

Annual Education and Skills Report

Academic Year 2024-2025



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Foreword

The endorsement of our Annual Education and Skills Report is always a privilege, as it provides an opportunity to reflect on the exceptional education delivered across our city and the profound impact this has on our children, young people and families. This year's report captures the breadth, diversity and ambition of our educational offer, and highlights the collective commitment of our schools, teachers, support staff and the many professionals who work tirelessly to support every learner in Newcastle.

Over the past year, our shared focus on improving attendance has begun to show promising signs of progress. Attendance remains central to children's wellbeing, learning and future success, and I am grateful for the determination shown by schools, services and partners to ensure this remains a priority across all phases of education.

One of the greatest joys of my role continues to be visiting schools. I am incredibly appreciative of the warm welcome extended by headteachers and school staff, and the openness with which they share both their successes and their challenges. These visits consistently reaffirm my admiration for the creativity, innovation and care that shape the daily experiences of children and young people in Newcastle. They also highlight the pressures our schools are navigating, and I am grateful for the honesty and resilience with which these challenges are met.

We remain acutely aware of the levels of child poverty within our city and the ways in which this impacts educational outcomes. This is why auto-enrolment for free school meals will continue to be a key priority in the coming year. Ensuring that families receive the full support they are entitled to is essential—not only for alleviating financial pressures, but also for unlocking vital additional resources for our schools.

My heartfelt thanks go to our children and young people for their enthusiasm, hard work and determination; to parents and carers for their ongoing encouragement and support; and to all of our schools, settings and education services whose dedication helps to shape the ambitions, confidence and aspirations of the next generation.

Together, we continue to build a system where children and young people feel supported, valued and inspired to achieve. I am immensely proud of the work showcased in this report, and deeply grateful to every colleague and partner who plays a role in making this possible.

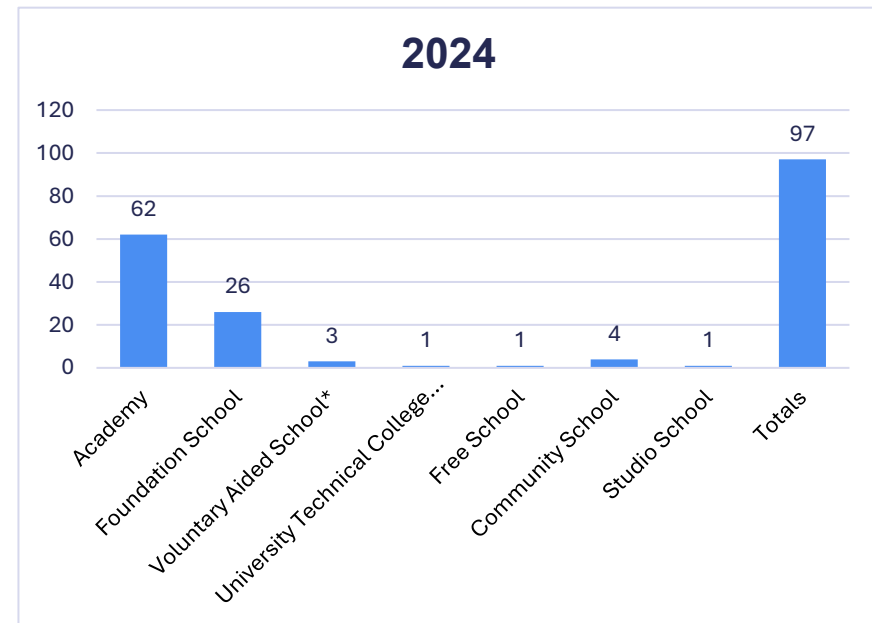
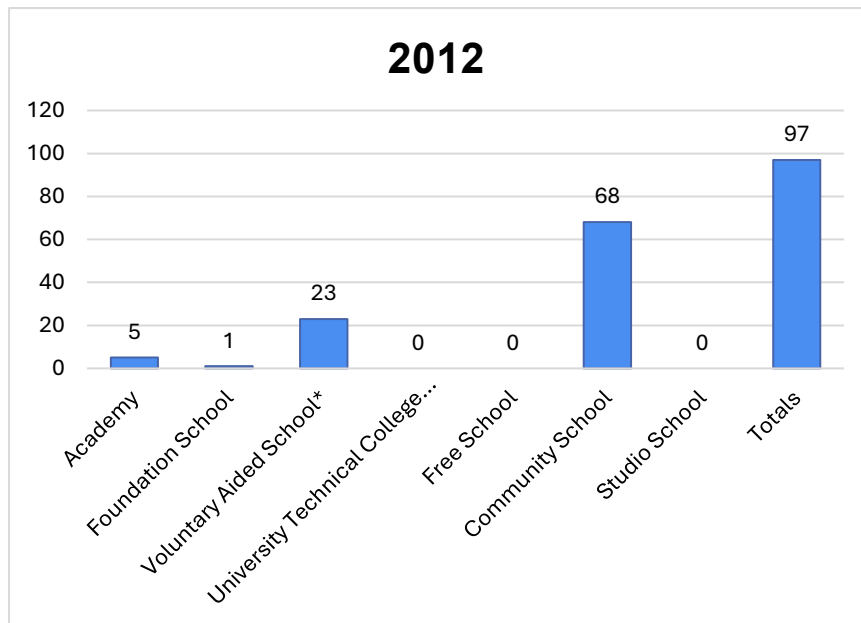


Cath McEvoy-Carr:
Director of Children and Families

Newcastle Schools and Pupils

Our Schools

The local authority has different responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to the different types of school. Despite increased academisation, local authorities still have wide ranging statutory duties. Below you can see the change in **schools by designation** between 2012 and now.



**Note that some academies are also faith schools*

Newcastle City Council continues to be committed to working in partnership with all schools in the City to ensure no child, school or family is left behind.

Our Children and Young People

In July 2025, there were 46,888 pupils in Newcastle schools including 4,123 in independent schools and 155 in non-maintained special schools.

Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics, DfE 2025

The proportion of children eligible for and claiming **free school meals** (2025):

- In primary schools was 40.8% (England average: 24.7%)
- In secondary schools was 42.1% (England average: 25.8%)

In Newcastle 9567 (20.4%) pupils had identified **special educational needs or disabilities** (SEND), compared with 19.6% nationally, of whom:

- 2,429 (5.2%) had a statement or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (England average: 5.3%)
- 7,138 (15.2%) had SEN Support (England average: 14.2%)



School Effectiveness

Work with Schools

Challenges faced by children and their families have increased over the past year. Around 40% of children in the city are eligible for benefits-related free school meals, compared to 25.7% nationally. Children from families that are struggling financially do not do as well at school. With so many children in this situation in Newcastle, most of our work with schools is aimed at reducing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes.



Evidence shows that children who do well in early years are much more likely to do well throughout the rest of their schooling. Working with the North East Combined Authority, we have introduced an Early Years Passport. This document provides the information schools need to support children right from the start. We have continued to support schools to implement Launchpad for Literacy, a scheme that provides interventions for children who are at risk of falling behind with their early language. We continue to roll out training for schools to improve early years provision, with a focus on improving children's transition into Year 1. Almost all of our schools' early years provisions have been judged good or better by Ofsted.

We continue to share good practice and support school staff through networks. As well as a range of networks for subject leaders, we also run a range of networks in areas such as SEND, safeguarding, inclusion and attendance. Sixty schools were represented at our attendance conference, and our briefings for primary and secondary headteachers were well

attended. We maintained our multi-agency support for schools through our Team Around the School provision, ensuring that schools have access to wider partners such as health, family support and police

Pupils' mental health has continued to be a concern. To improve provision for mental health in schools, the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) team worked across all schools in the city, delivering training for staff and working with several hundred

individual pupils. The team supported over 600 pupils in their transition to a new school and expanded their work into Year 8. A particular focus for the team over the year has been helping schools to reduce mental health related absence.

To support inclusion in schools, we launched our Inclusion Quality Framework. This is a framework for schools to develop strong practice for pupils with SEND and to improve inclusion. More than half of the city's schools are working towards achieving the award, and ten have already achieved it.

We continue to work collaboratively with all Newcastle schools through the Promise Board. Over the past year, our work with the Promise Board has focused on inclusion, SEND, transition, attendance and curriculum. These are issues that are challenging the education system nationally, but all education partners in Newcastle continue to work together on behalf of the city's children and young people.



This year we once again organised education for the children of the fairground families during the Hoppings. Our 'Town Moor School' hosted over 80 children over the two weeks. The success of the Town Moor School is a great example of collaboration across the city and the region. Partners include the Northern Showmen's Guild, the Showmen, the Freemen of the City, the Great North Museum, regional colleagues and young volunteers from the city's universities and schools.

We want our children and young people to be excited about living in our international city, with its cultural diversity and global links. Our partnership with International Newcastle has been extraordinarily successful in promoting languages, cultural celebration and international links in Newcastle schools. Seventy of our schools now have an International School award. We have supported over fifty international school partnerships and have enabled schools to access funding for international visits. Over eight hundred pupils from Newcastle schools have travelled to Europe and Asia as part of the British Council's Turing project.

Over five thousand children and young people in the city benefit from learning a musical instrument. Nearly two thousand of them played together at the annual Big Gig. We have continued to expand our music opportunities for young people, from rock schools and ensembles to opera and rap.

Attainment

The provisional attainment data from primary school assessments is encouraging. The proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of Reception increased. Although the proportion of disadvantaged children achieving this level is higher in Newcastle than the national average, there is still a wide gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their non disadvantaged peers.



The proportion of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 remained in line with the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting this threshold remained well above the national average for this group, but again, there was a wide gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers.

GCSE results for 2025 are still provisional and subject to change. There was a general improvement in outcomes for Newcastle students. Average attainment has risen. The percentage of students attaining at least a grade 4 ('standard' pass) in both English and mathematics has risen for the second year in a row. This measure is important as it opens the door to a wide range of post 16 options.

Importantly, the performance of disadvantaged students has improved overall and particularly in English and mathematics. Newcastle is above the national and regional average in this measure. However, there is still a lot of work to do. Both nationally and in Newcastle, less than half of disadvantaged students achieve a Grade 4 in GCSE English and Maths. Reducing the impact of poverty must remain a key priority.

Priorities for 2025/26

- Further strengthen schools' early years provision, so that all children get the best possible start to their education.
- Continue to strengthen provision for children whose mental health is impacting on their school attendance.
- Roll out SEMH training for secondary school teachers.
- Improve transition for pupils, between primary and secondary school, particularly for those pupils with SEND or who have other vulnerabilities.
- Aim for at least a third of Newcastle schools to achieve the Inclusion Quality Framework.



Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)



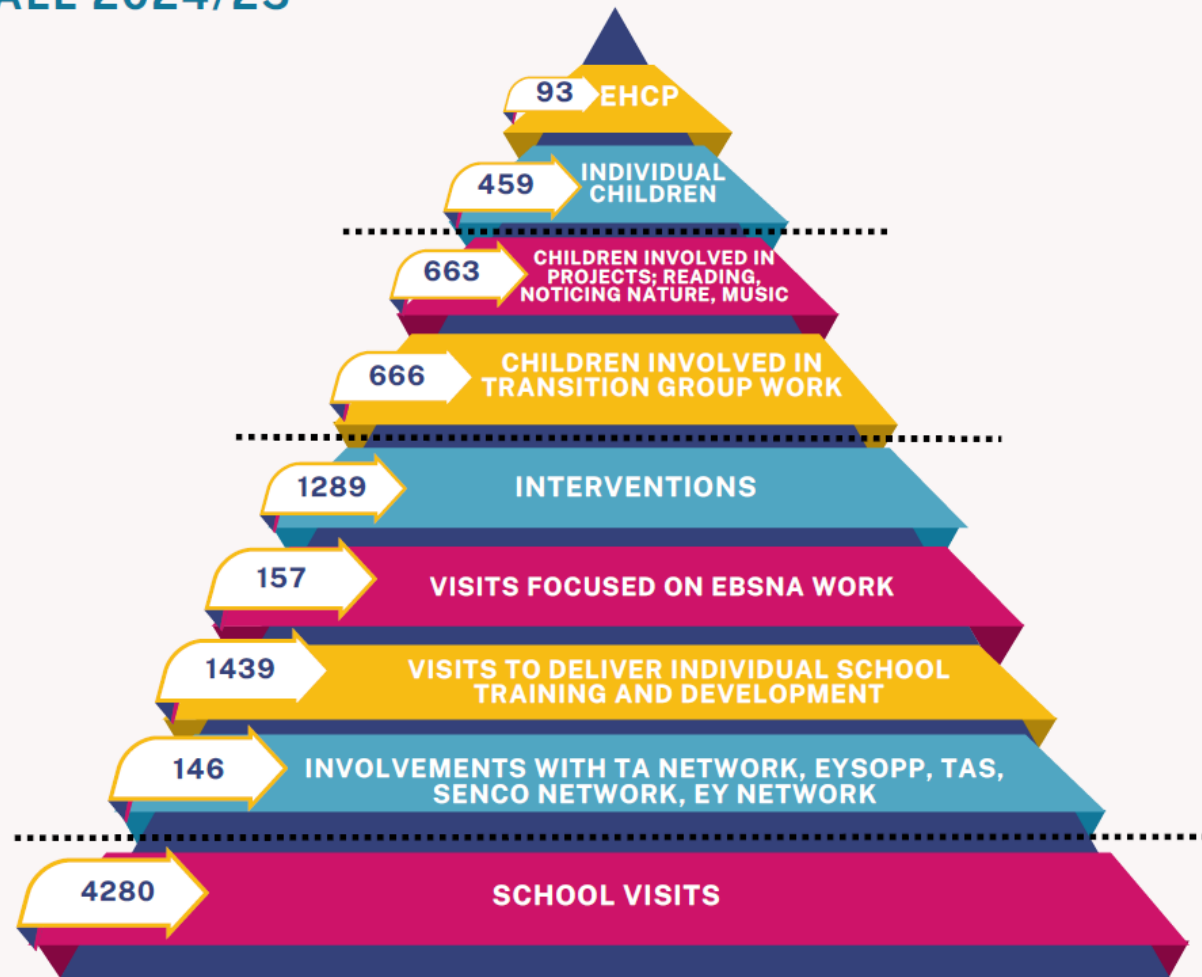
The SEMH Service sits in School Effectiveness. It was launched in September 2023 as an Educational Psychologist led specialist teaching service, arranged around localities. This means all mainstream schools in the City have access to a dedicated team of named specialist staff with Educational Psychology supervision and support. There are six broad strategic aims for the service focussing on whole school improvement in provision for social, emotional and mental health and developing social and emotional competence. The service works across the whole of the graduated response working with SLT in schools, providing high quality staff training, supporting transition and developing and implementing very specialist small step plans for children with significant needs in the area of SEMH. This includes working to provide additional support to children with EHCPs attending mainstream settings. Please refer to the overall Graduated Response graphic 24/25 for further detail.

