorts of less than ten children in both years.
4. The teaching of core subjects is generally good across Key Stage 1. As a consequence, 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 level is also above the national average. This has been the pattern for the last three years. Girls continue to outperform boys in each subject. The disadvantaged gap remains and, as in the Early Years, needs to close rapidly. At 71%, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics for looked after children at Key Stage 1 has improved significantly when compared with 20% the previous year.

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

As at 31st August 2018

# 20% GRADED OUTSTANDING

Abbeyfields First (Academy)  
Alnwick Swansfield Park Primary  
Beaufront First  
Belsay Primary  
Broomhaugh First  
Broomley First  
Cambo First  
Chollerton First  
Darras Hall Primary  
Ellington Primary  
Harbottle First  
Hexham The Sele First

Hipsburn Primary  
Holy Island First  
Kielder First  
Lowick CoE First  
Morpeth First  
Morpeth Stobhillgate First  
Norham St Ceolwulf's First  
Ovingham First  
Shilbottle Primary  
Stamfordham Primary  
Whalton Primary  
Wylam First

# 66% GRADED GOOD

Acomb First  
Allendale Primary  
Amble Links First  
Ashington Bothal Primary  
Beaconhill Primary  
Bedlington Station Primary  
Bedlington Stead Lane Primary  
Bedlington West End First  
Bedlington Whitley Memorial First  
Belford First  
Bellingham First  
Berwick St Mary's First  
Blyth Horton Grange Primary  
Blyth Morpeth Road Primary (Academy)  
Blyth New Delaval Primary  
Blyth Newsham Primary  
Blyth St Wilfrid's RC Primary  
Branton Primary  
Broomhill First  
Burnside Primary  
Corbridge CoE First  
Cragside Primary  
Cramlington Village Primary (Academy)  
Ellingham Primary  
Felton Primary  
Grange View First  
Greenhaugh First  
Greenhead Primary  
Guide Post Mowbray Primary  
Hareside Primary  
Heddon St Andrew's Primary  
Henshaw Primary  
Hexham First  
Hexham St Mary's RC First  
Holy Trinity First  
Holywell First  
Humshaugh First  
Longhorsley First  
Longhoughton Primary  
Mickley First  
Morpeth All Saints First  
New Hartley First  
Newbrough Primary  
Northburn Primary  
Otterburn First  
Pegswood Primary  
Ponteland Primary  
Ponteland Richard Coates Primary  
Prudhoe West First (Academy)

Red Row First  
Rothbury First  
Scremerston First  
Seahouses Primary  
Seaton Delaval First  
Seaton Sluice First  
Seghill First  
Shanklea Primary  
Slaley First  
Spittal First  
St Aidan's Primary  
St Bede's Primary  
St Cuthbert's RC First, Berwick  
St Matthew's Primary (Academy)  
St Michael's Primary, Alnwick  
St Paul's RC Primary, Alnwick  
St Peter's and Paul's Catholic Primary (Academy)  
St Robert's First, Morpeth  
Stakeford Primary  
Stannington First  
Swarland Primary  
Thropton First (Academy)  
Tweedmouth West First  
Wark First  
Warkworth Primary  
West Woodburn First  
Whitley Chapel First  
Whittingham Primary  
Whittonstall First  
Wooler First

# 11% REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

Amble First  
Ashington Central Primary  
Blyth Malvin's Close Primary (Academy)  
Cambois Primary  
Choppington Primary  
Cramlington Eastlea Primary  
Embleton Vincent Edwards Primary  
Guide Post Ringway Primary  
Haltwhistle Lower School (Academy)  
Hugh Joicey Ford First  
Linton Primary  
Prudhoe Castle First  
Tritlington First  
Tweedmouth Prior Park First

# 3% INADEQUATE

Adderlane First (Academy)  
Croftway Primary (Academy)  
Whitfield (Academy)  
Haydon Bridge Shaftoe Trust Primary

# 1 NEW ACADEMY AWAITING GRADING

NCEA Bishop's Primary School (Academy)



