



Annual Report for Education 2020



Northumberland
County Council



Welcome to the Education & Skills Annual Report 2020. In what can only be described as a turbulent and extraordinary time for education, businesses and communities; we are proud to have made some key areas of progress this year, due to the unwavering dedication of our staff here at the Council and across our network of schools, pre-school settings, academies, colleges, agencies and other support services.

The support offered to children and young people across Northumberland continues to improve as a direct result of the tireless efforts and dedication of teachers, support staff and partners; efforts which have triumphed through adversity this year as we tackled the international Covid pandemic.

In this ever-changing landscape there is always more to do, and this report marks a significant evolution in our approach, as well as a continued dedication to maintaining a keen eye on our key priority areas. The past 12 months have dictated an agile and flexible approach to our delivery and support services, in order to ensure continuity of learning across the county at our 164 schools, post 16 and other learning providers.

Further strengthening our relationships with educational establishments across the county, has seen strong communication links and support mechanisms alongside timely advice and guidance, underpinning operations throughout the Covid pandemic. The infrastructure put in place in March, taking us through to the end of August, enabled quick decision making and actions to equip and support schools through a very difficult period.

Despite the most challenging of circumstances, there has been much to celebrate this year, including:

- an agile approach to learning with digital classrooms and virtual support to facilitate continuous learning during these unprecedented times
- the growing number of primary and secondary schools that have been judged to be good or outstanding by OFSTED
- falling absenteeism and reduced permanent exclusions in most settings, shows a unified effort to reduce the number of pupils missing vital education time
- thousands of apprenticeship and traineeship starts across the county reflect a rich learning offer to widen horizons and raise aspirations with diversified routes into employment

Reflecting on the evolving opportunities in the local area and indeed nationally, we will continue to equip and inspire the next generation as well as empowering existing workforces looking to upskill and reskill across 2021 and beyond, as we navigate a new normal together.

Our ever-present motivation to support skills development and our learners' appetite for education and training, continues to drive forward hundreds of success stories of boosted confidence, career enhancements and fresh starts.

Maximising our investment in skills will help in our national Covid recovery to rebuild communities and industries with a diverse and skilled workforce ready to deliver the skills needed to support a successful UK economy.

We have tried in this year's report to capture a snapshot of resilience, of achievement and of ambition - to recognise our collective journey and the key milestones already accomplished.

Cath McEvoy-Carr

Executive Director of
Adult Social Care and
Children's Services

Audrey Kingham

Interim Director,
Education and Skills

Colin Guy Renner-Thompson

Portfolio Holder for
Children and Young People

Education data at a glance

Early Years

2019-2020 saw our nationally reported figures for take up of early learning for eligible 2-year-olds reach a high of 92%, which placed us third highest in the country. Our nationally reported 3/4-year-old take up figures hit 115% (some children come from out of county to attend our nurseries) and placed us first nationally. There were no recorded outcomes in the foundation stage profile due to Covid, (previous years placed us above the national average) but the monitoring of schools and settings demonstrated great provision across the county. Throughout the Covid crisis the vast majority of families who needed a nursery place for their child were accommodated.

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Primary outcomes in 2019-2020 were not recorded in their usual manner due to the impact of Covid. The vast majority of our first and primary schools were supported by the school improvement team and we continue to know all our schools well. Reports from the team indicated strong impact across key stage 1 and key stage 2 with a high focus on maths and English progression in conjunction with the broader provision of foundation subjects. A focus on SEND learners remained a high priority across the sector, with the graduated approach making further impact in many cases. The only reported academic outcome in first and primary schools was the Phonics Screening Check where Northumberland remained above the national average with a combined score of 80.4%.