Longer term the aim is to ensure that our provision across the City can adapt to pressures and improve readiness for each stage of education. In the past two years the service has demonstrated impact for individual children in many areas, including: increased attendance and engagement with teaching, improved relationships with teachers, parents, peers, prevention of permanent exclusion and reduced suspensions. We use a range of measures to demonstrate impact including seeking feedback from school staff and parents.

We are currently undertaking a review of 100 closed cases where there is significant evidence that the involvement of the SEMH Service led to improved outcomes in mainstream school for children across the spectrum of SEMH need. Comprehensive information about the service can be found by following this link <https://servicestoschools.org.uk/Page/35315>

SEMH SERVICE GRADUATED RESPONSE

OVERALL 2024/25



SEMH Feedback

It is very clear that we are working with professionals like yourselves, who clearly know and understand how a busy school, in area of high deprivation operate. This means that we can quickly access the right support for our families" - East

"The SEMH service has been extremely responsive and effective in helping us talk through and decide upon appropriate next steps with regard to some children we have found challenging recently; the feedback has been really positive from staff." - Inner West

"I feel I have new ideas which make total sense to use so thank you! And yes, love the idea of a rota plan for line up as the unpredictability element for him is definitely a trigger" - Outer West

"The strategies you have provided this year have made such a difference, it's also been helpful to have a team who are concerned about staff well-being as well as the children's"- North

"Your idea of coding parts of the day according to the 5 point scale really helped us to realise she was not attached to any member of staff and there is absolutely no pattern to any of her behaviour. This has helped us in terms of organising her morning and no one person taking all the hits" - Inner West

"X has been brilliant since we last met and there have been no more incidences, so everything seems to be working" - Outer West

"The team have been an invaluable support. Strategies suggested to support key pupils were implemented straight away with such positive results for the children. Communication was always supportive, caring and considerate" - Outer West

"It was helpful to take timeout and discuss and reflect on what is going on and think about ways to improve. You were very supportive and just what we need to help us navigate these tricky waters!!" - East

"We have noticed at home he is not so aggressive. Thankyou for being patient and kind and always supporting him, it has done a lot to support him at home. When I compare what he was like last year to now there have been lots of improvements" - Inner West

"At the start of the year it felt like I would never get to the end of the list but the way we have broken it down into manageable steps has been fantastic" - East

Careers and Guidance

2024	Not known	In learning	Neet	NEET & Not Known
Newcastle April 2024	0.6%	89.6%	7.1%	7.7%
North East	0.6%	90.2%	5.4%	6.0%
England	1.7%	91.9%	3.5%	5.1%

2025	Not known	In learning	Neet	NEET & Not Known
Newcastle April 2025	0.8%	90.3%	7.2%	7.9%
North East	1.4%	89.7%	5.4%	6.8%
England	1.7%	91.8%	3.7%	5.4%

The current economic climate continues to present significant challenges for young people seeking employment and educational opportunities. Many face barriers in accessing education, training or work, intensified by a limited range of post-16 provision. This has contributed to a rise in the percentage of young people in Newcastle who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), reflecting broader trends seen both locally and nationally. Despite these challenges, Newcastle demonstrates strong performance in tracking young people, with a Not Known (NK) rate of just 0.8%—notably better than the national average of 1.7%. The focus of the Careers Team remains to offer careers advice and guidance to prevent targeted pupils in school becoming NEET and supporting post-16 young people to move from NEET into education, training or employment.

Our work in schools supports a small, targeted group of pupils in years 9-11 who are most at risk of becoming NEET, as well as receiving a number of referrals from the Inclusion Panel and Team around the School (TAS) meetings. For young people outside school, the team continues to track and monitor the destinations of 16 to 17 year old NEETs on behalf of the Local Authority. As well as directly contacting young people we see a continued increase in the number of community based organisations who refer young people to us.

My future: My choice 2025



In continued partnership with the Newcastle United Foundation, the team successfully delivered the My future: My choice careers fair at St James' Park in February 2025. The event welcomed over 3,000 young people and featured more than 100 exhibitors across three floors of the stadium. A dedicated SEN zone was also included to ensure accessibility and tailored support. Feedback from students, exhibitors and schools was overwhelmingly positive. As a result, My future: My choice 2026 is scheduled to take place on 12 February 2026. We look forward to further developing the event and refining its content to better meet the diverse needs of the young people attending.

School Feedback...

"It was an excellent year again. This really is one of the best careers events in the year. Students get so much out of this."

"I thought it went really well this year and thank you for all of the organisation. All of the staff at the event were fantastic (Careers Team and Foundation staff)."

"Our students really enjoyed it and had really positive conversations."

When asked 'What did you enjoy most about the event?' Young People responded...

"Finding out things I didn't know and meeting people"

"Widened my range of options for careers"

"Information about what employers are looking for"

Matrix Accreditation

In February 2025, colleagues across Newcastle City Council who provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) to job seekers and young people were awarded matrix accreditation, the recognised standard for high quality IAG.

The matrix accreditation follows a review of services across:

- Newcastle Careers Team service for young people within Children and Families Directorate.
- Newcastle Futures service provided by the Inclusive Employment team in the Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate.
- The Employability Team's support for Council tenants and supporting inclusive recruitment to the Council within the Workforce and Development Directorate.

The matrix assessor highlighted some areas that were working particularly well, including:

- "There is strong leadership and commitment to a clear IAG offer".
- "The level of wellbeing support provided for recipients was much greater than might normally be expected".
- "There is an appreciation of each other's roles and responsibilities and a spirit of trust and co-operation".
- "Service delivery approaches are very supportive and non-judgmental".



This is a great achievement for the team and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to delivering high quality CIAG.

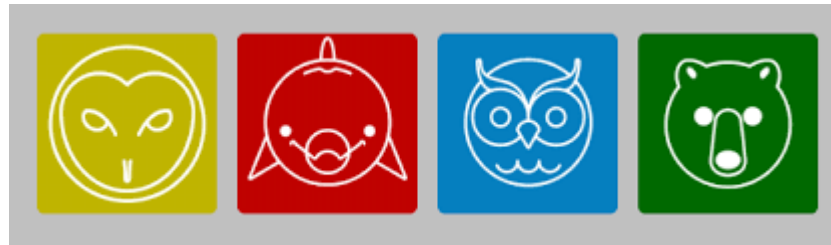
Next Steps Events

The Newcastle Careers Team has delivered a series of Next Steps drop-in events aimed at supporting young people who are currently not in education, employment, or training (NEET). These targeted sessions are designed to help young people re-engage with opportunities in education, training, or the workplace. Attendees have the chance to speak directly with careers advisers and connect with a range of providers offering support. Participating providers have included Newcastle United Foundation, Wise Group, King's Trust, Trinity Solutions, Northern Directions and Newcastle City Learning.



Careers Guidance Tools

The team continues to explore and integrate a range of careers guidance tools to support meaningful conversations with young people during careers interviews. This year, we received bespoke training in resources such as 'What's Your Strength?', delivered by its creator Katherine Jennick. These cards are designed to help young people identify their individual strengths, which can support career exploration and boost self-confidence. Additionally, we undertook training in the 'Buzz Quiz', led by its creator David Hodgson. This personality quiz is tailored for young people and aims to raise awareness of their natural strengths, preferred team roles and potential career or course pathways. We also invited colleagues from the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the Virtual School to join us for the training session.



Priorities 2025/26

- Further develop and enhance the My future: My choice careers event to maximise its impact and reach.
- Continue creating and refining careers resources for specific target groups such as EHE, SEND and CIC to support parents, carers, and young people in exploring post-16 options.
- Expand targeted events for young people, working collaboratively with partners to ensure access to high quality information that supports informed decision making about future pathways.
- Improve accessibility through the introduction of a digital appointment booking system.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

Introduction

Nationally there continues to be discussion about the effectiveness of the services available for children/young people with SEND and we eagerly await the government's proposals, hoping for meaningful improvements that address the challenges and enhance support for those who need it most.



In Newcastle we face a number of challenges: we continue to see a high demand and long wait times for services, and there is limited capacity with specialist educational places. In addition, for the first year and in common with many other local authorities, we are projecting a deficit against our high needs budget. These challenges are very significant but, as always, our children and young people in Newcastle are amazing and we have examples of really great work, from our brilliant workforce, that has been life changing for some.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual report which aims to provide a balanced overview of our work over the last year and some examples of the positive impact of our work on outcomes for children and young people with SEND. To ensure a comprehensive overview of the service's performance we also include feedback from inspectors and our performance against a set of key indicators.

Review of 2024/2025

We are now two years into the delivery of our five year [SEND Strategy 2023-2028](#): which aims:

‘To create an inclusive city to ensure children and young people with SEND get the right support at the right time so that they go on to live their best lives’.

A summary of progress made over the last year is set out below.

Priority 1: Making sure children and young people get the right support at the right time

This means that children and young people will have an equitable approach to having their needs identified and met as early as possible. We are committed to creating inclusive and accessible environments that support our children and young people at every stage and that this approach is well understood by families and professionals.

Progress in supporting mainstream schools

We have invested further in our SEND [Graduated Response](#) which sets out the support schools and settings are expected to provide for children with SEND from their own resources and how they can seek extra support. To help schools and settings accurately and consistently identify SEND needs we co-produced:

- [SEND Descriptors of Need](#)
- [Universally Available Guidance](#) (for early years)
- [Universally Available Provision](#) (for schools and settings)

Health services, parents, and carers also contributed to these documents. As a result of this work, posters showing the [5 quick wins from the Universally Available Provision](#) are being displayed in schools/settings and there is a high level of awareness of these documents and quality first teaching in our schools. Of all applications to SEND ASAP (see below) 94% included evidence that the guidance set out in the universally available provision had been considered.

Head Teacher feedback

“Thanks for the wonderful work you have done to support us and the children in our school. I would say you've made life changing improvements, which will be there as the children grow and mature.
Thank you”

SEND Descriptors of Need are being widely used across the city. The aim is to:

- ensure a common language to describe the support expected for children with SEND.
- provide a core framework for all practitioners working with children and young people to help assess and identify the needs of children and young people, and to put in place appropriate support.
- give greater clarity for parents and carers about their child/young person's needs and how their child should be supported at school.

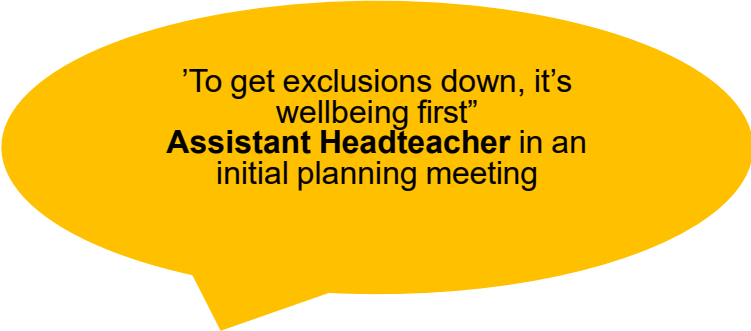
Over 200 staff accessed the descriptors of need training and subsequent moderation sessions from 2023 to date. They have told us that the descriptors of need have helped them feel more equipped to assess and support children and young people.

Feedback from Schools about the descriptors of need

- Children's development is not linear, the ranges are useful when teachers are identifying the level of individual need for pupils. The ranges have helped staff when completing the 'assess' part of pupil's SEN support plans.
- Useful to use with class teachers to support a professional discussion about the level of need.
- It helped me identify specifically what children were struggling with and pinpoint what targets might be appropriate for them.
- Once a range had been identified it was useful to look at provision examples and consider how we could implement them.
- They make it very clear what provision should be in place to support area of need.

We are continually promoting use of the descriptors, and we have moderation events arranged with schools to share good practice.

[Newcastle SEND Advice and Support Allocation Panel \(SEND ASAP\)](#) offers training, advice and individual pupil support funding for schools/settings. In 2024/25 the panel received 1,115 referrals from across 97% of all schools and settings. Schools now access support via a single referral form.



'To get exclusions down, it's wellbeing first"
Assistant Headteacher in an initial planning meeting

Impact Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) training for schools September 2022- March 2025:

In five out of six secondary schools we can see a downward trend in permanent exclusions following support from the work that the EPS led.

[SEND Local Offer Website](#): We are constantly working to improve the content and accessibility of our local offer website. Surveys show us that whilst the website is used by professionals, it is not well used by parents and carers. A dedicated officer has been employed as part of the High Needs Project Team to focus on improving the content and raising awareness of the website.

[Accessibility Strategy](#): We have provided capital funding to create spaces to support children in mainstream setting and by the end of August 2025 we have installed / assisted 31 schools with capital projects. This includes work in trust, community and academy schools.



Walker Riverside – low stimulus room

'It is so relaxing- it helps me calm down.' Yr8 student

'It is soothing. I could fall asleep in here.' Yr9 student

'It is magnificent. I love it.' Yr7 student

'It helps me regulate. There isn't anywhere as good in school.' Yr11 student

The **Inclusion Quality Framework (IQF)** is Newcastle's tool to support schools in evaluating their inclusive practice and it can form part of a professional development programme for schools on SEN and disability and the achievement and outcomes of vulnerable groups of pupils. By May 2025 fourteen schools have completed the IQF and in total 42 schools have signed up to drop ins to find out more about it/make a start on the self-evaluation process. Further drop in dates are scheduled throughout the forthcoming academic year.

Alternative Provision: Our alternative provision framework was published in April 2024 outlining our commissioning and quality assurance process and we now have 50 providers on the framework. As a result, we are getting a good response to requests for alternative provision for individual children with up to five offers per placement. This allows us to provide the best match for the young person.

Improving access to therapy services and short breaks

The learning from deep dive service reviews during 2023 altered the way in which our ambition for a timely, seamless, integrated system wide therapies response will be achieved. Throughout 2024 focus has been given to Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) to embed and support improvements and inform service redesign before further steps are taken towards an integrated whole therapies system.

For OT: Waiting times for assessment have reduced from an average of 29 months to 8 months with the expectation that this will reduce further when the Paediatric OT service starts in September 2025. Communications with families have also improved and feedback shows that families no longer feel 'forgotten'.

For SALT: Increased in

initial assessment capacity has reduced waiting times and the number of families waiting from 263 in March 2024 to 169 in March 2025 (under 3s) and from 222 to 169 (over 3s).

Waiting times for intervention, however, remain significant.

We have strengthened the support available to families whilst they are waiting:

- Under 3 Early Intervention Group offering group sessions whilst waiting for specialist intervention.
- Initial assessments for over 3s now completed in early years / school settings increasing attendance and building positive relationships with education staff.
- Early Language Development and School Readiness projects within community hubs.
- Training in place for the wider workforce to support understanding of the improved universal digital SALT offer.
- Accessible training videos, resources and guidance has reduced the number of inappropriate referrals to specialist



SALT pathways by 20%. 75% of Health Visitors trained reported improved confidence in supporting and signposting families.