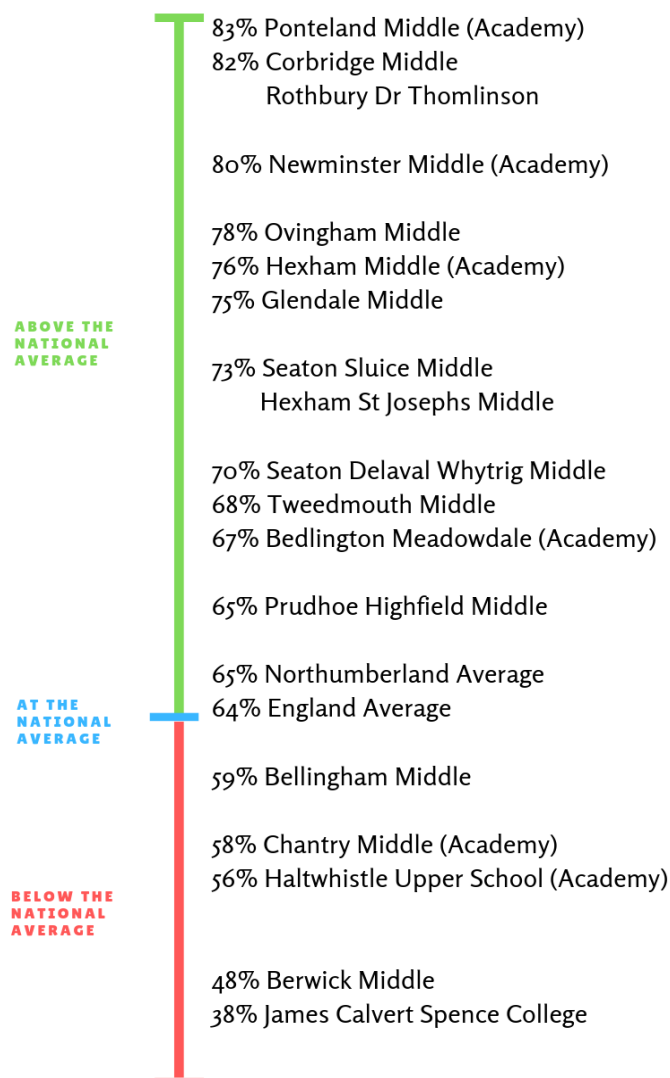
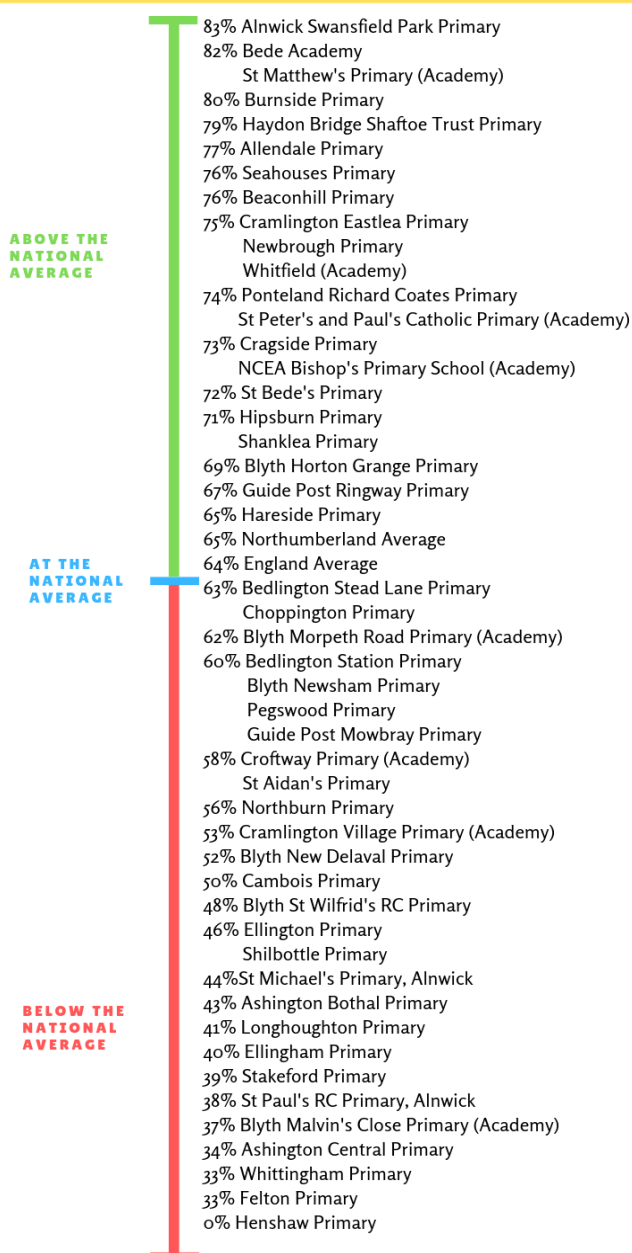
5. Outcomes across Key Stage 2 are in line with the national average. There is, however, too much variation both between schools and within schools. The number of children who reached or exceeded the expected standard in all three of mathematics, reading and writing increased by 4% and was driven by good improvements in reading and mathematics. As in previous years, the disadvantaged gap remains too large. Boys fall further behind girls in reading and writing although they do catch up somewhat in mathematics, particular those more-able boys who outperform the more-able girls. Mathematics attainment is now just below the national average, which is still unacceptable, and support will be provided to help schools to improve mathematical outcomes for pupils.
6. 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 attainment for looked after children are 30% (compared to 29% in 2017) with 3 of the 10 pupils in the official cohort achieving the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and mathematics.



