

Independent Alternative Provision: Quality Assurance Checklist

From time to time, it will be appropriate for schools to use alternative provision for some of their pupils. The reasons for this will vary; schools will often use alternative provision to enable pupils to access a more vocational curriculum than available in a mainstream setting, widening experiences, accessing therapeutic interventions, supporting transition or they may use it as an alternative to exclusion. The referring school has a duty to ensure that any alternative provision they commission is of high quality and that pupils are safe.

This guidance is aimed at schools where pupils on the roll of a mainstream school.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has a framework - the Independent Alternative Provision Dynamic Purchasing System ([IAP DPS](#)).

We have made our own checks on providers, who have signed-up and are satisfied that they meet criteria. We would like schools to use this mechanism for commissioning their AP, which offers schools the knowledge that WSCC have an oversight of the provision. **This is not in place of schools' own checks, but a supportive mechanism for both schools and providers.**

What is OFSTED looking for?

Evaluating schools' use of alternative provision

266. If pupils in PRUs and other alternative providers attend off-site alternative provision, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which these placements are safe and effective in promoting pupils' progress. Inspectors will visit a sample of the alternative providers used. Inspectors will want to understand how providers ensure that pupils who attend multiple settings or part time are kept safe when they are not on site for the whole school day. School Inspection Handbook - July 2023

WSCC also wants schools to confirm monitoring and quality assurance arrangements are in place for any alternative provision placements.

When looking at the suitability of alternative provision, inspectors will consider:

- that the provision is a registered school (if it needs to be *) and that leaders have checked this
- that it provides high-quality education and is safe
- how the school has quality assured the education on offer
- the school's reasoning for why this is the best choice for the pupils who are accessing it
- whether relevant safeguarding checks have been carried out by the referring school
- whether pupils are accessing a broad, balanced and well-planned curriculum
- the attendance of the pupils involved
- how well the provision supports pupils with their personal development.
- pupil attends the AP for less than 18 hours pw, averaged over the year.

Leadership and Management is likely to be judged ineffective if:

- the use of alternative provision is ineffective
- the school has not undertaken rigorous checks on safeguarding and quality assurance
- leaders are not aware of the numbers of pupils accessing alternative provision (leaders have not checked the provision's COVID-19 safety procedures)
- the school is not taking responsibility for any pupils attending alternative provision.

Registration Status

If an alternative provision is functioning as a school, it will need to be registered as an independent school before operating. It is a criminal offence to operate an unregistered independent school. Therefore, schools commissioning alternative provision should check the registration status of any provider that they are considering.

** 'An independent school is defined as a school that is not maintained by a local authority or is not a non-maintained special school, and at which full-time education is provided (a) for five or more pupils of compulsory school age or (b) for at least one pupil of that age who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.'* The Department for Education, March 2018

For further information see:

[Regulating independent schools](#)

[Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings – Advice](#)

Checklist: Things for school leaders to consider when using alternative provision

The tables below highlight initial checks that should be undertaken before referring pupils to an alternative provision setting.

Please note that these checklists are only intended to be a starting point for school leaders. Schools should take responsibility for carrying out their own suitability and quality assurance checks, as well as keeping up to date with government guidance and any local requirements:

[Alternative Provision – Statutory guidance for local authorities – DfE January 2013](#)

[Keeping children safe in education 2023 Statutory guidance for schools and colleges:](#) p 81-82

'Alternative provision

327. Where a school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, the school continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil and should be satisfied that the provider meets the needs of the pupil.

328. Schools should obtain written confirmation from the alternative provision provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the establishment, i.e. those checks that the school would otherwise perform in respect of its own staff.'

Alternative Provision Checklist

Name of Provision	
Provision Key Contact	
School Key contact	
Date of monitoring visit	
Date of initial planning meeting	
Date of review 1	
Date of review 2	

Leadership and Management					
	Area to be considered	Yes/No	Evidence seen/ copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Is the provision on WSCC IAP DPS?				
2	Does the provision meet the definition of an independent school? Has it been registered?				
3	Does the provider have adequate levels of public liability insurance? (>£5m)				
4	Does the provider have adequate levels of employers' liability insurance? (>£10m)				
5	Does the provider have adequate levels of professional indemnity insurance? (>£2m)				
6	If relevant, does the insurance cover any subcontractors or external partners who may work with the pupils?				
7	Where pupils will be using transport, is there insurance cover for this?				