- Improved information on the website: Speech and language therapy for children and young people - Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Impact statements: Children's therapies building the future

"This has been one of the best things that has happened to me regarding the autism - thank you" (Parent attending the Autism SALT More Than Words clinic)

"I've been doing some activities and games from the (SALT) website, and I think they've been helpful and made him learn some new words. The Health Visitor showed me which ones." (Feedback from a parent during initial telephone consultation)

Thanks so much for going out of your way to talk to me today, I really appreciate it as felt I've just been stuck in the system." (E-mail from a parent to the Interim OT Adaptations and Equipment Service).

[Short Breaks Statement December 2023](#): This statement was co-produced and demonstrates our ambition to improve access to universal community short break provision. We have recommissioned the community short break offer, and new contracts started in July 2025. The offer includes some specific SEND activities, but the focus of the review is to develop more provision of inclusive activities.

Creating more specialist school places for those that need them

We are continuing to see a high demand for EHC plans and in turn for specialist educational places. We have developed a robust placement planning model to help us assess how many specialist placements by SEND category of need will be required in the future.

Creating more specialist school places for those that need them is an urgent priority for the SEND and Inclusion Executive Board. This is balanced alongside the need to continually build confidence and inclusion in mainstream school, create more additionally resourced provisions (ARPs) and where possible reintegrate children from special schools to ARPs or mainstream places. For example, over the last two academic years we have successfully reintegrated nine children from Thomas Bewick Special school to a mainstream school.

We are continuing to explore funding options to build a much needed additional specialist school and have now identified a preferred site. This proposal went out to consultation in February 2024, and we have worked with schools and settings and parents/carers to agree the values and vision for the new school. We aim to provide 192 places at the new school for children and young people aged 4 to 16 with autism. We have gained approval for the proposed site for the new school to be demolished. But we are still to find the funding to build the new school.

Supporting young people to get ready for their next steps

Independent Travel for Young People with SEND: We have invested in travel trainers as young people told us that being able to travel independently is a priority for them.

'Your future: Your choice', has now become an annual event. In February 2025 all schools and over 4,000 children and families came to the event. There was a dedicated zone for young people with SEND, with over 100 support organisations offering advice about education and training, volunteering opportunities, and supported internships, to help young people and their families prepare for their next steps.

Feedback received from young people during their visit to the event in 2024 has broadened our understanding of what they want and how they want to be made aware of the options that are available to them. This has led to the production of the [Newcastle Transitions Guide](#). The guide has been widely publicised and sent to all with an EHC plan in year 9. The guide is also to be promoted at monthly coffee mornings in specialist schools.

Supported Internships (SI): We have increased the number of SIs available by 100% since 2021: to 33 in September



Impact: Independent travel training

September 2022/September 2023: 21 students. Two of these trained on two different routes September 2023/September 2024: 10 students. One of these trained on two different routes September 2024 /March 2025: 10 students.

2024. We held a supported internship celebration event in July 2024 which received great feedback:

Feedback: Supported internship event

- Excellent session showcasing young people and their progress
- Great to see some of the other programmes happening across the city, want to link in with other providers.
- It raised my awareness of the employment opportunities available for children and young people with SEND and I would know to signpost to these opportunities when the need arises.
- Strengthened links between Work & Thrive employment Partnership and SEND Employment Forum
- It was really well organised and definitely felt like a celebration

EHC Timeliness

Whilst we are still not at the national target, improvements have been made and feedback from parents about the process is encouraging:

Feedback from Parent/Carer Survey: Those with EHCs agreed September - December 2024:

Question: How satisfied were you with the EHC needs assessment, planning and plan?:

Of 25 respondents 17 (68%) were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

Question: Did you feel included in the process?

Of 25 respondents 19 (76%) were fully or somewhat included

Of the remaining parents we have been in touch to discuss any concerns

Priority 2: Making sure we are getting it right together:

This means that we are committed to having a strong partnership where families are placed at the heart of everything we do and together we develop high quality, inclusive and accessible services.

All our work is co-produced, and some examples are set out below:



Relationships with our parent/carer forum have significantly improved and in May 2025 they advised that:

Parents know that if they raise something they will get a response, and decisions will be explained. Parents may not always agree with the decision, but they will understand why it has been made.

With the Parent Carer Forum, we have co-produced a parent/carers handbook to explain the SENS system in Newcastle. This is available on our local offer: [Parent Carer Guide to SEND in Newcastle | Children and Families Newcastle](#).



SEND Support Hub - Activities Showcase

In June 2025, the SEND Voice Team and the Parent Carer Forum hosted the first ever SEND Support Hub – Activities Showcase, bringing together families and local activity providers for an evening of fun, information and community connection. Held from 4 to 7pm in The Haven in Kenton, the event offered families a chance to explore a wide range of activities available for children and young people with SEND. Attendees enjoyed taster sessions in art, dance and sports, alongside refreshments and a variety of information stalls. This is a first in a series of events planned with the Parent Carer Forum.

Feedback from Inspectors

The Accelerated Progress Plan (APP): The APP was developed to address the area of significant weakness identified in June 2021 at the Ofsted-CQC SEND revisit:

“Area leaders should establish effective arrangements to identify the impact of the area's work on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.”

Since this time, we have had a series of meetings with the DfE and CQC to monitor our progress in delivering the APP. Most recently the DfE and CQC visited us in May 2025, and we are pleased to report their findings as follows:

‘The written and verbal evidence shared during the review clearly demonstrated that this weakness has been addressed, with robust systems now in place to evaluate impact and drive improvement. It was very encouraging to hear about the clear and sustained progress made across the APP, and the positive impact this is having on children and young people with SEND.

Based on this evidence, the Department for Education and NHS England agree that sufficient progress on this area of significant weakness has been made, and as such, formal monitoring will now come to an end, with the APP being stepped down accordingly.’

The DfE encouraged continued focus on how changes are improving the experiences of children, ensuring that our governance provides effective oversight and challenge to sustain improvements, and to improve EHC timeliness. These are included in our priorities:

Getting ready for the local area SEND inspection

We continue to plan for the [Local Area SEND inspection](#) and we anticipate this will happen in the 2025/26 academic year. This inspection carried out by inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) looks at all services jointly provided by education, health and social care.



SEND Outcomes 2024/2025

- 5.6% of pupils in Newcastle have EHC plans compared to 5.3% in England. In addition, a further 15.3% of pupils required SEND support, compared with 14.0% in England.
- 28.0% of children in care (children in care of the LA continuously for at least twelve months on 31 March 2024) received SEND support (27.6% nationally) and 22.4% have an EHC plan (31.9% in England).
- We completed 497 EHC plans in the 2024 calendar year. 8.8% were completed within the required 20 weeks (including exceptions). This compares with 45.9% in England.



SEND Priorities for 2025 to 2028

- Redesigning the speech and language service offer to include earlier support.
- Continue to create inclusive and accessible environments that support our children and young people at every stage and will continue to invest in mainstream schools to improve inclusive environments.
- Continue to seek funding to build the much needed school to specialise in meeting the needs of children and young people with autism. Demonstrating how changes are improving the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND, including regular opportunities for families to share their views.
- Ensuring internal governance structures provide effective oversight and challenge, particularly in sustaining improvements.
- Improving the timeliness and quality of our EHCPs, with particular attention to those exceeding the 20 week statutory timeframe.

SEND Service Structure

The SEND service is made up of a number of teams:

- SEND Support Assessment and Review (SAR) team, who carry out the statutory EHC process
- Educational Psychology Service
- SEND Outreach Service including early years
- Sensory Service
- Service Improvement Team
- Placement Planning Team
- Transport Team
- Designated Social Care Lead
- Voice Team

More information about each team can be found on our [Local Offer website](#).



SEND System Change Programme

In response to the findings of the iMPower Report (April 2024), Newcastle has launched a targeted two year change programme to address escalating pressures within the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The financial case for change is compelling: without intervention, the budget gap is forecast to rise from £8.7m in 2024/25 to £20.2m by 2028/29. The programme aims to rebalance the system by identifying and meeting needs earlier, reducing escalation, and embedding sustainable practices. It draws on proven approaches from 30 other local areas and is underpinned by a Project Plan that outlines governance, delivery structures and required capacity.



Key features include:

- Transformational Change Funding allocation to support implementation.
- Recruitment of four key project roles since April 2025.
- System-wide scope, with a primary focus on SEND processes and High needs block expenditure.

Expected Benefits:

- Reduced growth in EHCPs and associated transport costs.
- A robust DSG Deficit Management Plan.
- Rebalanced High Needs Block spend, avoiding ESFA intervention.
- A modernised Local Offer and digitised Descriptors of Need, improving engagement and decision-making.

This invest-to-save initiative is designed to embed change as business as usual by the end of academic year 2027.

For more information, please contact Sue Alexander, sue.alexander@newcastle.gov.uk

The Virtual School

The Virtual School supports the education of children who are in the care of Newcastle Council. We provide statutory support and challenge to schools that our children attend, we track attendance and progress and provide targeted interventions so that each child can achieve their goals and educational outcomes. The Virtual School has a governing body that is represented by schools, Children's Social Care, Health, local authority officers and the wider community. The Virtual School Headteacher reports to the council's Corporate Parenting Committee.

Comparison

Following last year's reduction, we have seen an increase in the numbers of children on the Virtual School roll. The percentage of statutory age children has reduced with years 12 and 13 showing the largest growth. The level of identified SEN remains high, especially around SEMH.

Virtual School 3-year Trends

Trend	22/23	23/24	24/25	3-year trend
Size of Virtual School	634	598	675	+41
Statutory School Age	73%	74%	72%	-1%
Identified SEN	39%	39%	36%	-3%
EHCP	18%	18%	16%	-2%
SEMH EHCP	10%	9%	8%	-2%

Achievements

Attendance remains our main priority. For 20224/25 this figure stood at 88.96% with 203 children or 30% of the Virtual School had an attendance of over 98%.

Suspensions within the Virtual School dropped by 12 incidents involving 7 less students. This is pleasing, reversing a previous rising trend, and with 77 additional students on the Virtual School roll.

Headline performance data for 2023, 2024 and 2025 (provisional)

	Subject	2023	2024	2025 (provisional)	Difference from National
Early Years	Good level of development	41.7%	55.6%	71.4%	+27.4
Year 1	Phonics	53.8%	68.8%	58.0%	+13.4%
Key Stage 1	Reading	41.2%	75.0%	100.0%	+52.0%
	Writing	23.5%	75.0%	66.7%	+31.7%
	Maths	58.8%	75.0%	66.7%	+16.7%
Key Stage 2	Reading, writing and Maths	51.4%	36.4%	33.3%	-1.7%
	Grammar Punctuation and Spelling	57.1%	54.5%	39.4%	-11.6%

The Year 7 transition cohort has been reviewed and appropriate support allocated through personal education plan meetings. Further work into understanding the SEN profile of key stage 2 will be conducted, following an increase in identified need in year over the past four years from **44%** in 2022 to **61%** in 2025.

GCSE grades in Newcastle for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

GCSE grades in Newcastle schools have continued to rise over the last three years and this academic achievement has mirrored into high levels of students attending university. In 2024 Newcastle had **13%** of 19 to 21 year old care leavers in higher education compared to a national average of **5%**.

Proportion of Care Leavers engaging in post-16 study for 2021, 2022 and 2023

Care Leavers	2022	2023	2024	Trend
Higher education	8%	12%	13%	+5%
Education Employment or Training	58%	59%	48%	-10%
NEET	32%	32%	45%	+13%
Not in touch	9%	9%	7%	-2%

Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

There is a growing challenge in with care leavers who are not in employment and training. Work is being undertaken to understanding this increase, with year 12 being the age group with the largest numbers of young people coming into care every year since 2021.

Other developments

- Participation in the Royal Springboard program has secured places on 100% bursaries for **3** of our children at local independent school.
- Extended educational psychology capacity with additional accesses to a trainee EP to the service.
- Continued delivery of the summer tuition program by Kip McGrath.
- Opening of an education space, “The Brain Box, providing a venue for one to one and small group learning.
- Our first Virtual School conference and planning for 2026’s event.

Subject	Grade	2023	2024	2025 (provisional)	3 year trend
Maths and English	5+	11.8%	8.1%%	20.0%	+8.2%
Maths and English	4+	14.7%	16.2%	36.0%	+21.3%
English	5+	20.6%	13.5%	28.0%	+7.4%
English	4+	26.5%	21.6%	48.0%	+22.1%
Maths	5+	17.6%	10.8%	24.0%	+6.4%
Maths	4+	26.5%	16.2%	36.0%	+9.5%

Virtual School Priorities for 2025/2026

- Introduce and embed twice yearly PEP cycle, supported by weekly attendance monitoring and termly attainment collection.
- Work with school to implement extended duties legalised by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024.
- Improve the attendance of all children with a social worker.
- Ensure children in care reach their full potential.
- Continue to forge strong links with Childrens Social Care, school, and carers, including those placed outside Newcastle.
- Continue to provide solutions that support the individual student at the point of need.



Access and Inclusion

The Attendance Team is made up of 4 full-time Attendance Officers (or equivalent), each assigned to a locality and thereby giving every school a named Attendance Officer and single point of contact.

Every school continues to have regular Targeting Support Meetings with their allocated Attendance Officer, focusing on barriers to attendance and identifying pupils for early interventions and additional support where appropriate.

Attendance % for Newcastle schools by phase for the academic year 24/25 with previous year comparison

Phase	2024 – 2025 %	2023 – 2024 %	Diff
Primary	94.7	94.4	0.3
Secondary	90.2	89.5	0.7
Special	82.1	82.2	-0.1
AP	54.5	51.1	3.4

The data shows there has been an increase in both primary and secondary attendance compared to the previous academic year and AP attendance has increased by 3.4%.

A consistent theme emerging from schools continues to include disrupted attendance habits formed during school closures, engagement with education and attendance often linked to mental health, SEND or social factors. We continue to work with schools and wider professionals to overcome these barriers.

Autumn Term 24 & 23 PA and SA figures for Newcastle schools by phase, with national comparison

		Autumn 2024		Autumn 2023		Ncle Difference
		Newcastle	NA	Newcastle	NA	
Primary	PA	15.16	14.29	16.21	15.41	1.05
	SA	0.78	0.89	0.73	0.81	-0.05
Secondary	PA	23.55	21.09	26.92	23.44	3.37
	SA	4.23	3.19	4.90	3.14	0.67
Special	PA	39.98	34.90	42.03	36.19	2.05
	SA	11.67	6.32	10.17	6.15	-1.5
Total	PA	19.71	19.79	21.77	19.44	2.06
	SA	2.67	2.04	2.88	1.97	0.21

The data shows persistent absence figures have reduced across all phases, however the total remains above national average.

Severe absenteeism continues to be a key local and national focus, and the local authority will continue to collect and analyse data relating to this group. The sharing of daily school registers with the Department for Education is now helping schools to identify trends to support children and reduce pupil absence in schools. The Newcastle figure for severe absenteeism has reduced in comparison to the previous academic year.

Termly Targeting Support Meetings continue to be held with schools at least termly. Attendance Officers use reports to facilitate the meeting ensuring that persistent or severe absence is identified and addressed through joint approaches to remove any barriers to attendance.