### % ACHIEVING EXPECTED STANDARD OR BETTER IN READING, WRITING AND MATHS

In Northumberland Middle Schools 2017/18

In Northumberland Primary Schools 2017/18



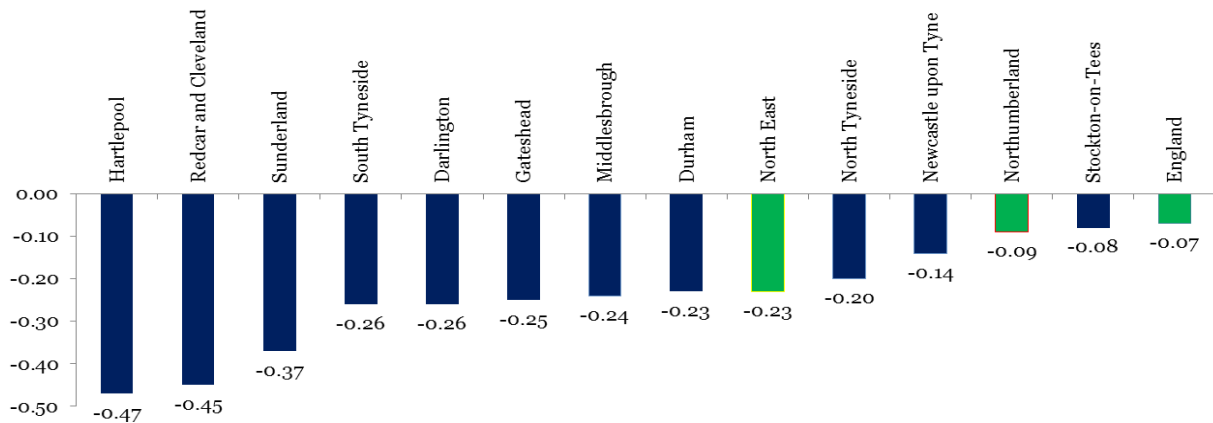


# Secondary Education (Key Stages 3 and 4)

- 1. Following the reforms to the GCSE examination system, which brought in a new grading scale of 1 (lowest) to 9 (highest), assessment by examination only and more demanding content, 2018 saw pupils sit the new reformed examinations in over 20 subjects.
- 2. The progress made and 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 published 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 2018, Northumberland secondary schools achieved a Progress 8 score of -0.09 which was a strong improvement on 2017, was the second highest of the twelve north-east authorities and was virtually in-line with the national average.

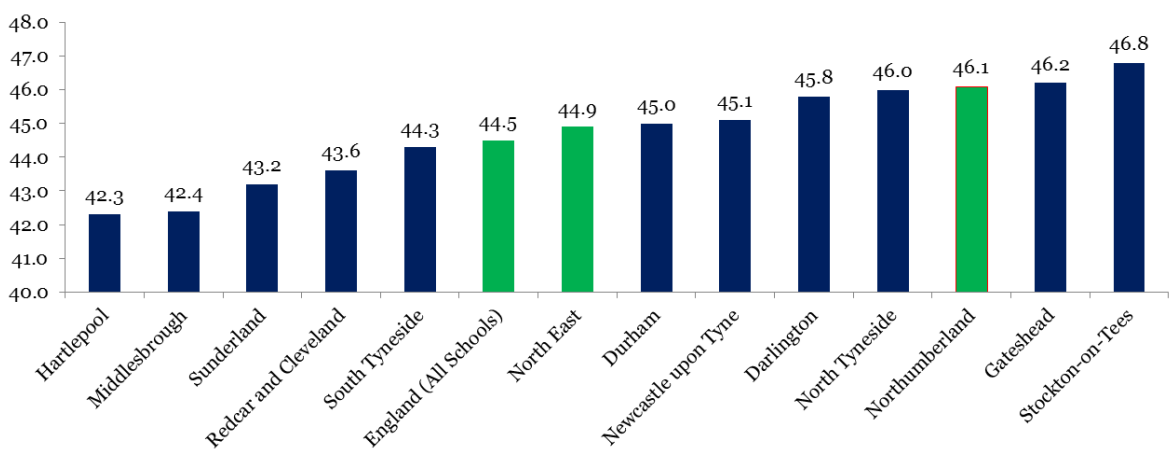


Progress 8 Scores 2017/18



- 4. Similarly, the Attainment 8 score of 46.1 was 1.4 points above that achieved in 2017, was higher than the national average and placed Northumberland third amongst the north east local authorities. 43.5% of Northumberland pupils achieved a strong pass in GCSE English and maths, an increase of 4.0% on 2017 and 0.4% above the national average. Once again the improvement is welcome but needs to be sustained over time, with the variation across schools reduced.

Attainment 8 Scores 2017/18



5. 18% of looked after Year 11 pupils achieved at least Grade 4+ in English and mathematics GCSE which is the same as the national average for all looked after young people in 2017 and compares with 17% in Northumberland in 2017.
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 our ambition.
7. The average points score in EBacc subjects nationally was 3.85. Northumberland pupils achieved an average points score of 3.92 and 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 19 out of 33 middle/secondary/high schools to be Good or Outstanding. This is well below the national average and, unfortunately, is likely to be so for a number of years as the rate of improvement needed at many of the schools judged to be 'inadequate' has been slow. A number of these schools are now academies and it is expected that they will show sustained improvement over the next two years.
9. As in the primary sector, the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils continues to be a high priority. Whilst there are signs of the gap closing, it is not closing quickly enough. We do expect, however, to see the positive impact of the investment made in early years and primary education continue into the secondary sector in the next few years.