Safeguarding					
	Area to be considered	Yes/No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Has a member of school staff visited the setting? (where appropriate)				
2	Does the provision have a Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy? Has this been shared with the school?				
3	Does the provision have a single central record and is this kept up to date?				
4	Are all staff and volunteers checked for their suitability to work with children using safer recruitment and vetting checks? DBS? Written statement required from provider (KCSIE)				
5	Is there a policy in place for managing allegations against staff? (knowledge of Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO))				
6	Are staff and volunteers at the provision familiar with the requirements that are set out in the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education?				
7	Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding an individual pupil, is this information shared with the referring school? Process?				
8	Have staff at the alternative provision accessed appropriate safeguarding training?				
9	Is there a partnership agreement in place for the placement?				
10	Does IT equipment used at home have parental lock/restricted access?				

Health and Safety					
	Area to be considered	Yes /No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Does the alternative provision carry out risk assessments where needed? Are copies of these available for the school to see?				
2	Is there an up-to-date Health and Safety Policy in place?				
3	Are regular checks carried out to ensure that the premises are safe and buildings are well maintained?				
4	Does the provider carry out all the required/recommended health and safety checks (e.g. electrical testing, legionella, fire safety)?				
5	If the alternative provision will be taking pupils off site, are there robust policies and procedures in place for this (e.g. Educational Visit Policy/Outing Policy, risk assessments, Evolve registration)?				
6	Are there sufficient numbers with up-to-date first-aid training?				
7	Does the setting offer adequate supervision for pupils? What is the staffing ratio? What is the group size?				
8	Does the alternative provision carry out risk assessments where needed? Are copies of these available for the school to see?				
9	When was the last fire drill?				
10	(Consideration of RA for COVID-19)				

Quality of Education					
	Area to be considered	Yes/No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Is the curriculum on offer suitable for the pupils that have been referred?				
2	Will pupils be accessing a broad and balanced curriculum that keeps future options open to them?				
3	Does the alternative provision have its own systems in place to quality assure the education on offer?				
4	How does the provision measure progress?				
5	How are the outcomes of these assessments/progress reviews shared with the school?				
6	Does the alternative provision support the personal development of pupils?				
7	Does the setting have adequate resources and facilities to provide a high-quality education?				
8	Does the provider offer appropriate qualifications and routes into further education and training?				
9	Does the provision recognise and meet the needs of children with SEND?				
10	How will school ensure they are maintaining contact and monitoring pupil progress?				

Behaviour					
	Area to be considered	Yes/No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Does the provision have an effective policy for managing pupil behaviour? Is it implemented effectively? Does this include anti-bullying and drug policies?				
2	Does the school support any rewards and sanctions that are likely to be implemented by the provision?				
3	Does the provision have a Suspensions Policy?				
4	In the event of an incident, which may lead to a suspension is it clear which party is responsible for which action?				
5	In the event of a suspension, is it clear where responsibility lies for ensuring the pupil continues to access education?				
6	Are there effective systems in place for the provider to report any behaviour issues to the school?				
7	Does the provider have systems in place to deal with poor attendance?				

Support for Pupils					
	Area to be considered	Yes /No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Are pupils provided with careers information, advice and guidance?				
2	Where relevant, does the alternative provision work with external agencies to support pupils with specific needs?				
3	Where pupils have specific SEND needs, is there an individual plan in place?				
4	Does the provision have its own SENDCo? If not, how will specialist support be coordinated for pupils with SEND?				
5	Are pupils given a thorough induction to ensure that they know the rules and are aware of how to keep themselves safe?				
6	Does the provider have a statement on equality, diversity and inclusion?				

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Communication					
	Area to be considered	Yes/No	Evidence seen/copy received	Comment	Signature/date
1	Is there an admissions policy? How is admission managed?				
2	Does the alternative provision share information and data about each pupil's progress regularly?				
3	Will the provider meet with the school regularly to discuss individual pupils?				
4	Does the provider have policies and procedures for communicating effectively with parents/carers?				
5	Will the setting provide regular attendance information to the school?				
6	Are there systems in place to allow effective communication with parents/carers?				
7	Has school considered transport?				
8	Is school aware of any financial commitments and agreed payment plan with provider?				