Vulnerable learners

There are **10 special schools and academies** (plus Pupil Referral Unit) across Northumberland

The **% of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** applications completed in 20 weeks was **87.4%** in 2020, compared to a national average of 60.4%

There are **124 primary/first schools and academies** across Northumberland

Early years and primary



Despite the impact of Covid on the take up of the 2-year-old places, **the latest figure of 81% is still significantly above the pre Covid national average of 69%**

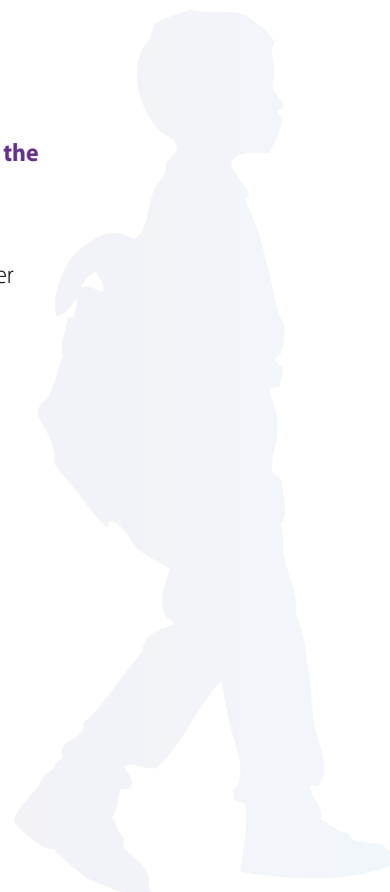
The **overall absence rate in state-funded primary schools was 4.09%** in 2020, moving closer to the **national average of 4.03%**

The **% of persistent absentees at state-funded primaries was 7.38%**, better than the **national average of 8.25%**

There have been **no permanent exclusions from primary schools since March 2020**

2020 saw a rise in the % of **Ofsted graded good or better primary schools to 91%** (national average 88%)

The **% of people getting their first-choice primary place was 97.9%**, significantly above the **national average of 90.2%**



Secondary

In 2020, Key Stage 4 results were based on centre-assessed grades or standardised grades (whichever was higher) as public examinations were cancelled due to Covid-19. Outcomes improved on the three headline measures published. Northumberland now exceeds the national average for Attainment 8 and 4+ in English and maths, and is 1% below the national average for 5+ English and maths. Progress 8 figures were not calculated in 2020.

Vulnerable learners (cont.)



The % of special schools judged good or better by the end of 2020 was **67%**, compared to the national average of 90%, leading to a clear action plan to support and underpin improvements for 2021



The **number of electively home educated pupils** in 2020 was **286** (Dec 2020)



The number of **children missing education in 2020 was 4** and **all were found thanks to excellent tracking systems** (Jul 2020)

There are **14 middle schools and academies** across Northumberland, **plus 3 independent schools**

The overall **absence rate** in state-funded secondary schools was **5.38%**, which was lower than the most recent **national average of 5.49%**

Permanent exclusions fell by 43% in the school year

The % of people getting their **first-choice secondary place** was **97.3%**, well above the **national average of 82.2%**

There are **16 secondary/high schools and academies** across Northumberland

The % of **persistent absentees** in state-funded secondary schools **fell to 12.31%** in 2020, lower than the national average

2020 saw a **rise in the % of Ofsted graded good or better** secondary schools to **66%** (5% higher than in 18/19, but lower than the national average of 76%)

KS4 figures for children in care show **29% of pupils achieved grade 4 or above in English and maths** at GCSE level



Secondary

Post 16

At Key Stage 5, the Average Points Score (both academic and vocational) per entry increased by over 6 points and now sits very close to the national average. Northumberland pupils sitting technical level qualifications continue to perform above the national average.

Vulnerable learners (cont.)



The number of children monitored and prevented from going missing from education was **608** (Sep 2019 - Mar 2020)



The number of children attending alternative provision in 2020 was **244** (Sep 2019 - Jul 2020)



The number of children with health and medical needs in 2020 supported by EOTAS was **143** (Sep 2019 - Jul 2020)



4.5% of children in care had a school move in two consecutive years, poorer than the national average of 3%



The % of adults achieving a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 was **79.3%**, slightly below the national average of 81.8%