## HOW ARE OUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADED BY OFSTED?

As at 31st August 2018

**6% GRADED OUTSTANDING**

Ponteland Middle (Academy)  
King Edward VI Academy

**52% GRADED GOOD**

Alnwick the Duchess's  
Astley Community High  
Bede Academy  
Bedlington Meadowdale (Academy)  
Berwick Middle  
Corbridge Middle  
Cramlington Learning Village (Academy)  
Glendale Middle  
Hexham Middle (Academy)  
Hexham Queen Elizabeth High (Academy)  
Hexham St Josephs Middle  
Ovingham Middle  
Ponteland High  
Prudhoe High  
Prudhoe Highfield Middle  
Rothbury Dr Thomlinson  
Seaton Sluice Middle

**REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT 27%**

Bellingham Middle  
Blyth Academy  
Chantry Middle (Academy)  
James Calvert Spence College  
NCEA Duke's Secondary Academy  
Newminster Middle (Academy)  
Seaton Delaval Whytrig Middle  
St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy  
Tweedmouth Middle



**15% INADEQUATE**

Berwick Academy  
Haydon Bridge High  
Haltwhistle Upper School (Academy)  
Ashington Academy  
Bedlington Academy





## Post 16 Learning and Skills

1. Participation in further education in Northumberland is above the national average overall, but it varies across the county, with lower participation in the more rural areas. There have, however, been good improvements in increasing the number of vocational training opportunities in north and west Northumberland through planned changes to the council's Learning & Skills Service. The Service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2018. It received a hugely positive report, being judged Grade 2 'Good' overall, but with outstanding leadership and management.
2. The number of looked after learners progressing into post-16 further education has remained consistently high over for the last three years and is significantly above the national average, although the current figure of 70% does represent a drop since last year.
3. In total, there were nearly 21,800 further education enrolments in 2017-18 from Northumberland residents and over 80% are with either the council's Learning and Skills Service or Northumberland College. Achievement rates (a resident starting and successfully completing their course) for further education in Northumberland averages 85% across all providers and ages which is above the national average.
4. There were approximately 2400 apprenticeship starts in Northumberland in 2017/18. 11% of the apprenticeship starts in the North east are from Northumberland, ranking the county 3rd in the north east. Northumberland's overall achievement rate for completion of apprenticeships is 72% and is above the national average of 67%. The County Council's apprenticeship achievement rate is outstanding in 2017/18. Across all ages, 88% completed their apprenticeship compared to 67% nationally. In addition, 82% completed on time compared to 60% nationally. Most importantly, 98.8% of council apprentices had a positive destination at the end of their apprenticeship in 2017/2018.
5. Although participation has had a downward trend nationally and regionally, the Council has been strongly influential in increasing recruitment of apprentices since the start of the Apprenticeship Levy in May 17 and has bucked the national trends. The Council's "We're Making it Work" Apprenticeship Strategy has been particularly successful and won the National Apprenticeship Service Northeast Regional Award for Excellence in Recruitment and was Highly Commended as Large Employer of the Year in 2018.
6. All of the Northumberland providers are judged by OFSTED to be 'Good' in 2017-18; however, the FE Commissioner has intervened at Northumberland College following concerns about their financial plan and performance, declining achievement rates, failure to meet minimum standards for apprenticeship delivery and a fall in the number of 16 – 18 learners.
7. Collaborative working in Northumberland is helping harder to reach young people including those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to access more opportunities for learning and work. New learning programmes, careers events and work related learning opportunities have led to better support for the most vulnerable and those young people that will not get educational opportunities elsewhere. The NEET rate in Northumberland is now one of the lowest in the region at 4.5%, which compares favourably with the national average of 6.0%. Northumberland is very effective at tracking young people and only 0.6% of young people have unknown destinations which is significantly and consistently better than the national average.





## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

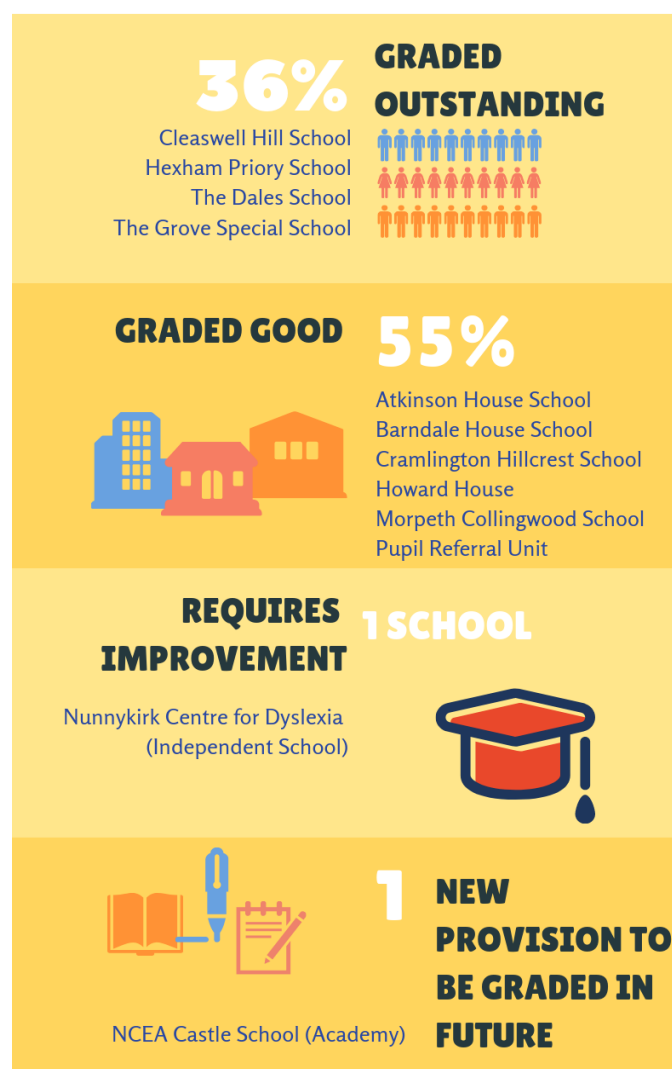
1. Northumberland County Council lead the Local Area education, health and care collaboration in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25.
2. A number of key appointments in 2017-18 has enabled the Local Area to make significant progress in developing important areas of work within SEND.
3. Following a period of consultation with all stakeholders and children, young people and their families, Northumberland's revised SEND Strategy was launched in January 2018. In It Together, Northumberland's Parent Carer Forum, supported the development of the SEND Strategy to ensure that the voice of children and young people are more central to the whole Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process.
4. The most prevalent areas of need identified continue to be moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health and speech, language and communication needs. Data from the SEND Panel indicates that 45% of pupils applying for an EHCP have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.
5. Northumberland County Council has worked with the schools' SEN coordinators (SENCo) to develop clear guidance that supports the consistent application of a Graduated Approach for children and young people with SEND in our settings and schools. This was launched at the 'Spotlight on SEND' conference for all schools on July 2018.
6. A Mainstream Local Offer has been co-produced with schools, parents, carers and learners and identifies what any SEND learner and their family can expect from their school and sets out a commitment to inclusive practice in the county.
7. The council's SEND Support Services delivered training to large numbers of school staff to assist mainstream schools to better support SEND learners with areas of need relating to behaviour support, emotional literacy support, resilience training and autism awareness.



8. All Statements of Special Educational Need were converted to Education Health Care Plans by the national deadline of 31st March 2018. The council continue to issue EHCPs within the 20 week national timescale. A multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework has been established to ensure that EHCPs are of the expected quality. In addition, training has been delivered to education, health and social care teams to ensure that they provide high quality advice and guidance.
9. The numbers of EHCPs has continued to rise, which matches the national trend. The national average for EHCPs for children and young people is 2.9%; Northumberland currently stands at 3.1% with a rising trend. Particular growth is noted within post-16 and for those aged 20-25.
10. Northumberland's early health checks continue to be timely and very effective in identifying needs as soon as possible. Waiting times for access to speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy are within timescales which enables children and young people to access support in a timely manner.
11. Northumberland has a higher than average number of pupils with EHCPs whose needs are met in specialist provision when compared to most other local authorities. This is due to a combination of factors, including both inconsistent inclusive educational practice across Northumberland schools and an increasingly strong parental preference for specialist educational placements.
12. The council has developed additional specialist capacity within Ashington and Hexham and is exploring options for the future.



## HOW ARE OUR SPECIAL SCHOOLS GRADED BY OFSTED?



13. A jointly produced action plan has been produced between the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust and the NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Groups to reduce waiting times for pupils' mental health support. This plan has resulted in an improvement in overall performance but further development is required to meet the rapidly growing needs.
14. The 2018 Ofsted inspection of the Northumberland Post 16 Learning and Skills Service highlighted that managers successfully prioritise the recruitment of learners and apprentices who face significant barriers to learning.