Attendance network meetings were held in Autumn and Spring Term, where 56 schools were represented, and an Attendance Conference was held in Summer Term.

The focus of the network meetings has been around new systems that have been put in place, registration codes and the Newcastle's Education Neglect policy.

77 schools made a referral into our service in 2024 – 2025. The number of attendance legal referrals received was 958 compared to 803 last academic year (19% increase).

The number of referral requests to issue a fixed penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence has also increased with 1,942 received, compared to 1,631 at the same point last academic year (19% increase). Attendance Officers remain engaged with schools and partners to provide support, advice, and early interventions for pupils and families through Team Around the School meetings.

The Attendance Officers are working alongside the SEMH and Educational Psychology teams to formulate EBSNA plans where it is deemed appropriate to support children and young people.

Regular training is delivered across services such as Early Help and Children's Social Care to improve collaborative working solutions and ensure all partners better understand attendance thresholds, processes and the threshold for educational neglect.

Part-time Timetable Referrals

Some pupils may require additional support to attend school, part-time timetables can be used as part of a carefully planned support package to re-engage with learning, manage a transition or recover from a period of absence and back into full-time education. All schools have adopted the Local Authority Policy on notifying the Access and Inclusion team of those for whom this is an appropriate intervention. This system is robust and well established. When required bespoke training on part-time timetables is delivered to schools and stakeholders.

Across all settings, 815 pupils have been supported with a partial timetable at some point throughout the year.

Priorities 2025/2026

- Targeting Support Meetings will continue to be held on a termly basis, ensuring consistency across all schools, including working with SEND caseworkers in special schools.
- Targeting Support Meetings will focus on schools monitoring their data closely to identify patterns of absence using the DfE absence bandings for early identification.
- To prioritise SA and PA focusing on barriers to attendance.
- To ensure schools have embedded the 'Support First' approach, focusing on early intervention.
- To carry out statutory responsibilities in line with Department for Education's attendance guidance.
- Continue to strengthen relationships between schools to improve attendance.
- To work closely with partner agencies to ensure attendance is included in actions plans and strategies to support families.
- To continue to provide all stakeholders with high quality information, advice, and guidance to support in the removal of barriers to school attendance.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

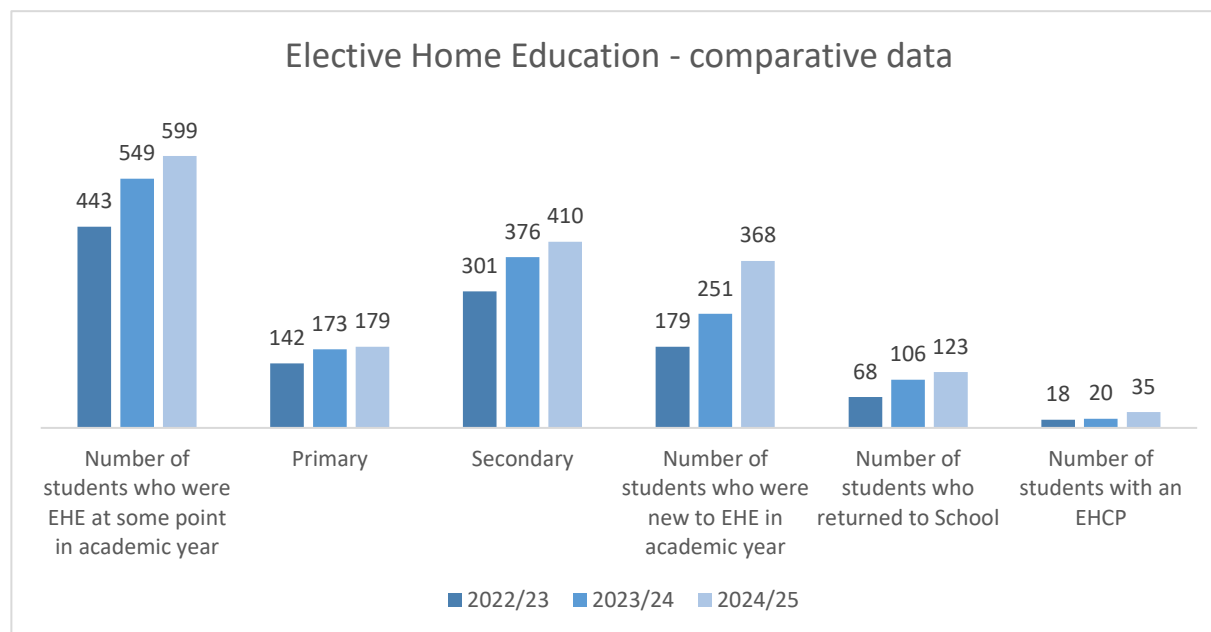
Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school full-time. Parents/carers are required to provide a full-time education that is suitable for their child's age, ability, and aptitude, taking into account any special needs that a child may have.

It is our responsibility, as the Local Authority (LA), to make sure that the arrangements being made for a child's education at home are suitable. We encourage parent/carers to meet with us to discuss the education they will be providing. If we are unable to establish if a suitable education is being provided the LA may seek to issue a school attendance order and direct a child into a school setting.

Since the beginning of the academic year 2024/25, the number of parents electing to home educate in Newcastle has continued to increase. This increasing trend has been seen in our neighbouring authorities as well as at national level.

Numbers during the Academic Year 2024/25

- In Newcastle **599** students were registered as electively home educated (EHE) during 2024/25, of which **179** were primary students and **410** were secondary students.
- There were **368** students who were new to EHE in 2024/25.
- A total of **123** EHE students returned to a mainstream education setting during 2024/25.
- There were **30** students who came back to EHE after returning to a school setting.
- A total of **35** families are currently being supported by the local authority to ensure they provide a suitable education.



Priorities 2025/26

- Work alongside colleagues in the SEND team to ensure all children and young people who are EHE with additional needs, receive the support and advice needed to ensure they receive a suitable education at home.
- Working with schools across the city to encourage early contact with the EHE team when a parent is considering EHE. This will allow parents to be fully informed of what EHE entails and what they will need to provide to the LA to evidence a suitable education.

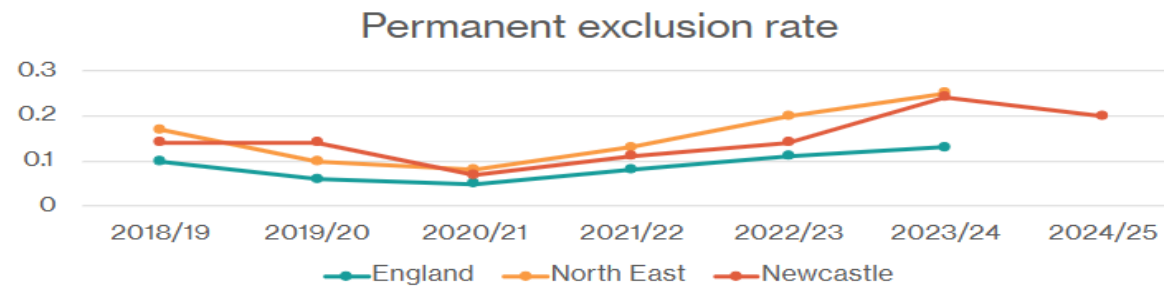


Exclusion

Local unvalidated data indicates a similar level and rate of permanent exclusion in Newcastle during the academic year 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. The number of permanent exclusions recorded this academic year was 83(91, including those excluded from alternative provision or out of area schools). There have been seven permanent exclusions from primary schools. Exclusions from alternative provision and out of authority are included separately to align with previously shared published datasets for comparison.

Permanent Exclusions	ENGLAND			NORTH EAST			NEWCASTLE				
	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Primary	758	1201	1462	21	44	48	2	1	1	4	7
Secondary	5,658	8054	9298	504	736	939	25	42	59	77	75
Special	79	121	125	6	3	7	0	2	1	4	1
Total	6,495	9,376	10,885	531	783	994	27	45	61	85	83*

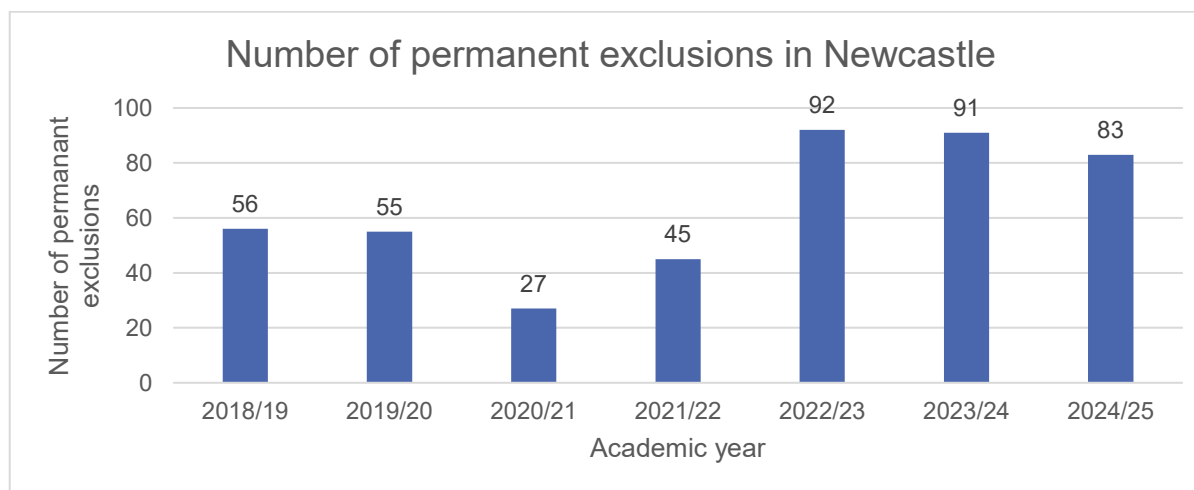
*unpublished data.



	England								North East						Newcastle upon Tyne						
Rate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25		
State-funded primary	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.01	-	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	-	0.01	-	-	0.02	0.03		
State-funded secondary	0.20	0.13	0.10	0.16	0.22	0.25	0.40	0.23	0.19	0.31	0.44	0.56	0.30	0.33	0.14	0.23	0.32	0.42	0.41		
State-funded special	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.05	-	0.01	0.07	0.03	0.07	0.11	-	-	0.21	0.10	0.32	0.11		
Total	0.10	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.11	0.13	0.17	0.10	0.08	0.13	0.20	0.25	0.14	0.14	0.07	0.11	0.14	0.24	0.20		

24/25 rates are based upon unpublished data

The rate per 1000=Number of exclusions/school cohort*1000 in that academic year

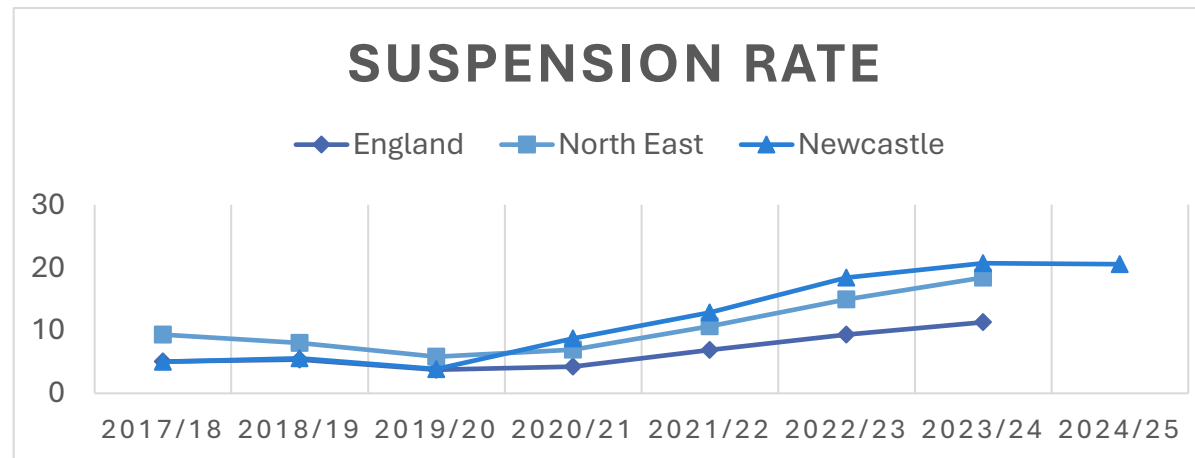


Out of authority and alternative provision are not included in order to align with historical comparisons. 2022/23 and 2023/24 rates are based upon unpublished data

Local unvalidated data indicates a decrease in the number of suspensions in Newcastle during the academic year 2024/25 compared to other comparable years. The number of suspensions recorded this academic year was 8622.

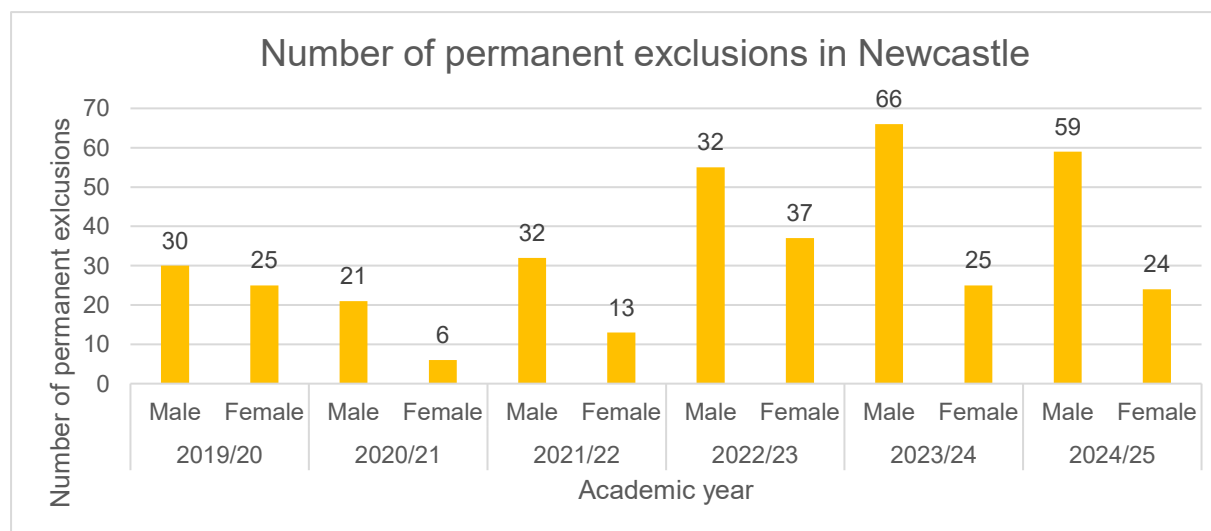
Suspensions	ENGLAND			NORTH EAST			NEWCASTLE				
	21/22	22/23	23/24	21/22	22/23	23/24	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25*
Primary	66,203	84,264	104,803	2,325	2,990	4,100	248	204	266	331	373
Secondary	498,120	685,930	829,896	38,743	54,429	66,352	3,253	4,999	6,557	7,906	7,750
Special	13,957	16,767	20,253	1,028	1653	2276	89	162	205	548	499
Total	578,280	786,961	954,952	42,096	59,072	72,728	3,590	5,365	7,028	8,785	8,622

*unpublished data. **There have been additional suspensions from out of authority and alternative provisions which are not included in order to align with historical comparisons.