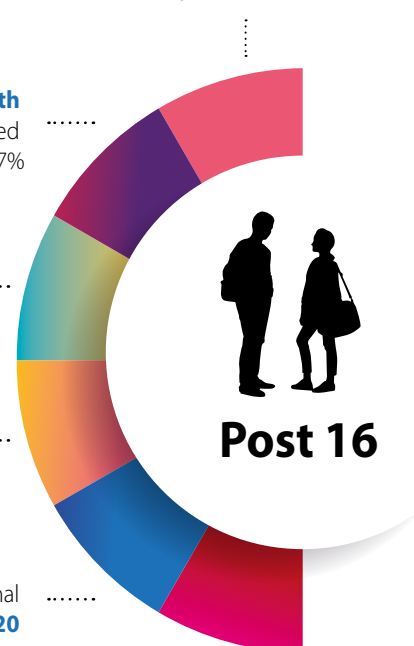
The % of adults achieving a Level 2 qualification with English and maths by the age of 19 was **66.5%**, compared to the national average of 68.7%

The % of adults achieving a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 was **51.7%**, below the national average of 56.9%

5.4% of 16-17 year olds were NEET or 'not known', compared to **5.5% nationally**

A staggering 2,240 starts illustrated an exceptional outcome for **apprenticeships and traineeships in 2020**

As well as the wide academic and vocational offer across our schools and sixth forms, **both Northumberland College and the Northumberland Learning & Skills Service deliver an array of pathways for learners post-16**





This section reflects upon the positive outcomes and those which require further attention by way of a continuous improvement plan.

Early Years & School Improvement

The Early Years and School Improvement Teams have worked at 100% capacity throughout Covid delivering:

- Over 80 dedicated Covid information sessions for school leaders
- 1500+ attendees to training sessions for early years and school staff
- 100% of schools and settings allocated to a Covid support network
- SENDCo support by weekly updates
- Vulnerable pupil monitoring on a weekly basis
- 100% of asylum seeker children placed in schools
- Over 16,000 daily logins to the Northumberland Learning Platform by pupils on home study
- Regular and topical home learning opportunities to support parents provided by the team
- All parental requests for nursery and school placements responded to swiftly
- All Covid outbreaks managed robustly and in line with Public Health guidelines



Virtual School

- GCSE results for looked after children were the best since the Virtual School opened, with more than twice as many pupils achieving the Basics in 2020 compared with 2019
- No Northumberland looked after child has been permanently excluded from school since 2008
- Fewer children in Northumberland go missing from education than average across the region and since tracking of children missing from education became statutory in 2008, only 4 pupils have not been traced

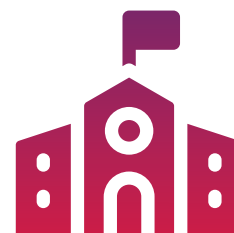


Impact in an extraordinary year

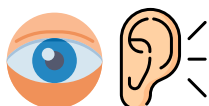


Inclusive Education Service/SEN

- Across 2020, our specialist teaching and educational psychology services have provided support and advice for children and young people with special educational needs in 96% of our schools
- 50% of our schools have received support from 3 or more of our specialist SEN teams
- The number of learners with SEN who were persistently absent from school has reduced significantly over the past three years, and the number of learners with SEN who were excluded from school has continued to fall
- From March - July 2020, the Northumberland Inclusive Education Service specialist teams offered a virtual service to schools to support learners with SEN who were attending. From September - December 2020, the teams returned to as close to business as usual as possible, offering a virtual and in person service
- In the Autumn term, the highest level of service provision was within the Ashington partnership, closely followed by Berwick and Blyth, then Seaton Valley
- In the Autumn term of 2020, the highest levels of demand/activity for the specialist teaching services were for:



Speech, Language & Communication Needs



Sensory Support



Autism Support



Emotional Wellbeing & Behaviour

- Throughout 2020 the Educational Psychology service continued to provide ongoing support and advice to many of the educational settings in Northumberland and children and families, along with specialist advice for all pupils undergoing Education, Health and Care needs assessments

Return to School Pop Up Hub

We knew that returning to school after the period of lockdown would be challenging for many children and young people. In response, a multi-agency pop up hub was set up which took referrals from schools who were particularly concerned about young people not returning in September, where their concern, or that of their family was a factor.

This time-limited exercise was extended beyond time initially planned as demand was still high at October half term. A total of 91 children and young people were referred into the hub and services were identified to support them and/or their families. This support, centred around working with schools, led to improvements in child and family confidence, and therefore in attendance.