## Safeguarding

1. The Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board's Education Reference Sub-Group, chaired by the Virtual School Headteacher, continued to meet termly to promote learning on safeguarding themes identified by the group members. Themes such as neglect, domestic violence, children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care were thoroughly explored.
2. Additional support was provided to schools, academies and alternative providers to review the safeguarding standards audit (Section 175) and any subsequent actions, to plan safeguarding learning walks and to support the safeguarding training needs of governors.
3. The Northumberland Schools' Safeguarding and Wellbeing team provided advice to schools on the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education, both of which were revised in 2018. In addition, it carried out investigations on behalf of the local authority into any safeguarding complaints. From September 2017, 24 complaints regarding safeguarding standards in schools from Ofsted and nine additional complaints from members of the public were investigated. A further 31 complaints were all resolved in school with the actions identified for improvement being monitored by the Education and Skills Service.
4. Training was provided for 105 school governors on their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, 100 School Designated Safeguarding Leads on the Refresh programme, 40 new Designated Safeguarding Leads and 28 schools that requested whole school safeguarding training.
5. Following Operation Encompass, refreshed procedures and protocols were put in place to support the safeguarding of very vulnerable children in school. In addition, the new post of Education Liaison Officer for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was introduced.
6. Since 2015, every school and academy has completed a safeguarding standards audit which incorporates statutory and Ofsted requirements. This annual safeguarding assurance is well-embedded and supports education settings to improve the welfare and safety of children and young people.
7. With well-established multi-agency procedures for identifying, tracking and finding children missing from education in Northumberland, the number of incidents is very low compared to local and national data and, for five consecutive years, there have been no children recorded as missing from education or who have left the area and not been found or placed onto the lost pupil system. In 2018-19, 19 pupils were referred directly to the Education Welfare team as missing from education and all were found. A significant proportion of those reported missing attended alternative provision or were on part time timetables. This is an issue that schools need to take into consideration when reviewing their behaviour policies.
8. Procedures for identifying and supporting children who do not receive their entitlement to full-time education are effective. Over 400 pupils were identified in 2017-18 and supported back into appropriate, full-time education. Many of these children had special educational needs or were known to children's social care. Highly effective pupil tracking systems ensure that schools can quickly identify those children who are missing from school and may be at risk of or subject to sexual exploitation and/or criminal exploitation. Schools can then make timely referrals to children's social care and receive appropriate support.
9. By July 2018, 198 children were known to be electively home educated in Northumberland. Less than half of those families agreed to an optional visit from an Education Welfare Officer which means that reassurance about the safety of these children and the quality of the education they are receiving is not consistent. The profile of the group is concerning, with 52 of the 198 pupils being in Year 11, 69 having an identified SEND, and 45 receiving interventions from Early Help or social care. The majority of home educated children reside in the south-east of the county. In 2017-18, 23 pupils returned to school placements after a period of elective home education but none of them returned to the same school that they left.





## Inclusion & Social Mobility

1. Absence data for the academic year 2016-17 was published in May 2018. It tells a good story overall for Northumberland, with performance either equal to or better than the previous year.
2. Primary absence was 3.9%, compared to 4.0% nationally. Secondary absence was 5.2% compared to the national average of 5.4%. Overall attendance in Northumberland for both primary and secondary combined was 4.7%, which matches the national average.
3. Overall 'persistent absence' (those pupils having attendance of less than 90% which equates to missing a half day a week every week of the school year) was 10.3% compared to 10.8% nationally.
4. The absence data of children with SEND indicates that in Northumberland more children with SEND regularly attend school than nationally. Special schools overall absence increased to 8.8%, but it is still better than the national average of 9.7%.
5. The Education Welfare Service issued 619 Fixed Penalty Notices to parents in 2017-18 to enforce parental responsibility for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. 487 Attendance Warning Notices were issued prior to legal action being taken and all 89 prosecutions in 2017-18 were successful. This has contributed to the improvement in overall attendance in primary and secondary phases.
6. The Pupil Placement Panel was implemented in 2016 with the intention of stabilising education placements for the most vulnerable learners and reducing between-school pupil mobility during the academic year. Overall mobility in Northumberland has now started to reduce but there is still work to be done to improve opportunities for pupils whose behaviour is challenging, as indicated last year when just eight permanently excluded pupils were successfully re-integrated into mainstream school after alternative provision intervention.
7. The total of 115 permanent exclusions for 2017-18 was the highest recorded in more than ten years and a sharp rise from 40 in 2015-16. In addition, there were 4426 fixed-term exclusions in 2017-18 with 2409 of those coming from one academy. Reducing exclusions is a key priority for the council and, even though nationally the number and rate of permanent exclusions have increased steeply, the situation in Northumberland is critical and needs to be addressed urgently.
8. The majority of pupils permanently excluded from mainstream schools will then attend alternative provision. The local authority's model for quality assuring alternative provision received positive recognition from the DfE, following a field visit in

March 2018 and the subsequent publication of the report *'Alternative Provision Market Analysis Research'* in October 2018. The government's Department for Education is considering introducing legislation to make schools more accountable for the children they place in alternative provision and to provide a legal mechanism to hold schools to account for permanently excluded pupils.

9. The Education Other Than at School wellbeing team delivers the council's service for pupils with health and medical needs, including those with mental health needs, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, and is responsible for those pupils' outcomes, which are good overall. A total of 16 different venues were used to deliver tuition on a one to one or small group basis to 114 pupils and the average length of time in provision was nine months.