24/25 rates are based upon unpublished data. The rate per 1000=Number of suspensions/school cohort*1000 in that academic year

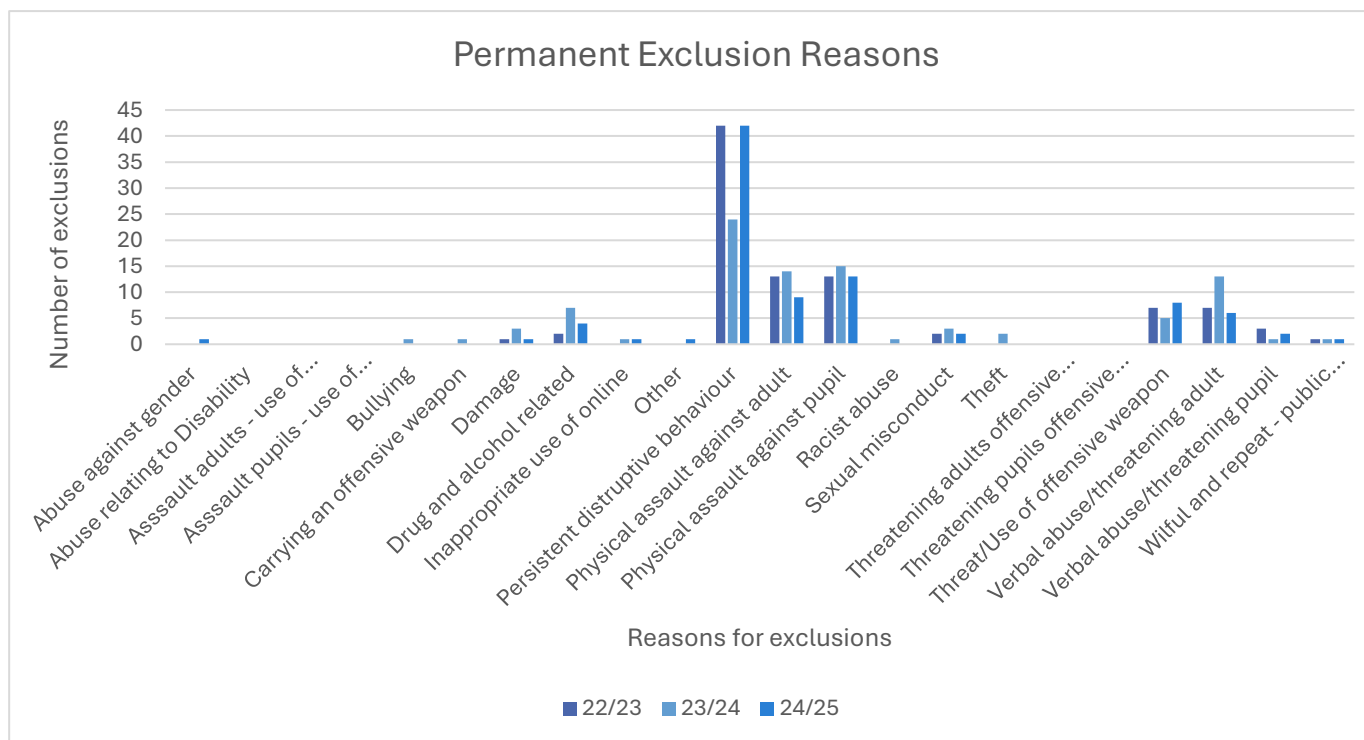
Historically, fewer females in Newcastle are permanently excluded than males, reflecting the regional and national picture. Out of authority and alternative provision are not included in order to align with historical comparisons.



Out of authority and alternative provision are not included in order to align with historical comparisons. 2024/25 rates are based upon unpublished data

The most common reason to issue a permanent exclusion in academic year 2024-25 and 2023-24 was 'persistent disruptive behaviour'; this accounted for 39% of all permanent exclusions in both years. In Newcastle for 24/25 this equated to 46% of all permanent exclusions. This is in line with previous years where this reason was the most commonly recorded. This was followed by physical assault against a pupil (14%).

Out of authority and alternative provision are not included in order to align with historical comparisons. 2024/25 rates are based upon unpublished data

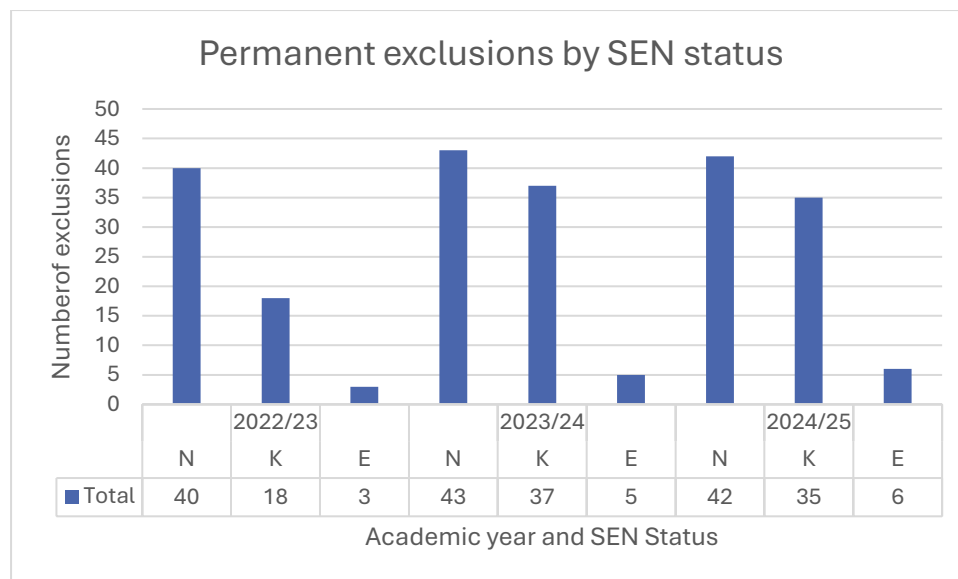


A number of permanent exclusions have been prevented this year due to the robust support mechanisms offered to all primary and secondary schools in Newcastle via the expanded team of officers, Team Around the School, Locality Inclusion Panel and SEMH Team. In addition, internal data recorded 12 schools withdrawing a PEX prior to GB meeting (10) or a PEX YP being reinstated following GB meeting (2). There have been six independent review panel requests following permanent exclusion, compared to last year's 16 requests.

We continue to work with partner agencies to adopt an alternative approach in response to the increase in violent or weapon related exclusions. Where possible the local authority works with schools and the SEND team to find an alternative to an exclusion, particularly in the case of primary pupils. Primary schools are included in the LIP (locality inclusion panel) process, SEND ASAP (advice, support allocation panel), TAS (team around the school) meetings and are able to access support from the SEMH team. As part of the LIP/ASAP process schools are encouraged to access the increasing support available from the LA teams at the local authority. This can include specialist teachers, outreach support from specialist provisions, individual pupil support funding, Inclusion key worker, Educational Psychologist and general advice and guidance.

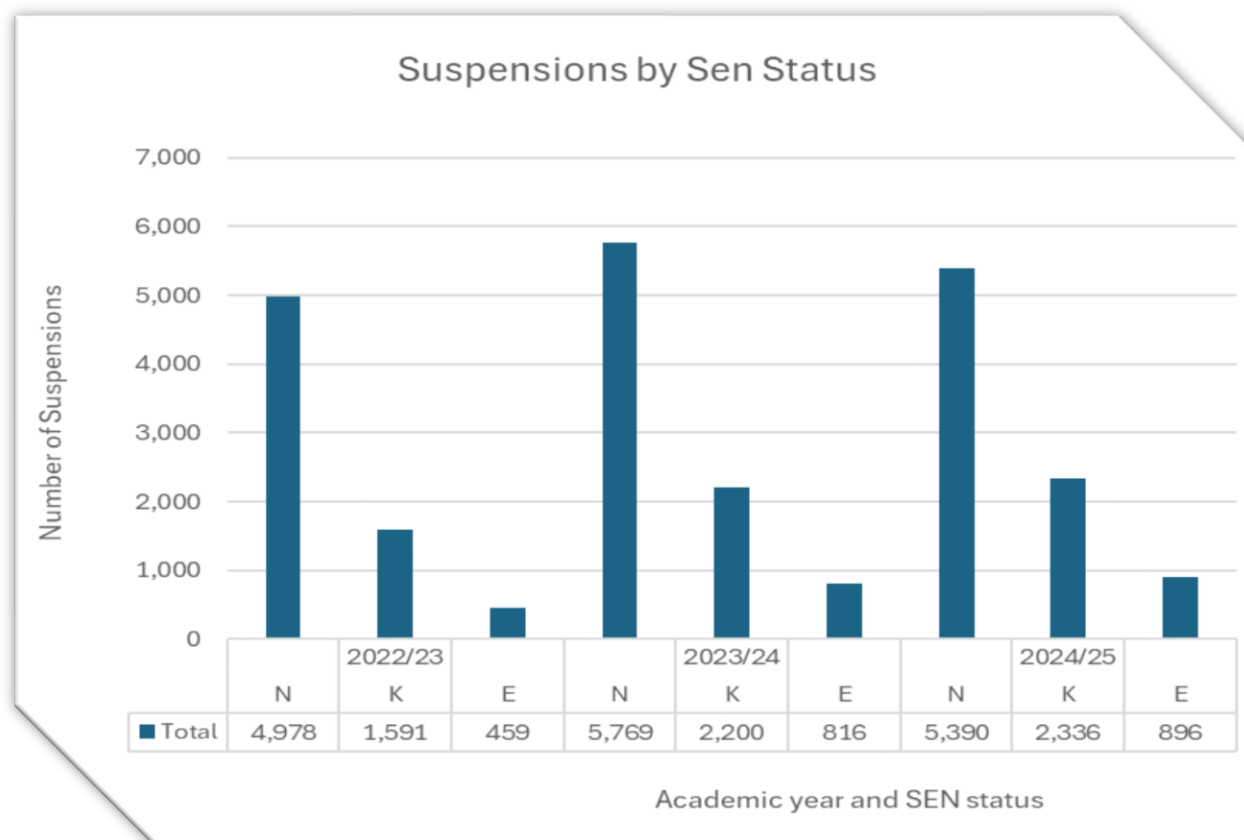
Exclusions by SEN status	2022/23 published			2023/24 published			2024/25** Internal data		
SEN Status	N	K	E	N	K	E	N	K	E
Primary	0	1	0	1	3	0	2	3	2
Secondary	40	17	2	42	34	1	40	32	3
Special	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	1
Total	40	18	3	43	37	5	42	35	6

**Internal data. Not including alternative provision and out of authority to align with previous data sets.



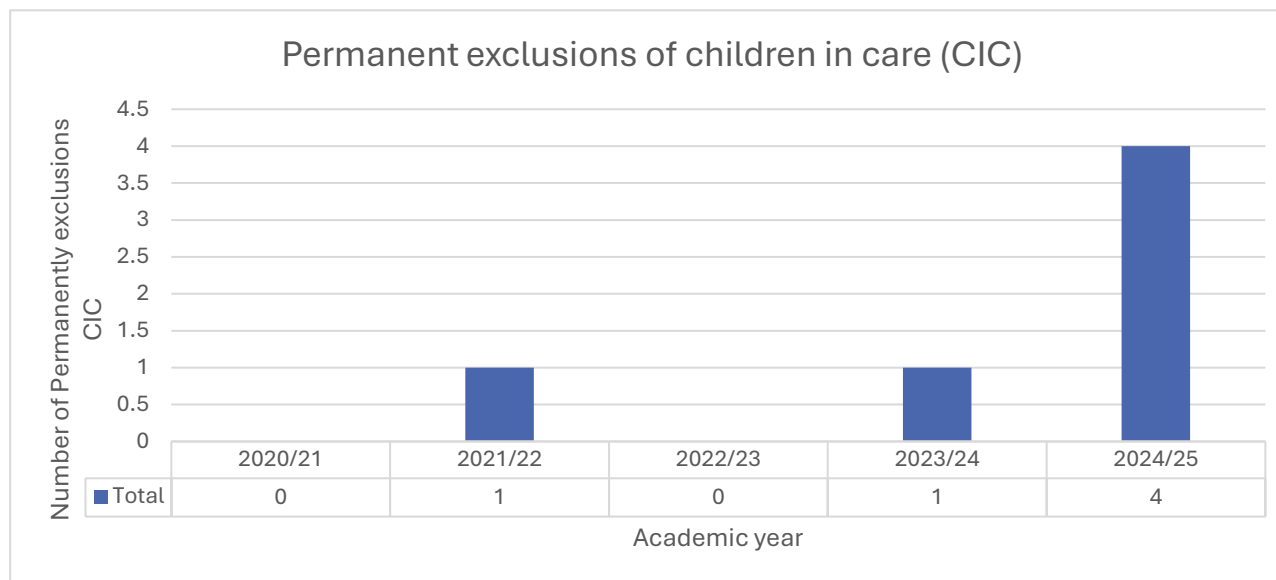
**Internal data. Not including alternative provision and out of authority to align with previous data sets.

Suspensions by SEN status	2022/23 published			2023/24 published			2024/25 Internal data		
SEN Status	N	K	E	N	K	E	N	K	E
Primary	43	174	49	67	200	64	106	181	86
Secondary	4,935	1,416	206	5,702	2,000	204	5,255	2,155	340
Special	0	1	204	0	0	548	29	0	470
Total	4,978	1,591	459	5,769	2,200	816	5,390	2,336	896



Where a child or young person (CYP) with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) comes to the attention of the A&I Team and is at risk of exclusion or suspension, the SEND caseworker is informed. In the case of the CYP having an EHCP, schools are challenged and advised to use the SEND route to avoid PEX.

**Internal data. Not including alternative provision and out of authority to align with previous data sets.



The Access and Inclusion team continue to work closely with Virtual School to challenge exclusions for CiC and explore alternatives to exclusion.

Priorities 2025/26

- **Continue to Embed the Fair Access Protocol** with schools in Newcastle to ensure that children without a school place are supported back into full-time education as quickly as possible. Pupils will be gradually integrated into mainstream settings, with support from Inclusion Key Workers and bespoke provision.
- **Work collaboratively with schools** to reduce exclusions and promote inclusive practice, thereby improving outcomes for children and young people. This includes closely monitoring students who are at risk of exclusion due to repeated suspensions.
- **Regularly review PEX bespoke provisions** to ensure excluded pupils are supported to return to mainstream education where possible, or to achieve appropriate qualifications (GCSEs or functional skills) aligned with their ability.
- **Work with Inclusion Key Workers and Early Help** to identify appropriate interventions that address the underlying reasons for exclusion and prepare pupils for a successful reintegration into mainstream.