Northumberland Learning & Skills Service

- Overall apprenticeship achievement was 83%, 19% above the national average
- More than 90% of learners (both adults and young people) progress and complete another programme following their first engagement with the service
- 98% of teaching and learning observations were graded as good or better
- 84% of adult learners in the Learning & Skills service remained engaged on programmes and continue to make progress
- We are pursuing capital funding to support our plans for an industry leading welding and fabrication training centre within Port of Blyth. The pioneering centre aims to maximise vocational skills in the sector to underpin regional priorities, providing outstanding progression opportunities into high value apprenticeships and careers



School Organisation and Resources; Data Unit

- We saw a 33% reduction in permanent exclusions and a 20% reduction in fixed term exclusions when comparing Autumn term 2020 to the same period in 2019
- 98% of first preferences were allocated in the primary and secondary admission rounds despite colleagues working from home and both national offers days occurring during the first lockdown period
- 89% of HUGGG vouchers disseminated for learners eligible for free school meals over the Christmas holidays have been redeemed
- 100% of schools and early years providers who requested a PPE support package in the first lockdown had one delivered by staff
- Since introducing the data sharing agreement in October 2019, 99% of schools have now signed up to it. This enables them to receive a report from the Data Unit about which children are open to the social work service. This report is run every week during lockdown periods
- Children's Services have completed 10 capital projects, with a total investment in excess of £38m, since the start of the Covid pandemic





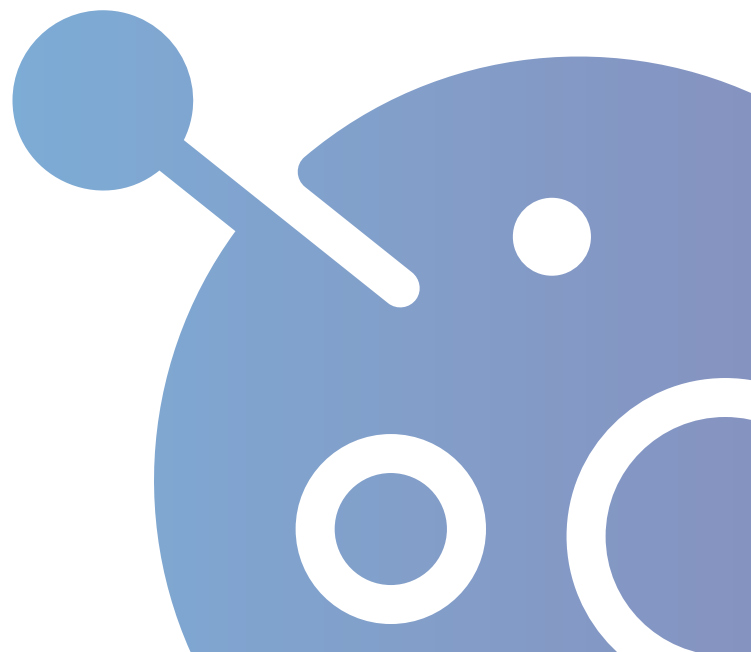
A collaborative approach to the Covid pandemic

Schools faced significant challenges to meet the fast-paced changing guidance across the lockdown period. To ensure schools were safe environments for children and staff, the Health and Safety team at Northumberland County Council reviewed all national guidance to provide support to Leaders and Governors in daily operations and to support decision making.

School voices were well represented in regional and national forums ensuring that the daily challenges were clearly represented and made a contribution to the evidence base to inform practice and future direction. The feedback from such forums was made readily available to inform decisions and keep all schools up to date with planning and directions

Throughout 2019-2020 schools were able to maintain a good working relationship with trade union and professional body colleagues representing staff across the whole of the workforce in schools and skills. Clear, open and transparent discussions continued throughout lockdown to provide strong and effective working relationships.

Communication with schools and skills, the routines established and the partnership working throughout lockdown led to further developing a very successful support infrastructure which helped to ensure that pupils were well supported in their need for a place in school. School leaders and their staff were more confident, attendance increased and the needs of their most vulnerable learners were met; supporting children and young people learning from home as well as the pupils who are children of key workers and attending schools across Northumberland.





01

We will take a key role in the strategic leadership of educational improvement in Education and Skills in Northumberland. Our vision will define the purpose and will ensure connectivity and inclusion to eradicate gaps.

02

We will know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers, challenge and support them to improve and report their performance to the Council and the community.