## Northumberland Virtual School

1. Education outcomes as identified throughout this report for Northumberland's looked after children compare well to national averages and the children's progress from their starting point of entry into care is consistently good in every phase, although it dipped in 2018. Cohort size is usually quite small, so year-on-year comparisons can be tenuous.
2. School placement stability is good according to the Children's Commissioner's Stability Index. Just 8% of looked after children had a mid-year school move in 2017-18 compared to 10% nationally with only 2% having at least one school move in both 2015-16 and 2016-17 compared to 4% nationally. A focus on reducing exclusions and strengthening transition arrangements should have a further positive impact on stabilising school placements.
3. No looked after child has been permanently excluded from school since 2008. This has been achieved despite evidence from the Department for Education that children in care are nearly twice as likely to have a permanent exclusion as all other children. There has, however, been a dramatic increase in the number of fixed term exclusions from 38 in 2017 to 128 in 2018.
4. Every looked after child now has an online electronic personal education plan (ePEP) which allows for the swifter sharing of information amongst professionals about the planned education support for individual looked after children. A joint project between the Virtual School and Northumberland Adolescent Services will see the merger of ePEP information, social worker information and good quality careers' guidance to create a post-16 Pathway Plan by the end of Year 11 for each looked after pupil.

## Equalities and schools

1. In January 2018, according to the School Census, there were 57 community languages spoken in Northumberland schools in addition to English. This was an increase of seven languages from 2017. The languages spoken by the most significant groups of bilingual pupils in the county's schools are Polish, Punjabi and Chinese. 37% of Northumberland schools or academies have no children at all who speak any community languages other than English.
2. In 2017-18, 95% of the pupils in Northumberland schools were of white British heritage, with 5% black, Asian or minority ethnic. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Irish Traveller pupils represented 0.16% of the pupil population.
3. Northumberland continued to welcome refugee families from Syria in 2017-18 and saw growing numbers of asylum seeker families dispersed within the county, mostly into the south east. The children from these families have enjoyed a warm welcome in their schools, and members of some of the Syrian families have become black and minority ethnic role models and have shared their experiences of coming to the UK and settling into new homes.
4. The county commissioned Show Racism the Red Card to deliver their race equality and football fitness educational workshops in 22 schools each academic year.
5. The Stonewall Education Champions programme assists the local authority in prioritising and embedding work around tackling and preventing homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic bullying and promoting lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender inclusion.
6. Northumberland's inaugural, family friendly Pride took place in June 2018, and an estimated 5,000 people took part in a march through Alnwick town centre to the rugby club where many families, children and young people were welcomed at the Children and Young People's Zone.
7. In 2018, the county partnered with Children North East and Leading Link to deliver an exciting DfE pilot that included summer camps for children identified by their schools that were available and would enjoy taking part. Over 100 children enjoyed four weeks of sport, bush craft, visits, healthy cooking and eating. The pilot will be evaluated by Northumbria University and the findings will help inform the DfE about how best to structure and fund summer camps in schools in future.





## School Organisation and Resources

1. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 1996 to ensure that there are a sufficient number of school places within its area and that within such provision, parental choice, diversity and fair access are promoted. The power of local authorities to influence how and where school places are provided within its area has been reducing for a significant number of years as a result of national policies. Local authorities are now unable to open their own community schools as every new school opened must be a free school, which is effectively an academy.
2. As voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools are their own admissions authorities, they can increase their planned admission number without consultation. The council, therefore, tries to maintain good working relationships with and between all types of schools to ensure that there are sufficient good school places available in the right places in the county for all the children and young people.
3. Although it is now not a statutory requirement, the council published the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 in July 2018 which 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. The plan will be refreshed on an annual basis to reflect updated statistical information and any changes to school circumstances.

4. The provision of sufficient school places in Northumberland presents a number of challenges. There are high levels of surplus places in the rural areas of the county, which has led to ongoing scrutiny by the Department for Education, and a growing demand for places in some specific areas of the urban south east. A key challenge is to ensure that there are viable schools within reasonable travelling distance for most children in the rural communities. The council also has to ensure that those schools and academies that are their own admissions authorities offer sufficient places in each school partnership area to reflect their local populations. Overall, however, and with the exception of some partnerships in the south east and central areas of the county, pupil numbers in Northumberland continue to decline.







5. A long and emotive consultation on the provision of education in the west of the county took place in 2018 and resulted in approval for the reorganisation of the remaining maintained first schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership to become primaries in September 2019. The proposal to close Bellingham Middle School in 2019 was rejected following an appeal to the Office of Schools Adjudicator.
6. In the 2017/18 academic year, nine schools became academies as a result of self-conversion or sponsorship and a tenth school converted on 1 September 2018. A further six schools in the Ponteland Partnership plan to convert in early 2019, and ten schools in the Prudhoe Partnership and one in the Hexham Partnership are planning to convert as part of the Tyne Community Learning Trust in Spring 2019. A further three schools in the county - Acklington CE First School, Netherton Northside First School and Belford St Mary's CE Middle School - closed in August 2018 after falling pupil numbers resulted in a lack of viability.
7. Where a new housing development is forecast to create a demand for school places in excess of those available in the catchment area, the local authority will seek a contribution from the developers that reflects the likely costs of the additional school places required. Since April 2017, £31.3 million has been requested in respect of 68 developments, with funding of £10.8 million agreed to date.
8. Over 7500 children use school transport. 900 children with SEND are provided with transport (including 300 post-16) and 696 children benefit from transport provided on grounds of religious belief at a total cost to the council of £21.6 million.