Children Missing Education (CME)

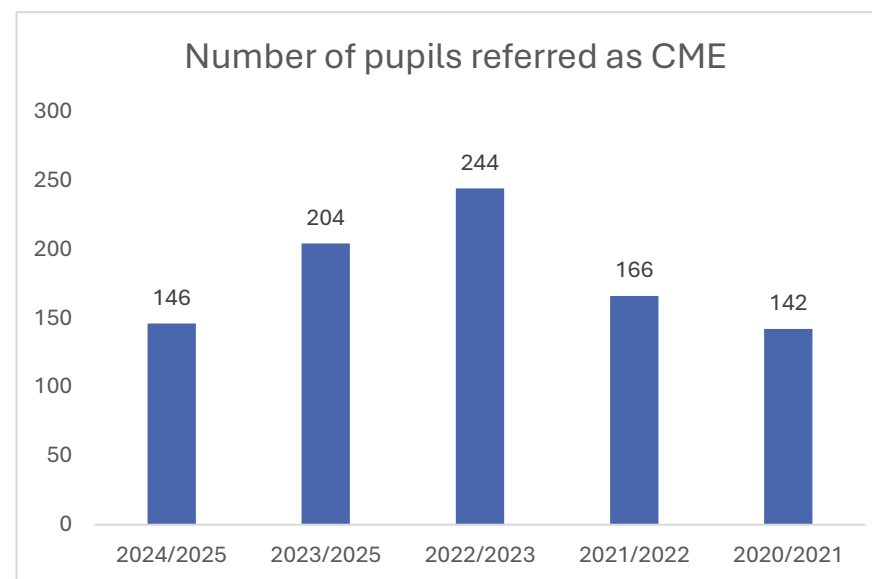
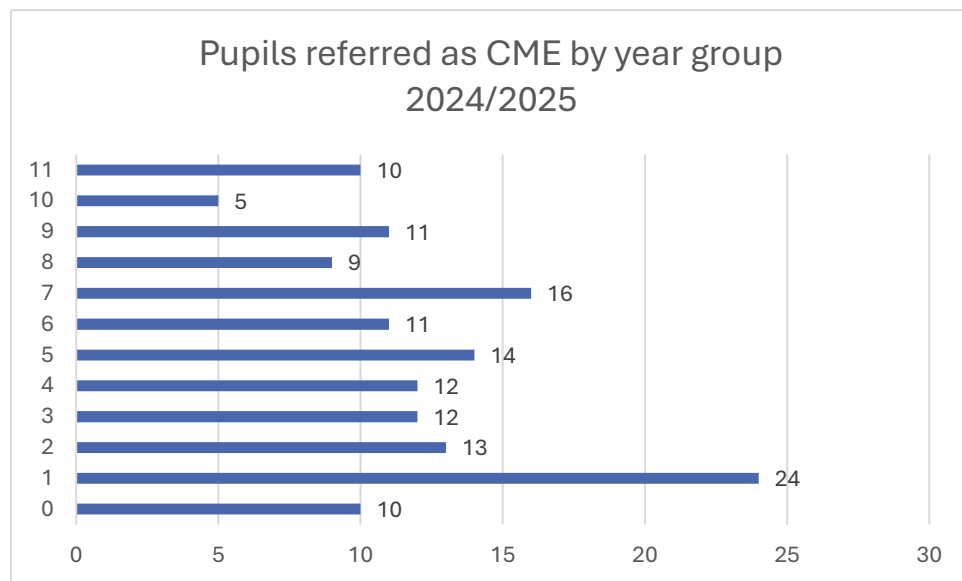
Children Missing Education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

CME include some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

- In the academic year 2024-25 146 children were reported as CME in Newcastle by schools and partner agencies.
- There was a significant peak during the first academic term following the summer break which is consistent with previous years. This peak is in part due to families returning to their home countries over the summer and failing to inform school.
- There were 526 enquiries about children from other LA's who believe these children had moved to Newcastle up to August 2025. These enquiries are investigated and if a pupil is found to be in Newcastle and are without a school they are supported and tracked into education.
- Checking and reporting systems have been developed, including a new data sharing agreement with border force whereby last movement request for a child may be submitted.



CME numbers have decreased in 2024/2025 for the second consecutive year.



*Internal data. Not including alternative provision and out of authority to align with previous data sets.

Priorities for 2025/2026

- Working with schools across the city to encourage early contact with the CME officer to ensure early identification of those who are at risk of becoming CME.
- Continue to review and develop the CME process to ensure children are located and supported back into education quickly through effective working alongside colleagues.



Safeguarding

Within the Access and Inclusion Team there is a Safeguarding Team which consists of two Education Supervising Social Workers and the MASH Education Officer.



The Education Supervising Social Workers offer all schools in the city support around safeguarding. This support includes: half termly supervision with the DSL, DDSL or pastoral staff - the supervision can be with either individuals or group; reviews of Early Help plans, Child Protection plans, Child In Need plans or Child in Care; consultancy support via telephone/email; support with safety planning for children who pose a risk to self and others; support for link Safeguarding Governor and Supervision for headteachers who have issued a permanent exclusion.

As well as being a key link between schools/education providers and Children's Social Care, the Education Supervising Social Workers also attend the half termly Team Around the School meetings and facilitate the termly DSL Network Meetings which includes key speakers who provide support around key themes and contextual safeguarding information.

The safeguarding team also have a role within the Newcastle Safeguarding Children's Partnership (NSCP) which includes engaging with strategic groups such as PREM (Partnership Reduction of Exploitation and Missing) and undertaking Case Reviews and Audits alongside multi agency partners. The collaborative working promotes opportunity for effective information sharing between the Newcastle Education Safeguarding Partnership (NESP) and schools.

MASH

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) continues to be a channel for information sharing between services when a significant safeguarding concern has taken place. It is vital in ensuring the right support is in place for families at the right time, and schools, colleges, nurseries, and other education settings continue to contribute valuable information as part of this process.

The MASH Education Officer represents education within the hub. The role includes contacting schools and informing them when a safeguarding concern has been identified, engaging with school staff to gathering their views, assess current risk, and facilitate attendance at strategy meetings. This role is an important part of the information sharing process between education and partner agencies to ensure that children's wellbeing is safeguarded.



There were 1198 MASH Education involvements recorded between 1 September 2024 and 31 August 2025. Please note that this relates to the number of individual children considered and that some children may have had more than one MASH involvement within this timeframe.

School Organisation and Infrastructure

School Organisation and Infrastructure incorporates some key statutory duties of the local authority:

- Planning for and ensuring sufficiency of school places across the city in maintained schools and academies.
- Allocation of school places through the Coordinated Admissions Schemes for primary and secondary schools in line with the School Admissions Code and coordination of in-year admissions.
- Management of the maintained school estate for which the local authority is the responsible body, including condition improvement works and where possible, improve the carbon efficiency of the school estate.

In addition, these services work with families, schools and other services to:

- Develop, oversee and deliver capital programs and projects to create mainstream and specialist places to meet needs, improve access, inclusion and learning environments.
- Maximise parent and pupil access to education-related benefits, such as free school meals and mainstream home to school travel.
- Support families who are new to the city to secure school places.

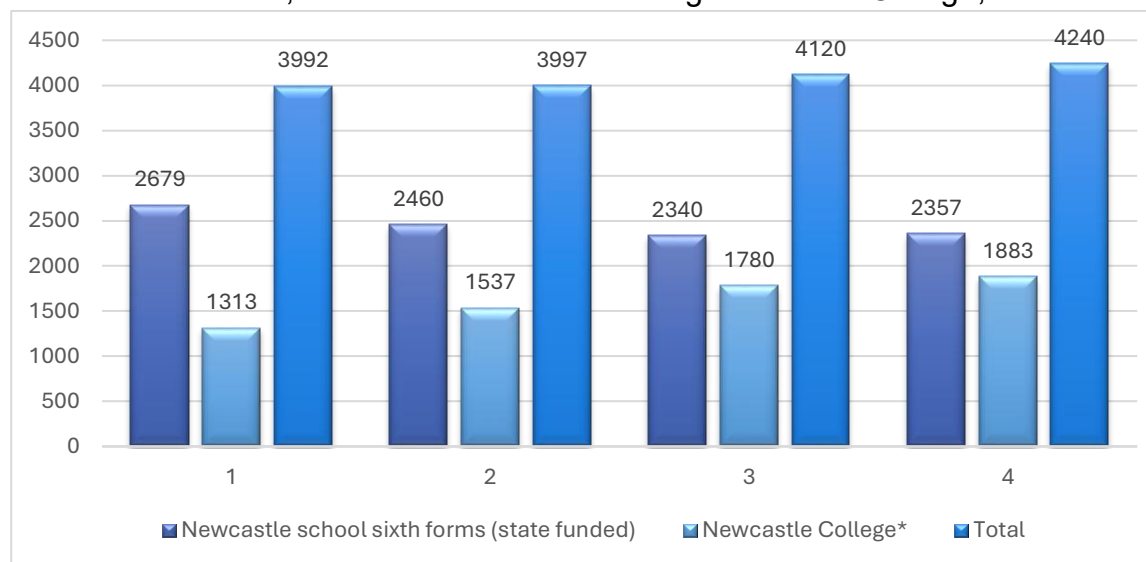
Pupil Population

There has been significant growth in the school age population in Newcastle for the past 10 years, there are now signs that this growth is slowing. With specific cohorts decreasing; particularly sixth form, school nursery and reception cohorts.

The latest ONS data predicts the population of Newcastle will grow by 2.9% between 2018 to 2028 equating to a population change of 8,749 across all age groups. But shows a reduction in the proportion of the population aged 0 to 18 years.



- In January 2025, there were 46,888 pupils in Newcastle schools, a decrease of 150 pupils since January 2024. However, the school population in reception to Year 11 has only fallen by around 50 pupils.
- The number of pupils in state-funded primary schools (including first) has grown by 3,235 (15.2%) to 22,750 since 2012, and by 1,436 (6.7%) since 2015.
- Since 2015, the number of pupils in state-funded secondary schools (including middle, not including sixth form) has grown by 3,278 pupils (25.8%) to 15,986.
- In the last academic year (2024/25), the number of pupils in Reception to Year 11 increased in-year by nine pupils between October 2024 and May 2025, compared to an increase of 256 pupils in the previous year and 415 in the year before.
- There is still in-year growth in some cohorts, especially key stage 1 but some cohorts have reduced in-year, especially key stage 4.
- Year 4 is currently the largest cohort in the city with 3,381 pupils and has grown by 251 pupils (8%) since reception in October 2020.
- Other primary phase cohorts have grown between 3% and 6% since reception apart from the current reception cohort.
- In January 2025, there were 2,357 pupils in mainstream school sixth forms, this number has declined over the last three years despite increasing Year 11 resident cohorts, while the numbers attending Newcastle College, as shown in the table below.



*Newcastle resident students only

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- The number of children and young people of all ages with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans has increased to 3,095 in 2025 a growth of 11.8% since 2024. In 2024, there were 2,769 children and young people with an EHC plan, a 14.1% growth from 2023. Over the last five years, there has been an 82% growth in students who have an EHC plan. This growth is above the North East and national averages.
 - As a result, the numbers of children and young people in specialist places have also increased substantially, despite increasing numbers and proportions of pupils with EHCPs being educated in mainstream schools.

Addressing School Place Needs

- Although there has been a fall in reception intakes to primary schools in some parts of the city and further forecast reductions based on birth rates, this has been countered by some in-year growth. Much of that growth is associated with new large-scale housing developments.
- In the short to medium term, there are expected to be sufficient primary school places to meet need across the city within existing capacity, except for pockets where there is more substantial on-going housing growth or inward migration.
- However, as mentioned above, during the 2024/25 academic year there has been far less net growth than in the previous four years. If this becomes a new pattern, there is a risk to the future viability of some schools.
- Secondary place pressures are ongoing but should be resolved when the two new DfE-delivered secondary schools, Callerton Academy and Great Park Academy (GPA), are in their new buildings on their permanent sites from September 2025.



- Many secondary schools have admitted over PAN into 'bulge classes' for a number of years to help address the shortfall of secondary places due to the delays in building the two new schools.
- There are very few or no unfilled places in all secondary year groups, only current Year 10 is below the total PAN for schools. As a result, in-year admissions applications in these year groups are increasingly being offered through the Fair Access process (FAP) to allocate places for children who are new to the city and otherwise would not be able to secure a suitable school place.
- Future post-16 needs and provision will need consideration as larger cohorts progress through secondary schools but reducing proportions are choosing school sixth forms and attending FE provision instead.
- Although the proportion of children and young people who attend specialist schools is reducing, there has been a growth in the numbers from 827 in 2020 to 1,166 in 2025:
 - Special – non maintained schools, from 104 to 146 children and young people
 - Special – independent schools, from 6 to 76 CYP
 - Special – LA maintained and academy schools, from 717 to 944.
- The number of children and young people in reception to year 11 with EHCPs is forecast to increase by around 815 (38%) over the next five years, from 2,153 to 2,968 in 2029/30.
- The most significant growth in numbers relates to autism and the level of increasing need and lack of capacity in existing special schools mean that a new special school for pupils with autism is needed, even with increasing rates of inclusion within mainstream schools.



The Impact of Housing Developments on Demand for School Places



In the last ten years, there have been around 1,000 new houses completed each year in Newcastle, excluding student accommodation. In addition, the significant amount of purpose-built student accommodation is releasing some of the existing housing stock back into the family housing market, especially in the Inner East of the city.

Between 2018 and 2030, major new family housing developments (Newcastle and Gateshead Core Strategy) were expected to create more than 9,500 additional new family homes on Strategic Land Release (SLR) sites with an estimated pupil yield of around 6,000 across the age ranges, 3,500 primary age pupils and 2,500 secondary age pupils (excluding post-16).

- The SLR developments are greenfield sites extending the conurbation at the Northern, North West and Outer West fringes of the city and are mostly not serviced with local infrastructure, amenities or educational provision prior to their development.
- Well-established large-scale housing developments, such as in Newcastle Great Park (NGP) have been a key source of some, but by no means all, of the recent inward migration and pupil population growth. Other large family housing sites are also growing now, although some are yet to deliver significant numbers of houses or gain planning approval.