03

We will lead the development of an overall strategy to ensure our residents and their families are able to access appropriate and inclusive provision in Northumberland that meets their needs as close to their homes as is possible.

04

We will develop an alternative education model which offers routes for children which support their future career choice; the model may also support keeping our children in education and provide a positive and financially viable contribution to our communities.

05

With all stakeholders and partners, we will act upon and deliver the areas for improvement identified in the SEND local area inspection (October 2018).

06

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



“ Learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn. ”

Peter Drucker



07

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

08

We will transform transition, progress and performance for our Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 and improve their access to their first choice University place, Further Education, Higher Apprenticeship and/or employment.

09

We will work in partnership across services to ensure our children are supported through Social Care, Virtual school and Community Hub supporting their health and well-being (including mental health), feel safe, in touch, listened to and supported every week of the year and not just term time.

10

We will develop key relationships with education and industry to support careers ambition, curriculum development and routes into post 16 and Higher Education which support the economic priorities in Northumberland.

11

We will develop a strategy and create an appropriate curriculum supporting the needs of all our young people and adults in Northumberland so that more can access suitable/appropriate/good fit apprenticeships, skills training and development to underpin careers, employment and in work progression.

12

We will work closely with Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and North of Tyne Combined Authority to be innovative in our approaches and to be ground breaking and leading the way in education for all our stakeholders.

“ I attribute my success to this –
I never took or gave any excuse. ”

Florence Nightingale



The future



2020 has proven our collective ability to learn together and work together, through the most exceptional circumstances and testing times.

Teams across the Council's Education and Skills Services have shown considerable adaptability during the pandemic and have supported with a whole host of deliverables, including:

- PPE allocations and deliveries
- setting up our local free school meals voucher system from a standing start in less than 20 days
- supporting our children and families with the supply of IT equipment
- keeping a daily check on children attending our schools early years settings and alternative education providers to ensure key worker children were given a school place in order that their families could attend work, and our most vulnerable children were safe

As we strive for inclusive outcomes and fair access to education and support across the county, 2021 will see us continue to collaborate as we strive to achieve our goals of educational improvement, connectivity and inclusion.

Achieving our ambitious vision and supporting our young people at every stage of their educational journey, as well as understanding the evolving needs of adults looking to upskill, re-skill and adapt to meet changing market demands, will require continued investment and a partnership approach.

We offer an array of options and support for school leavers across our county and indeed North East region, which present various pathways to young adults as they pursue Higher Education at university, apprenticeships and other work-based training programmes, as well as entering the world of work.

We will continue to work collaboratively with schools, training providers and other organisations to support all of these destinations, ensuring next steps are clear and accessible across our communities.



“ The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go. ”

Dr. Seuss

The future



The Council is continuing this year with an investment programme funded from the Local Authority resources in order to maintain the schools estate, grow school places and deliver projects to support school re-organisation.

The team is delivering:

- 4 new build schools
- a leisure centre
- a fire station
- 30 maintenance projects
- 2 major refurbishment schemes
- 6 extension projects, which has seen over £38m invested in education in the last year

Over £500,000 of Covid grants were allocated to early years settings, as the Council worked hard to underpin the delivery of early years and primary education over recent months.

We are very proud of our strong relationships with schools and learning providers across Northumberland and beyond, and together we will continue to support the development of each and every individual across our exceptional county.

Daily and weekly briefings attended by representatives of all schools have ensured a consultative and supportive approach to tackling the challenges of the last and current academic year, amid the global pandemic. This methodology has seen some commendable systems and processes put into place, including all schools and settings having benefited from dedicated Covid support 'buddies' and ongoing opportunities for best practice sharing as well as a real partnership approach to continuous improvement.

Preparing and equipping people of all ages to cope with whatever the future holds through a sound and varied education, responsive to ever-changing contexts and with real opportunities for lifelong learning and employment realities, is paramount now, and into the future. Strengthened relationships with our schools is something on which we can build for the good of all Northumberland children and young people.



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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USEFUL LINKS

[Children & Young People's Plan](#)

[Learning & Skills Annual Report](#)

[SEND offer](#)

[School Organisation Report](#)

[Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2020](#)

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Version 1: March 2021