## Admissions

1. In 2017/2018, there were 1,433 in-year transfers of pupils from one school to another, with 6% of these being pupils moving into the county from other local authority areas. Parental choice cannot always be met, especially in those areas where there is a continuing pressure on places.
2. There is a high demand for school places in Morpeth and Blyth. Capital funding has allowed additional places to be created at New Delaval and Horton Grange primary schools in Blyth from September 2018, with additional places planned for Newsham Primary School from September 2019. In Morpeth, an additional class of 30 places at Chantry Middle School in Year 5 funded by the council.
3. Funding has been secured for Beaconhill Primary School in Cramlington in order to expand it from a one form entry primary school to two form entry from 2021.
4. Northumberland is very successful in meeting parental preference for school places. In September 2017, 96.5% of parents' first choice entry to Reception class and 98.2% of first choice entry to secondary school were met.
5. In June 2018, the School Admissions Team merged with the Inclusion Team. This has led to better support for hard to place and vulnerable pupils with their transition between schools and has resulted in a more holistic approach with better outcomes for pupils.

## GETTING YOUR SCHOOL CHOICE IN NORTHUMBERLAND

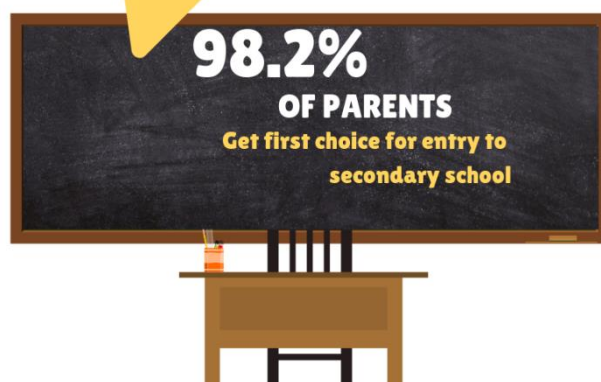
In September 2017

**96.5%**  
OF PARENTS

Get first choice of school for  
entry to reception class

**98.2%**  
OF PARENTS

Get first choice for entry to  
secondary school



## Schools Capital Investment

1. The Council has invested more than £23m this year in improving and adapting the existing school estate through a combination of new builds, extensions, alterations and refurbishment projects. A £6.8m capital investment in the Ponteland Partnership saw Darras Hall Primary School rebuilt to providing outstanding teaching and learning accommodation. The construction of an extension to the Duchess's Community School in Alnwick increased its capacity to accommodate the extra pupils resulting from the reorganisation of the Alnwick partnership to two-tier.
2. Capital investment of over £3m increased the number of SEN places in two settings across the county. An additional three classrooms were provided through the construction of a first floor extension to the existing Hexham Priory school building and will increase capacity at the school from 80 to 112. Ashdale, a new special educational needs provision developed at the former Ashington High School Annexe, will further support children with social, emotional and mental health needs by creating 50 additional primary aged places.
3. Just over £2m of government capital funding was used to increase 3 and 4 year old 30-hours free provision in Seahouses, Ashington, Bedlington and Blyth.
4. The relocation of Morpeth First School from its current site at Goose Hill to the Loansdean site started in summer 2018. Capital investment of £7.05m will see the school rebuilt and welcoming pupils at the start of the new academic year in September 2019.
5. £2.8 million was invested in 2017-18 across the school estate through the School Capital Investment Programme (SCIP) on projects such as replacing deteriorated and inefficient steel windows with new double glazed units, replacing or improving existing flat roofs, improving school heating with new boilers and distribution systems and upgrading electrical systems, including new switchgear and emergency lighting. Over the last seven years, the council has invested over £26 million to improve the school estate through SCIP. In addition, eight schools benefited from works totalling £215K in this year to improve accessibility and facilities for pupils with special educational needs.

## School Meals

1. The school meals service worked with 57 schools within Northumberland. The service worked with an external company who provide the hardware and software to promote the benefits of electronic pre-ordering of school meals. Fifteen schools went live and each of these schools increased their uptake of school meals.
2. The school meals service continued to maintain their accreditation with the Soil Association Food for Life bronze award. 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. In addition, the county continued to work with other agencies to promote the health and wellbeing of the pupils.
3. Over £340k was received for the Healthy Pupil Capital fund as part of the new sugar tax levy. A competition for schools took place and the successful schools started to implement their 18 month projects to help promote active healthy lifestyles.





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