The table below shows the projected housing growth for each of the SLR sites for primary and secondary pupils and the school planning areas that will be most affected. The number of completed and occupied houses on these sites has increased from 4,134 in June 2023 to 5,101 in April 2025

SLR Sites	School Planning Areas most impacted	Total homes	Houses occupied 2023	Houses occupied 2025
Kenton Bank Foot (all)	North Central / Outer West	825	454	535
Upper Callerton	Outer West / North Central	1200	0	0
West Middle Callerton	Outer West	513	290	439
East Middle Callerton	Outer West	600	438	494
Lower Callerton	Outer West	816	242	255
Throckley (all)	Outer West	600	332	412
Newbiggin Dene	Outer West / North Central	303	0	0
Newburn	Outer West	1000	0	0
Scotswood	Inner West	1552	674	779
Kingston Village	North Central	900	0	0
NGP Cell A	Gosforth	1200	167	492
NGP Cell D	Gosforth	651	628	628
NGP Brunton Quarry	Gosforth	140	0	0
Hazlerigg	Gosforth	455	383	455
Wideopen	Gosforth	167	167	167
Dinnington	Gosforth	445	356	445
TOTALS		11367	4131	5101

The Newcastle Great Park (NGP) housing development is the largest of these sites and is now well-established, having started in 2009 prior to the current Core Strategy, with more than 3,000 houses built and occupied since 2009 and will continue to grow with an average housing completion rate of over 100 per year. The housing is extremely popular with families who are attracted by the development itself and because of the successful and popular schools in the Gosforth planning area.

Latest school census and health data (October 2024) shows that there were over 3,200 children and young people resident in the SLR sites enrolled in Newcastle schools and over 1,200 resident pre-school age children.

The table shows the number of pre-school age children and pupils who are attending a Newcastle state-funded school resident within each of the SLR housing sites.

Housing sites	Pre-school cohorts 0-4 yrs. (Oct 2023)	Pre-school cohorts 0-4 yrs. (Oct 2024)	Pupils in Newcastle schools (October 2022)	Pupils in Newcastle schools (October 2023)	Pupils in Newcastle schools (October 2024)
Throckley	112	112	237	238	260
Dinnington	307	321	421	421	456
Newcastle Great Park	558	515	1721	1772	1790
Scotswood	122	127	211	249	248
Kenton Bank Foot/ Kingston Park	61	63	50	51	52
Middle Callerton	69	87	125	143	155
Lower Callerton	Not available	28	-	57	57
Hazelrigg and Wideopen	28	34	43	43	46

School Admissions

Under the statutory School Admissions Code (2021), local authorities are required to coordinate the annual processes for primary and secondary school admissions and transfers, for the normal year of entry for schools in that phase of education.

Through the Co-ordinated schemes for primary and secondary school admissions, applications are managed from around 7,000 individual applicants who are resident in Newcastle.

- On Secondary National Offer Day (1 March 2025) - 79.7% of applicants were offered their first preference and 93.9% were offered one of their preferred schools. These percentages have increased since last year but remain lower than the national average.
- On Primary National Offer Day (16 April 2025) - 92.6% of applicants were allocated their first preference and 98.4% were offered one of their preferred schools. These percentages have decreased slightly since last year and are similar to national comparators.



Since National Offer Days, more than 600 late application forms have been processed.

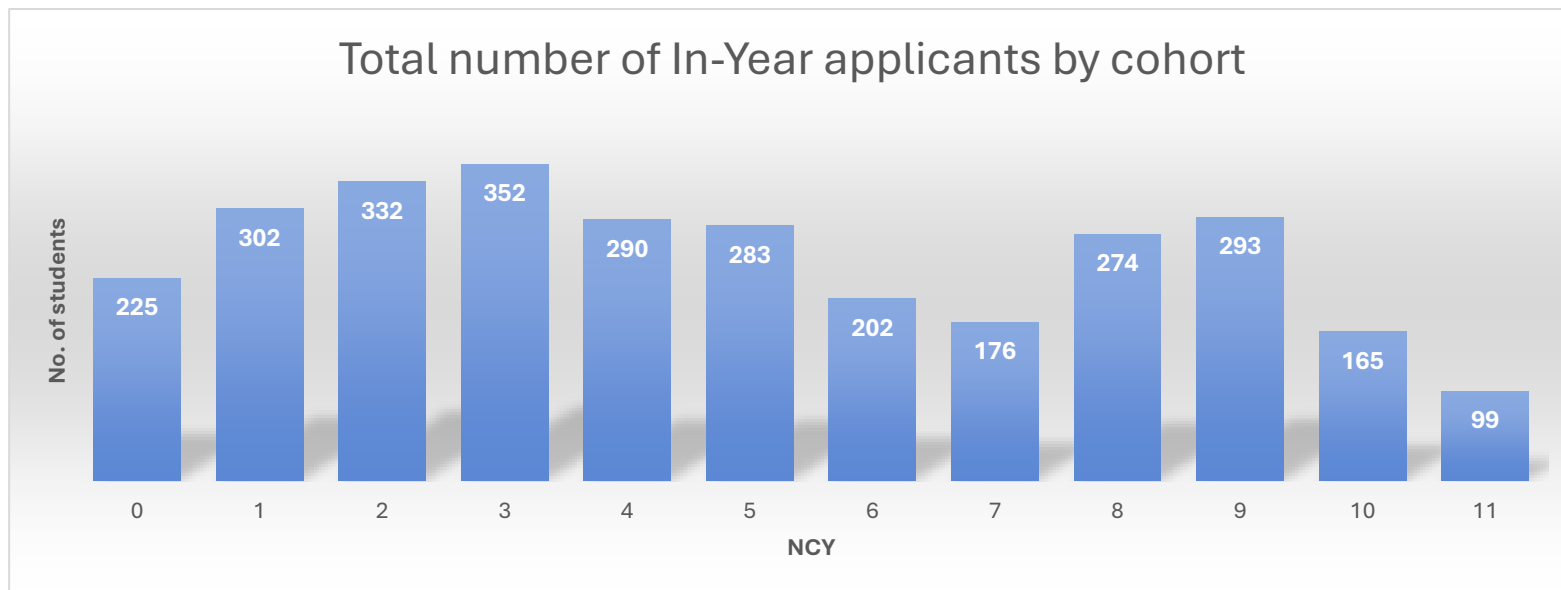
The numbers of families making offset request for their children to start outside their age cohort has increased from 51 to 57 this year.

In-Year Admissions

In recent years, there have been significant numbers of in-year admissions. These are a combination of applications to move between schools in Newcastle outside the usual school admissions and transfer timescales or cohorts and applications for children who are new to the city.

In 2024/25 up to the end of the summer term, the City Council's School Admissions Team processed 2,993 in-year applications for a school place, containing 7,168 preferences.

In-year applications are received for all year groups and from all parts of the city, although the numbers vary significantly. There are larger numbers of applicants in primary age ranges and far greater numbers of applicants who are resident in the inner west than in other school planning areas, as shown in the charts below.

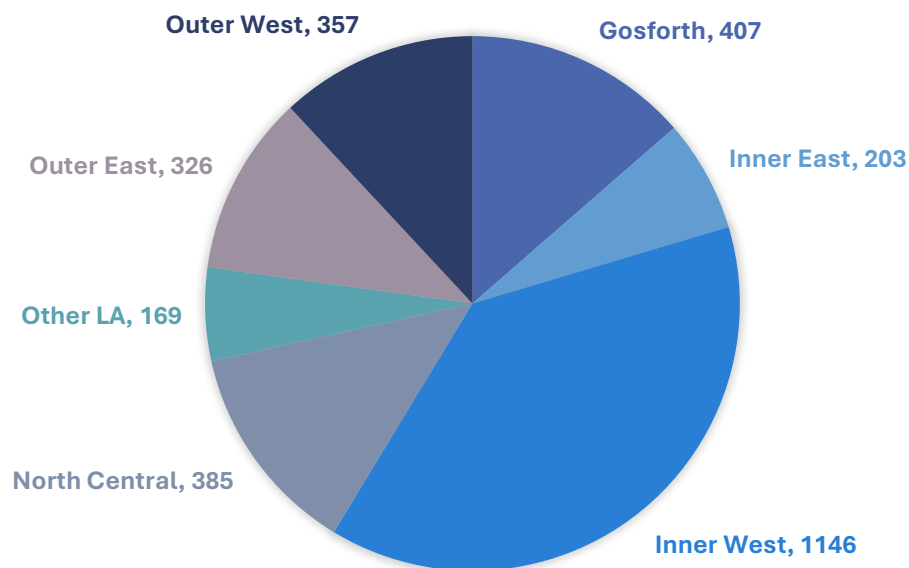


Of all students for whom an In Year application was made during the 2024/25 academic year:

- 859 (29%) were in Reception or KS1 Year groups (Year 1 to Year 2)
- 1,127 (38%) were in KS2 Year groups (Year 3 to Year 6)
- 743 (25%) were in KS3 Year groups (Year 7 to Year 9)
- 264 (9%) were in KS4 Year groups (Year 10 to Year 11)

Families can make in-year applications to change their child's school or for children who do not currently have a school place.

NUMBER OF IN YEAR APPLICATIONS BY PLANNING AREA



Of these, 1,051 applications (35%) were for children who were new to the city. This compares to 1,634 applications (47% of applications) and 1,553 in 2022/23 (36% of applications).

Up to the end of summer term 2025, there were 570 applications for children arriving from outside the UK (as identified by parents on their applications), this compares with 931 in the 2024 and 1,214 in the 2023.

There were 81 in-year applications for a school place for children who were being home educated. The number of students who are applying to move out of independent schools increased during this year from 40 in 2023/24 to 89 in 2024/25. This represents an increase from 1% of all in-year applications to 3%.

Managing in-year admissions has become increasingly challenging and more complex, which is exacerbated by lack of available places in the secondary sector. There has been an increase in capacity in the Admissions Team to help to address this by providing additional advice and support to families to navigate the admissions process and increased liaison with other agencies who provide family support. Where there is a lack of available places in some year groups and some areas of the city, in-year applications are being referred for allocation through the Fair Access Protocol, in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.



Free School Meals



The number of students eligible for free school meals continues to increase. In January 2025 (DfE School Census), there were 17,857 students in Newcastle schools assessed as being eligible for free school meals, which equates to 41.9% of the school population, up from 40.0% in January 2024. This compares with 25.7% of the school population in England being eligible for free school meals.

The number of students eligible for free school meals in Newcastle has increased by 4,809 since January 2020.

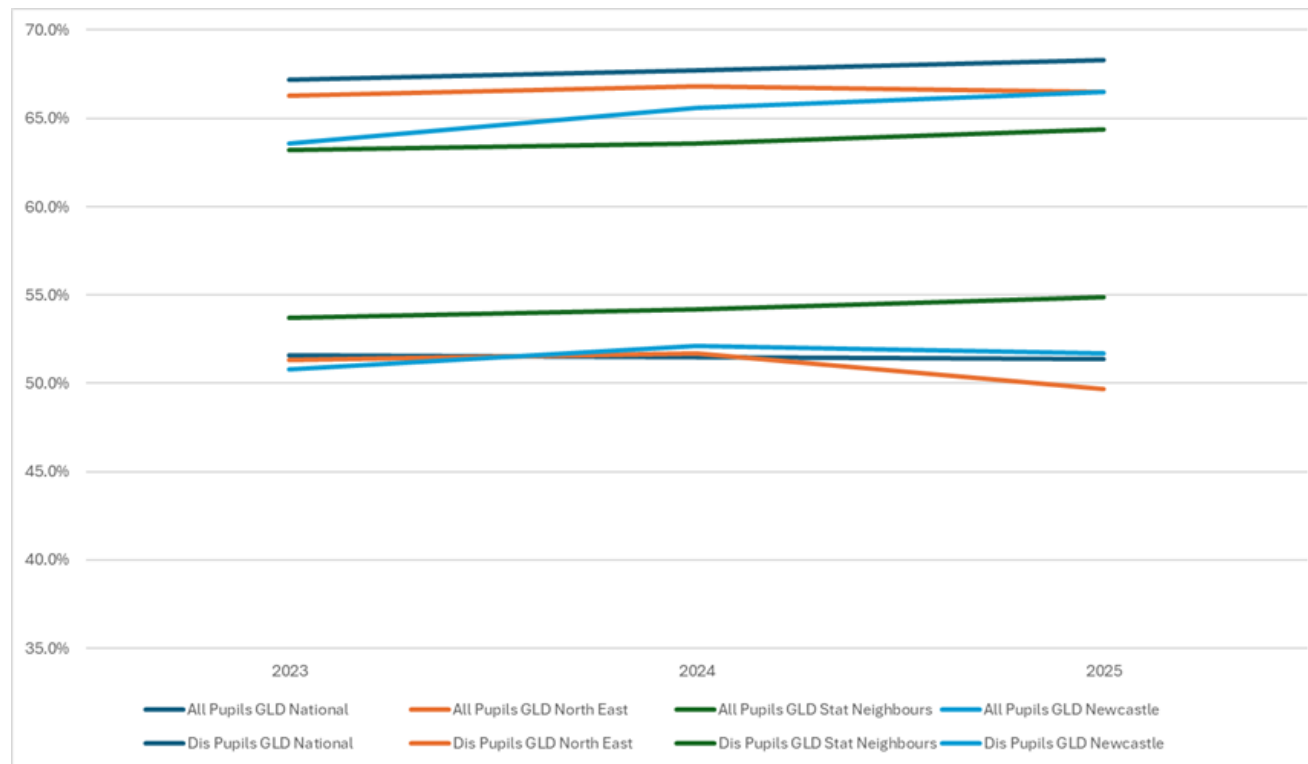
In March 2025, the local authority rolled out an auto-enrolment process for free school meals.

As a result of this auto-enrolment process, 150 students were identified as eligible for free school meals for whom an application for free school meals had not previously been made. However, of the 150 eligible students, 80 (53%) were already in receipt of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM). Although these children could still have been receiving a free school meal through the

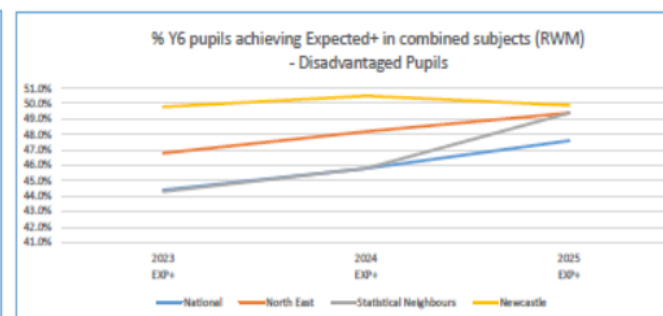
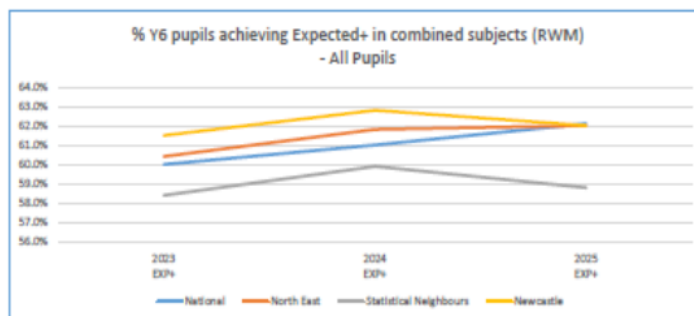
universal offer, the fact that they were not known to be eligible means that schools have been missing out on pupil premium and FSM related formula funding.

The exercise has raised the importance of schools continuing to encourage parents to apply for all children in a family, even if some of those are eligible for universal infant free school meals. The auto-enrolment data matching exercise identified a much lower level of newly eligible children when compared to other local authorities (2500 in Durham and, 546 in Middlesbrough). The exercise suggests that less than 1% of families who are eligible in Newcastle do not apply for free school meals.

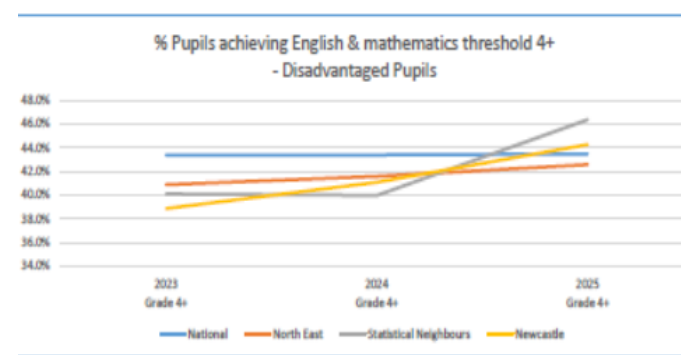
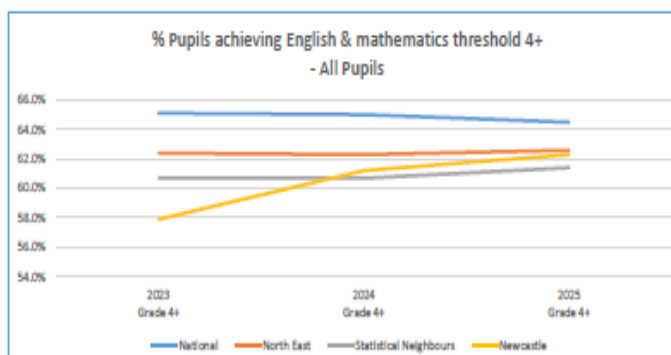
The process demonstrated the strength of the previous work of the Council and schools to optimise take-up of free school meal entitlement by families living in the city.



A chart showing the proportion of all children and children eligible for free school meals achieving a Good Level of Development



Charts showing the proportion of all pupils and pupils eligible for free school meals achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6



Charts showing the proportion of all students and disadvantaged students achieving at least a grade 4 in both English and mathematics at GCSE



Free School Travel (mainstream)

The number of students eligible for free mainstream home to school travel is also increasing due to increasing pupils eligible for free school meals, growing secondary-aged cohorts and increasing place pressures. The number of students applying for and assessed as eligible has increased year-on-year, more than tripled from 535 in the 2019/20 academic year to 1,618 in 2024/25.

Some of the recent increase in numbers is related to Callerton Academy's location on a temporary site which is further from the future permanent site than the statutory walking distance for secondary aged pupils. In 2024/25, 350 free travel passes were issued to Callerton Academy students as well as the provision of bespoke coaches for Y7 and vulnerable pupils in other cohorts. It is expected to decrease from September 2025 when the school relocates to its permanent site.

Education Capital Programme

The School Organisation and Infrastructure team manages a large capital programme of school projects related to school place sufficiency, condition improvement, efficiency, accessibility and inclusion.

There have been no new mainstream place projects in the last academic year. However, there have been a number of projects related to specialist spaces in both special schools and mainstream settings (see SEND Capital Programme below).

The DfE delivery programmes for Callerton Academy (Y7 to 11) and Great Park Academy (Y5 to 11) new schools have progressed positively this year after a number of delays. Both schools permanent buildings are under construction and expected to be occupied in September 2025. Currently both of these schools have been operating on temporary sites with reduced intakes since September 2021. Although both projects are DfE-led, there has been substantial involvement by the School Organisation and Capital team, particularly in relation to the wider infrastructure requirements needed at Newcastle Great Park.

There is an identified need for an additional special school for pupils with autism and the City Council and this has not progressed as hoped during 2024/25 due to a significant capital funding gap, despite ringfencing of around £15m of unallocated Education capital funding towards this project.

A feasibility study for the preferred school site was commissioned and completed in 2023/24, including design options to RIBA Stage 1 and full cost estimates.

These proposals have been revised during 2024/25, including some options to phase the delivery. Funding has been agreed corporately by the City Council to progress some works on site to prepare it for future use, including demolition of existing buildings and remedial groundworks.



School Condition – Maintained Schools

School Condition Allocation (SCA) grant funding from DfE is allocated to local authorities to meet their own local condition priorities across the schools for which they are the responsible bodies. Separate allocations are made to other responsible bodies, such as large Academy Trusts and Dioceses. This funding is used to address strategic condition and estate issues, such as ensuring school buildings are structurally sound, watertight, warm etc, for example, replacement of boilers and heating systems, roof repair and replacements, replacements of windows, fire safety, and decarbonisation work. There is a 'rolling programme' of condition improvement works across the school estate with many of the larger or more disruptive capital projects delivered over more than one year to reduce operational impact on schools.

The annual SCA grant to Newcastle City Council has reduced over time as schools have become academies and the local authority is no longer the responsible body. In 2024/25, condition projects were delivered across ten different maintained schools with an overall value of around £1.6m, although the in-year grant allocation was around £1.4m.

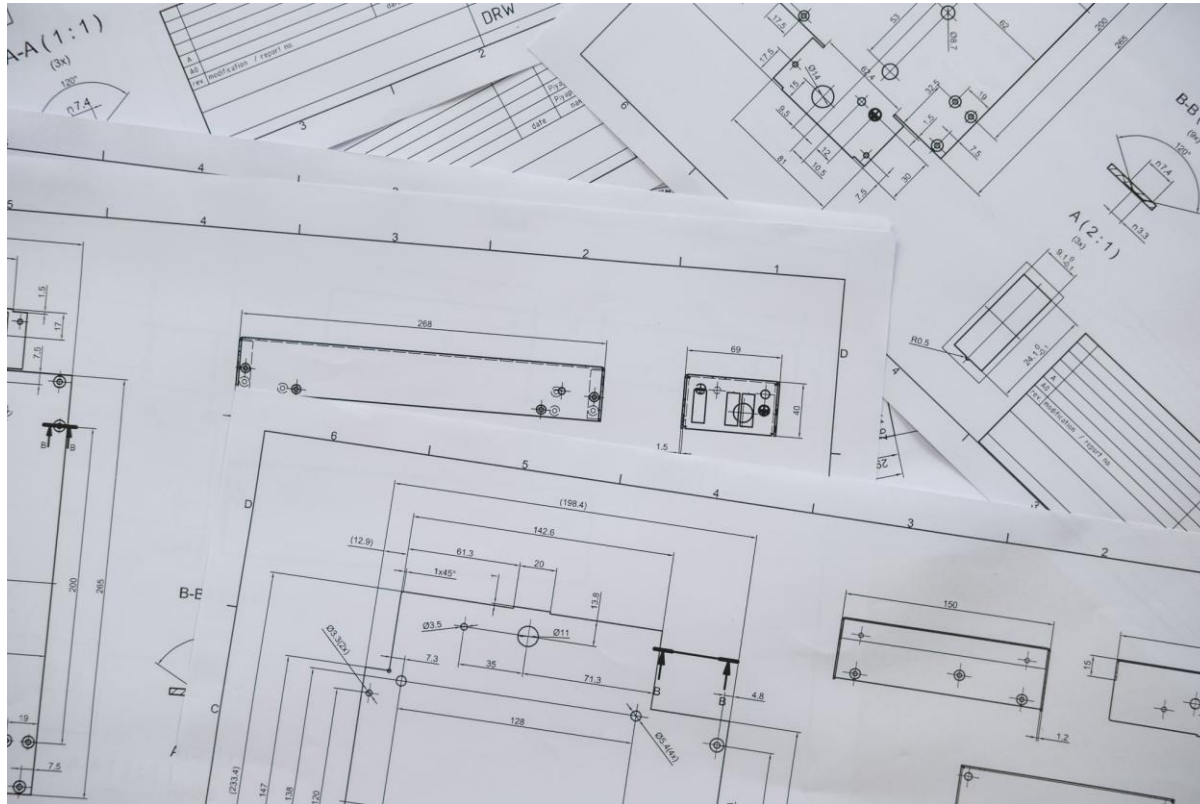
Prioritising the condition works effectively depends on regular, robust and detailed school condition surveys. A new programme of school condition surveys was commissioned and commenced last year with all reports now completed. These surveys are being used to set out the priorities for the condition improvement programme over the next five years.

The DfE also manages a programme of centrally funded and delivered school rebuilding projects to wholly replace or refurbish state-funded schools assessed to be in the worst condition or with specific structural issues identified with certain types or eras of school building. Regent Farm First School and Benton Park Primary School were both nominated to be rebuilt through the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme and the initial design development was completed for both schools. However, there have been delays on both projects. Benton Park originally gained planning consent in April 2024 but due to commercial issues with the DfE's original contractors, a *new contractor* was procured. The revised scheme gained planning consent in April 2025 and work started on site in July 2025. The school is expected to move into their new building in summer 2026 with demolition of the old building to follow.



Regent Farm First School's inclusion in the School Rebuilding Programme was first announced by the DfE in July 2021 but was delayed prior to the design development stage. The DfE's contractors submitted a planning application in February 2025, following a public consultation, but this is yet to be approved.

In October 2022, the DfE adopted its new 'Spec 21' output specification for all of its new build schools. The specification is intended to be 'net zero' in operation. Great Park Academy, Callerton Academy, Regent Farm First School, Benton Park Primary School and St John Vianney will all be built under this specification.



SEND Places, Inclusion and Accessibility

With growing numbers of children and young people with special educational needs, work has continued to increase places in existing specialist provision, as well as utilising capital funding to improve specialist facilities and increase inclusion and accessibility within mainstream schools and academies. This has included:

- Further expansion of Thomas Bewick Special School, including new satellite provision at Kenton Par Primary.
- Creation of additional spaces and improved facilities at Hadrian Special School.
- Funding for new Additional Resource Provision (ARP) at Cheviot Primary.
- Remodelling of Brunswick Park Centre to create Newcastle base of Hope Springs to provide SEMH places.

Inclusion and accessibility projects in mainstream schools and academies, including sensory and intervention spaces, acoustic attenuation, building modifications to improve accessibility and changing places washrooms. Projects have been funded in the following schools, academies and settings:

- Archibald, Byker, Moorside, Wingrove, Ravenswood, St. John's, Gosforth Park, Dinnington, Our Lady & St. Annes, English Martyrs, West Denton, Grange, Westerhope, Studio West, Welbeck, Gosforth Academy and Walker Riverside, Treehouse Early Years centre, Newcastle City Learning.

In total, over £2m was spent on SEND capital projects in 2024/25, of which around half was spent on inclusion and accessibility projects in mainstream schools and settings.



Priorities 2025/26

- Work with SEND services and schools to develop next phase of the SEND Capital Plan to deliver additional specialist places and provision as well as using SEND capital funding to increase inclusion and accessibility in mainstream schools.
- Planning and delivery of a new special school for pupils with autism, subject to securing sufficient capital funding.
- Work with other Council services, schools and external partners to provide support families and access education, including securing school places for those who are new to the city.
- Work with families, schools and other services to maximise education-related benefits, such as free school meals, to alleviate the impact of child poverty, including an implementation of the new national threshold for free school meals.
- Complete new asset management plan and priorities for maintained school estate and work with school leadership teams to embed robust asset and estate management.
- Respond to new government policies and legislation, including the new Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.
- Work with schools, academies, DfE, wider council teams and external contractors to develop and deliver proposals to improve the carbon efficiency of the school estate line with the Council's Net Zero ambitions and revised government guidelines.
- Work with Planning and others across the Council on Core Strategy for 2030 and beyond, including future school place and land requirements.
- Review school places programme for Strategic Land Release (SLR) sites and future place needs and work with Planning, housing developers, schools and trusts to progress proposals related to large-scale housing developments.



Afterword

Thank you for taking the time to read this year's Annual Education and Skills Report for Newcastle. As Assistant Director for Education, it is my privilege to reflect on the progress, resilience and shared ambition that continue to define our city's education community. This report demonstrates the unwavering commitment of our schools, services, partners and of families to give every child and young person the opportunities, support and belief they deserve.

Celebrating a Year of Determination and Impact

Across the year, we have seen remarkable work right across Newcastle's Education system:

- **Stronger foundations in early years**, with improved development outcomes, targeted literacy support and a continued emphasis on ensuring that children transition into school with confidence and curiosity.
- **Growing inclusion and strengthened SEND provision**, with significant developments in our Graduated Response, the continued embedding of the SEMH service, and visible improvements in specialist support, therapies, and accessible environments.
- **A renewed momentum on attendance**, supported through consistent multi-agency collaboration, improved data use and targeted interventions that ensure children are present, safe and engaged in their learning.
- **Expanding opportunities for culture, creativity and global connection**, seeing thousands of children involved in music, arts, international partnerships and experiences that inspire aspiration and broaden horizons.
- **Clearer pathways to adulthood**, through strengthened careers guidance, supported internships, and events like My Future: My Choice and Your Future: Your Choice, which brought thousands of young people together with employers, training providers and support organisations.
- **Deep partnership working**, from safeguarding and the MASH, to SEND co-production with parents and carers, to continued collaboration with schools through the Promise Board, Trusts and the wider children's system.
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These achievements reflect the breadth of our collective effort—across schools, health, social care, early help, community partners and of course our children, young people and families themselves.

Looking Ahead – Our Priorities for 2025/26

The coming year brings both opportunity and challenge. Our focus will be on:

- **Raising standards and narrowing persistent gaps**, especially for disadvantaged learners.
- **Embedding inclusive practice** across all schools and progressing plans for additional specialist places, including the development of a much-needed new autism school.
- **Improving attendance and engagement**, particularly reducing severe absence and strengthening support where mental health impacts participation.
- **Creating pathways to aspiration**, expanding careers guidance, supported internships and inclusive progression routes into post-16 learning and employment.
- **Delivering strong multi-agency practice**, ensuring safeguarding, early help and education work seamlessly together to improve children's lived experiences.
- **Responding to pressures on high needs funding**, with a clear commitment to long-term sustainability and better early identification.

Final Reflection

I am immensely proud to work alongside such dedicated, skilled and compassionate colleagues in schools, services and partner organisations across Newcastle. The achievements outlined in this report are a direct result of your commitment to children and young people, particularly in a year where financial pressures, rising demand and wider social challenges have made our collective work more complex than ever.

Despite the challenging context, Newcastle continues to demonstrate innovation, resilience and a deep-rooted belief in the potential of every child. Our city's strength lies in its collaboration, its honesty and its determination to keep improving.

As we look forward, let us continue to work together with ambition, generosity and purpose to ensure that Newcastle remains a place where every child can learn, grow and thrive, and where every young person can see a future filled with opportunity.



Paul Shadforth
Assistant Director: Education

Special thanks to our Newcastle schools who have provided the wonderful photographs that appear in this report, and to the pupils and staff who star in them.

If you have any questions about this document or require more information, please contact schoolinfo@newcastle.gov.uk